



THE DARK
SIDE OF **CHARLES**
DARWIN

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS *of an* ICON *of* SCIENCE

JERRY BERGMAN

What others are saying . . .

Few people in the history of the modern world have had a greater negative influence on society than Charles Darwin. But few people know the real Darwin. Dr. Bergman has done a real service to both science and society by casting a bright light on the dark side of Darwin. This is a must read for all who are concerned about the erosion of our moral fiber by the hijacking of science through Darwinian evolutionism.

Dr. Norman L. Geisler
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The Dark Side of Charles Darwin sheds much-needed light on a flawed man and his ideas. Evolution’s often tragic results are built on incorrect data and anti-theistic goals. Darwin was neither objective scientist nor deserving “Saint.”

John Morris, PhD
President of Institute for Creation Research

In his typical thoroughness, Dr. Bergman has carefully considered a wealth of literature by Darwin (both his public and private writings) and by his many sympathetic, if not admiring, biographers and commentators to reveal a more accurate picture of Darwin. Darwin was hardly an unbiased objective pursuer of truth, as his past and present devoted friends and disciples want us to believe. Rather, his writings on evolution used a mixture of scientific facts, faulty data, misinformation, plagiarized ideas, distortions of reality, and unbridled imagination to deceptively advance his anti-Christian, anti-biblical agenda, which has wreaked such social, political, theological, and moral havoc in the world. Bergman’s insightful and wide-ranging study will open the eyes of readers to the depth of the spiritual battle for truth in this question of origins.

Well documented for the person who wants to dig deeper, but written in an easy-to-understand style, this book will be a great help to many. I highly recommend it.

Terry Mortenson, PhD, speaker, writer, researcher
Answers in Genesis

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Foreword

Tufts University philosopher Daniel Dennett would, without question, place Charles Darwin, accompanied with his *The Origin of Species* (1859), first in the academic Hall of Fame above such intellectual luminaries as Albert Einstein or even Sir Isaac Newton. Such esteem of Britain's most notable personage would receive enthusiastic acclaim by the academic community worldwide.

The Dark Side of Charles Darwin, a very scholarly yet readable book written by Jerry Bergman, offers its readers another perspective. Dr. Bergman's examination of Darwin's beliefs and attitudes — some of which are highly undesirable and even offensive — might well be a shocking revelation to some readers. Darwinian scholars have purposely avoided such an investigation for fear that it might tarnish Darwin's hagiographic image.

Dr. Bergman's analysis correctly begins by looking at Charles Darwin's religious views. Darwin's deistic (my opinion) evolutionary worldview spawned his ideological views on racism, eugenics, and even his belief in the inferiority of women. Having read numerous books in the Darwinian field, I must confess that this is the first time that I have ever found that Darwin's attitude toward women has ever been broached. The book also features a lengthy discussion on Darwin's incessant fears that led to his struggles, both physically and mentally. Some have suggested, as cited by Dr. Bergman, that

Darwin's psychosis was directly related to his publication of *The Origin of Species*.

Personally, I believe that a significant contribution by Dr. Bergman is his questioning the legitimacy of Darwinian evolutionism or more specifically the role of natural selection. "The problem with evolution[ism] is not the survival of the fittest but the arrival of the fittest," is definitely a memorable maxim that should be pondered by all readers.

There is no doubt that this exposé will "ruffle the feathers" of some in the ivory towers of academia, namely the "new militant atheists" such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. It was Richard Dawkins, no doubt beaming with pride, who remarked that it was the works of Darwin that made atheism intellectually acceptable. But let me congratulate Dr. Bergman for writing *The Dark Side of Charles Darwin*. His well-documented book will provide readers with a realistic and convincing portrait of Charles Darwin—an aspect which has been long lacking within the Darwinian industry.

Dr. David Herbert, historian and author of
Charles Darwin's Religious Views (2009)



Introduction

Naturalist Charles Robert Darwin (1809–1882) is widely considered one of the greatest scientists of our age, if not the greatest scientist in the entire history of humankind. Although he did much research on a wide variety of life forms from flowers to worms, Darwin is most well known specifically for his theory of evolution. Evolution is the belief that all living organisms evolved due to purely natural forces from one or a few simple organic chemicals or life forms by natural selection. In answer to the question

“who is the greatest biologist of all time?” the editor of *Science News* wrote, “There’s only one answer. Any other invalidates the voter as unqualified. It’s Charles Darwin.”¹



Charles Darwin
Photo: Superstock.com

Although one of the few scientists known to most Americans and Westerners, few people know much about the dark side of Darwin, such as his support in his writings for eugenics and racism, or the reasons for developing his naturalistic evolution theory. Furthermore, Darwin’s book *The Origin of Species* is widely regarded

as “the most important biological book ever written.”² Some claim that it was “one of the most influential books ever written” and possibly only the Bible and the Qur’an were more influential.³

Willison wrote:

No single document in history . . . has so profoundly affected humankind’s understanding of the living world. Darwin’s theory of natural selection challenged all received opinion about life on earth and, in an era of intellectual, political, and scientific ferment that gave rise to the modern age, was perhaps the most revolutionary idea of all.⁴

Darwin was an icon of science during his own lifetime, and his icon status has grown enormously since then.⁵ This book provides some needed balance by looking at his dark side, however briefly, and is one of a handful of new books now beginning to reevaluate Darwin’s legacy. Criticism of Darwin is rare because it goes “against the grain of conformist academic praise for Charles Darwin” that is all too common in academia, the media, and our public school classrooms.⁶

It also goes against the common perception among scientists and academics that Darwin, “one of the greatest of our [science] figures should not be dissected.”⁷ The critical importance of Darwinism was highlighted by militant atheist Christopher Hitchens who wrote that Darwin is so important that the 21st century will be known in history as Darwin’s century:

Write the name of Charles Darwin on the one hand and the name of every theologian who ever lived on the other, and from that name [Darwin] has come more light to the world than from all of those [theologians]. His doctrine of evolution, his doctrine of the survival of the fittest, his doctrine of the origin of species, has removed in every thinking mind the last vestige of orthodox Christianity.⁸

This work does not negate Darwin’s many science accomplishments, such as his study of worms, something that no one disagrees

with. The fact that he had a reputation as a careful naturalist is partly why he was so successful in converting most of the scientific world to his worldview. Nor do we take issue with the common, if not exaggerated, belief that Darwin was

one of the most likeable, congenial, self-effacing, patient men of science; a model husband and father, kind and loving, generous and humorous, magnanimous and solicitous toward his neighbors of every social rank. . . . He had too many of the natural, personal qualities of a saint, and in fact, had he not been so entirely bent on creating a godless account of evolution, he might, just might, have become one.⁹

But there is a dark side of Darwin.

Darwin's Difficulties with Others

In his autobiography, Darwin revealed another side of his personality — his rather coarse public comments about close friends. For example, he stated that William Buckland was a “vulgar and almost coarse man” who was “incited more by a craving for notoriety, which sometimes made him act like a buffoon, than by a love of science.”¹⁰

He even claimed that Carlyle “sneered at almost everyone . . . his expression was that of a depressed, almost despondent . . . man” and “Carlyle’s mind seemed to me a very narrow one; even if all branches of science, which he despised, are excluded.”¹¹ Darwin said that one of his closest friends botanist Robert Hooker is “very impulsive and somewhat peppery in temper”; he once sent him an “almost savage letter for a cause which will appear ludicrously small to an outsider.”¹² Darwin also opined much about the conflicts that scientists had with each other. For example, he stated Hooker attacked so “many scientific men” but that his attacks on Richard Owen were “well-deserved.”

Darwin said Alexander von Humboldt talked too much¹³ and Charles Babbage “was a disappointed and discontented man; and

his expression was often generally morose.” Babbage’s attitude toward others was indicated in Darwin’s claim that he invented a plan by which fires could be effectively stopped, but he did not want to publish it because he felt “damn them all, let all their houses be burnt.”¹⁴ These comments about his friends, while not too uncivil, are not exactly those of a “kind and loving, generous . . . magnanimous” man, as Darwin is often pictured.

Darwin once stated that when he was younger he was capable of very warm attachment, but that later he “lost the power of becoming deeply attached to anyone, not even so deeply to my good and dear friends Hooker and Huxley,” a feeling that he stated gradually crept over him. He added that his chief enjoyment in life was his scientific work.¹⁵

Darwin’s Many Achievements

Darwin’s many achievements have been carefully documented in the hundreds of often highly laudatory books written about Darwin the man and Darwin the scientist, and will not be repeated here. More than 100 biographies of Darwin have been published in English alone since 1885, all of them favorable, and many very favorable.¹⁶ To understand Darwin and his work, though, the whole story must be told, especially since many people today view him almost as a god.

This work attempts to understand Darwin the man and the impact that his work has had on society for good and evil. As we will document, “Darwin was himself in error about lots of things.”¹⁷ Actually, in “his seriously flawed book” the *Origin of Species*, he was in error about many of his central ideas, including the means of genetic inheritance and the source of phenotypic variety.¹⁸

It is commonly assumed that Darwin’s main opposition was from clergy but, in fact, his fellow scientists were often his fiercest critics. It is a “long-disestablished myth that Darwin avoided publishing his theory for so long because he feared backlash from the religious establishment. In fact, he was much more concerned about criticism from the scientific community.”¹⁹

Much commonly believed information about Darwin is either incorrect or misleading, and many myths exist about Darwin's life and work.²⁰ An example is many authors claim that his most important book, *On the Origin of Species*, was so popular that it sold out on its first day of sale. Actually, the publisher wholesaled the first printing of 1,500 copies to booksellers, a fact Quammen notes, "is the precise reality behind a loose statement sometimes made — that the first edition sold out on the first day."²¹ Many minor claims such as this one are commonly part of what has become the Darwin industry. Added up, they create a myth that is far from reality.

This work is not alone in documenting a major reevaluation of Darwin and his work. One new book by a Darwin scholar and producer of a major documentary on Darwin concluded in the book's introduction that the

story that will be told in this book is light-years away from the established orthodoxy, which states that a letter from Wallace caused Darwin the rush to establish his claim to be the first to outline the theory of evolution. An increasing body of evidence contradicts the received view of Charles Darwin as a benevolent man who, alone, unaided and without precursors, was inspired to write *On the Origin of Species*. At the heart of that famous historical event lies a deliberate and iniquitous case of intellectual theft, deceit, and lies perpetrated by Charles Darwin. This book will also argue that two of the greatest Victorian scientists were willing accomplices.²²

Davies concluded in his well-documented but controversial work that the facts he "unearthed, supplemented by new evidence discovered while researching this book," show that "there is little doubt that a compelling case can be made against Darwin that would allow any reasonable person to conclude [that] it is likely he committed one of the greatest thefts of intellectual property in the history of science."²³

Another problem is many researchers have questioned Darwin's honesty, often in a way that attempted to absolve Darwin of wrongdoing so as not to besmirch their hero's reputation. For example, Quammen, in a very favorable biography of Darwin, wrote that Darwin tried to "assure Wallace [who also came up with a theory of evolution very similar to Darwin's theory] that 'I had absolutely nothing whatever to do in leading Lyell & Hooker to what they thought a fair course of action,' a claim that was weasely at best and arguably untrue."²⁴ The "course of action" was related to the fact that Wallace had sent a manuscript to Darwin outlining a theory that was so similar to Darwin's unpublished theory that Darwin was in jeopardy of losing priority, and would be accused of plagiarism if he did publish it.

Quammen adds that Darwin also misstated the "dating of his own excerpts in the Darwin-Wallace package, telling Wallace that they'd been written in 1839 now just 20 years ago! In fact, they'd been written in 1844 and 1857."²⁵ The date was important because Darwin was trying to claim priority for his natural selection-based theory of evolution over Wallace's very similar theory. The claim that he plagiarized the core ideas of his theory is documented in chapter 8.

Darwin and the Creation-Evolution War

Darwin is historically important for another reason: until Darwin, for most of history, science and religion were largely co-workers and partners in exploring the material world.²⁶ As Provenzo writes, the creation-evolution debate began with Charles Darwin and, until the "advent of Darwin, science was primarily rooted in theology. Its purpose was to demonstrate the existence of God . . . by demonstrating evidence of God's design and influence in nature."²⁷ The fact is,

if variations are undirected, and if natural selection calibrates only the fitness of each individual creature to survive and reproduce . . . is it possible to believe that God created humans in His image and likeness, endowing us with a

spiritual dimension not shared by the best-adapted orchid or barnacle? Arguably not. There's a genuine contradiction here that can't easily be brushed away . . . what Darwin's evolutionary theory challenges . . . is the supposed godliness of Man — the conviction that we above all other life forms are spiritually elevated, divinely favored, possessed of an immaterial and immortal essence, such that we have special prospects for eternity, special status in the expectations of God, special rights, and responsibilities on Earth. That's where Darwin runs afoul of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and probably most other religions on the planet.²⁸

Since then, the orthodox science establishment as a whole has become militantly opposed even to the idea of design and purpose in nature.²⁹ Jones opines that Darwin himself taught that “life had no plan, but turned instead to an infinity of expedients to cope with what nature threw at it.”³⁰ In other words, life lives only for the moment with no forethought or concern for the future, the “eat and drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die” philosophy. *The Dark Side of Darwin* discusses this side of Darwin rarely covered in books and journals. One example is the perception that humanity is one and indivisible, a view that would have been taken for granted until about the time of Darwin's birth. Christians, at least

would have believed that everyone descended from Adam and Eve, with what biologists would refer to as a genetic “bottleneck” at the time of Noah. By the time Darwin was a student at Cambridge, though, this was being questioned. The idea that the different races had different origins (from different types of monkeys, or from different acts of divine creation, depending on the views of the proposer), began as a convenient piece of slave-traders' propaganda, intended to denigrate the humanity of Africans.³¹

As documented in chapter 11, the racism that resulted from this revolutionary view increased by many orders of magnitude after the

Darwinian revolution. Darwin's own writings gave clear and important support to this tragic historical revolution.

Also covered in chapter 12 are his eugenic views and how they influenced dictators such as Hitler and Stalin. His attitude toward women (he believed they were less evolved than men) is covered in chapter 13. Certain racial groups, such as Africans, he called savages and believed that because they were inferior humans, they would become extinct. Nothing illustrates as well the fact that at times he seemed to lack normal human compassion, even toward his family, as Darwin's obsession with killing animals (chapter 7). As Quannem wrote, "Darwin was a selfish and ruthless man in some ways, but selfless and ruthless mainly in service to his work" of proving that intelligence was not involved in the creation of the natural world, but rather time, natural law, chance, mutations, and natural selection did it all.³² Why he was so obsessed with, in his words, murdering God is a theme hardly ever explored in the Darwin literature but central to any study of Darwin the man. This concern is explored in several chapters in this book.

Darwinism Is Now Dogma

A major problem today is Darwinism has hardened into dogma that interferes with science progress. University of Chicago biologist James Shapiro wrote:

Neo-Darwinian advocates claim to be scientists, and we can legitimately expect of them a[n] . . . open spirit of inquiry. Instead, they assume a defensive posture of outraged orthodoxy and assert an unassailable claim to truth, which only serves to validate the Creationists' criticism that Darwinism has become more of a faith than a science.³³

Professor Shapiro concluded that dogmas and taboos

have no place in science. No theory or viewpoint should ever become sacrosanct because experience tells us that even

the most elegant Laws of Nature ultimately succumb to the inexorable progress of scientific thinking and technological innovation. The present debate over Darwinism will be more productive if it takes place in recognition of the fact that scientific advances are made not by canonizing our predecessors but by creating intellectual and technical opportunities for our successors.³⁴

The following is one of the many examples Shapiro provides that posed major problems for Darwinism:

All cells from bacteria to man possess a truly astonishing array of repair systems which serve to remove accidental and stochastic sources of mutation. Multiple levels of proof-reading mechanisms recognize and remove errors that inevitably occur during DNA replication. . . . cells protect themselves against precisely the kinds of accidental genetic change that, according to conventional theory, are the sources of evolutionary variability. By virtue of their proof-reading and repair systems, living cells are not passive victims of the random forces of chemistry and physics. They devote large resources to suppressing random genetic variation and have the capacity to set the level of background localized mutability by adjusting the activity of their repair systems.³⁵

In the last chapter of this work some of the major problems with Darwin's major contribution to evolution, natural selection, are briefly reviewed. In fact, as chapter 14 shows, there are "far more unresolved questions than answers about evolutionary processes, and contemporary science continues to provide us with new conceptual possibilities" for answers.³⁶

Why This Book Is Important

This work is timely for many reasons, including that the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the

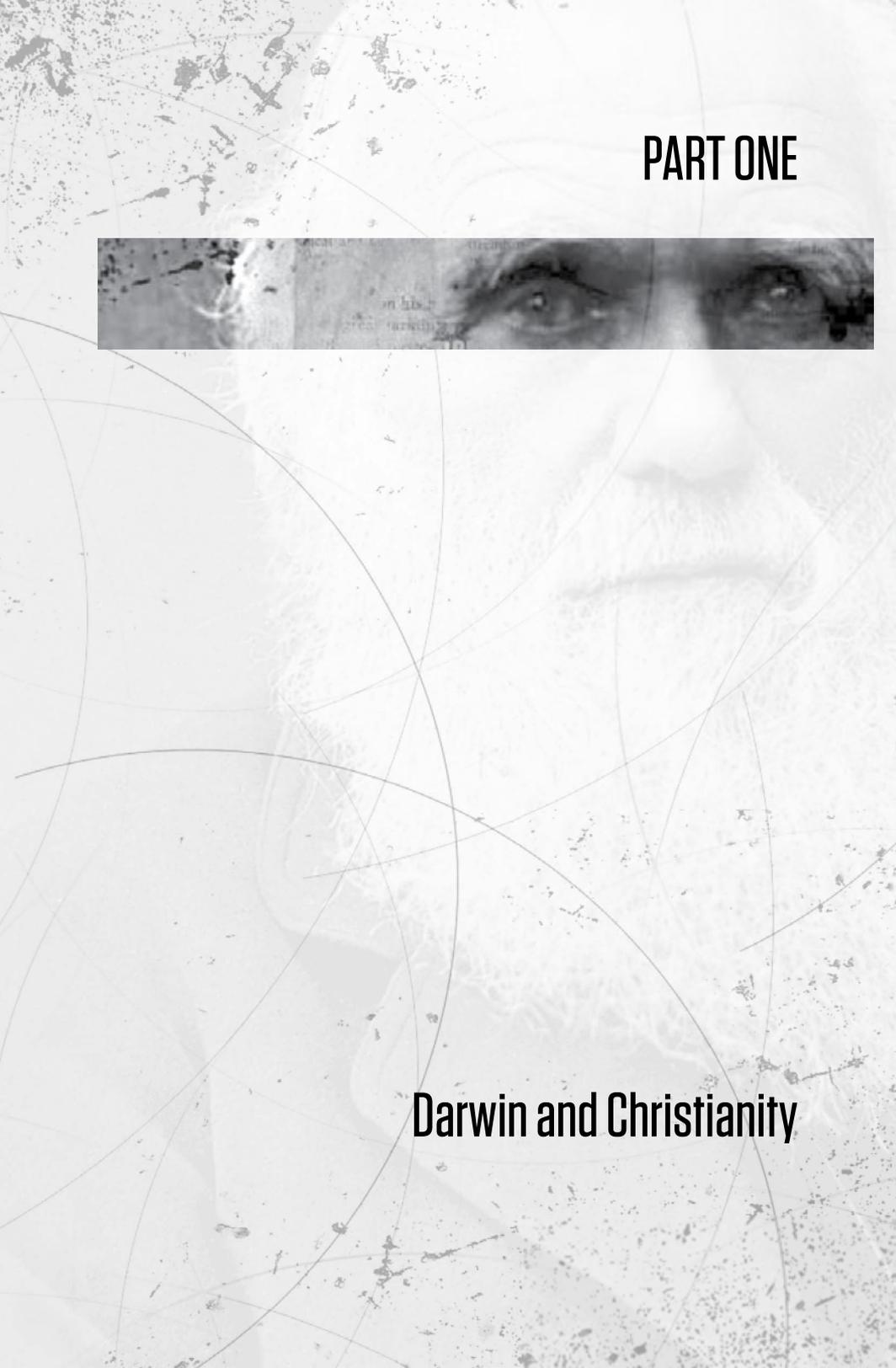
publication of his famous book *The Origin of Species* occurred in 2009. Chapter 1 explains how Darwin successfully connived to sell his worldview to both the public and the scientists. In Darwin's own words, his goal in developing and establishing his theory was like committing a murder. Among at least the leaders of the scientific hierarchy, he destroyed the most common basis for believing in God — the argument from design, also somewhat loosely called the cosmological or teleological argument. In their mind, and that of many others, Darwin murdered God by demolishing the main basis of belief in God, at least in the minds of the orthodox science establishment.

Darwin's failed theories and ideas, including his now discredited Lamarckian views, pangenesis, and the serious problems with his scholarship (in many cases he had his facts just plain wrong), are also discussed in some detail in chapters 9 and 10. Also reviewed were the problems his conclusions pose to theism and the destruction of any ultimate purpose of human life that resulted from his theory. Last, his journey from Christian to agnostic and its effect on his well-documented severe health problems, both physical and mental, are discussed.

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PART ONE

Darwin and Christianity

CHAPTER 1



How Darwin Overthrew Creationism Among the Intellectual Establishment

Chapter Synopsis

It is commonly assumed that Darwin was an active naturalist who, through his research, stumbled on the theory of evolution and then convinced the scientific world of his discovery due to its overwhelming scientific evidence. In fact, Darwin never did have good evidence for the origin of species, but convinced the scientific world by propaganda and even social pressure using deception and not evidence. Furthermore, it is commonly assumed that Darwin's motives were purely scientific but, in fact, his motives were primarily religious. He knew that his theory would demolish the strongest proof of God's existence (evidence from design, called the teleological argument) and this was a major source of motivation in his efforts to convert the world to the worldview now called evolution or Darwinism.

Introduction

Until Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (often called *The Origin of Species* or *The Origin*) book was published in 1859, the dominant orthodox scientific explanation for the origin of life was creationism.¹ Before the Darwinian revolution, special creation was almost universally accepted by both sectarian religion and science. More specifically, before Darwin's publication, "Most scientists who had opinions on the subject were special creationists."² In fact, "Prior to the development

of evolutionary theory, almost 100 percent of relevant scientists were creationists. Now the number is far less than 1 percent.”³

Historically, the strongest argument for the existence of God was the proof from design called the teleological argument. It is this argument that Darwin attempted to destroy. Darwinism also replaced the scientific establishment’s view that the world was “nearly perfect, and harmonious” with the view that the world was “violent and amoral . . . lacking a divine purpose.”⁴ How and why did this revolution that affected almost every area of science and society occur?

The Darwinian Revolution

A common assumption in Western society is that the Darwinian revolution was based on the accumulation of scientific evidence that eventually convinced the academic community of the theory’s scientific validity. In fact, the overthrow of creationism and its replacement by Darwinism was largely accomplished by political, and not scientific, means. Darwin himself admitted in the introduction to his *Origin of Species*:

I am well aware that scarcely a single point is discussed in this volume on which facts cannot be adduced, often apparently leading to conclusions directly opposite to those at which I have arrived. A fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question; and this cannot possibly be done here.⁵

Of course, as will be documented, this laudable goal was not even attempted in the thick two-volume set *Origin* because Darwin did not want to present both sides. As we will show, “To understand the scientific revolution that Darwin initiated, we must move beyond the simple assumption that his theory triumphed,” because Darwin marshaled an overwhelming body of scientific evidence that substantiated it.⁶

Even Darwin expressed major doubts about his theory, although only to close friends. In December 1857, he wrote to George Bentham

that he should expect to be disappointed with the *Origin of Species* book when it was published because the book would be

grievously too hypothetical. It will very likely be of no other service than collecting some facts; though I myself think I see my way approximately on the origin of species. But, alas, how frequent, how almost universal it is in an author to persuade himself of the truth of his own dogmas. . . . I certainly see very many difficulties of gigantic stature [in my theory].⁷

Even after the Darwinian revolution was complete and creationism was successfully suppressed in secular academia, many scientists still “had doubts about the efficacy of natural selection as a mechanism of evolution.”⁸ Natural selection, the chief mechanism that Darwin popularized, was widely rejected by biologists until long after Darwin died. Furthermore, their major objections to selection theory were never overcome in Darwin’s lifetime, and his followers were forced to argue around these problems rather than solve them. Open criticism of the selection theory grew in intensity during the last decades of the 19th century, and explicitly anti-Darwinian versions of evolution were accepted by many scientists.⁹ As chapter 14 documents, a resurgence of doubt about the ability of natural selection to account for the enormous variety of life is occurring in our day.

In short, “The advent of Darwinism was a social event within the scientific community and must be understood in terms of changing loyalties as well as changing research programs.”¹⁰ Bowler described the Darwinian revolution as a carefully orchestrated political attempt to convert both the common people and the scientists to his view. For example, Bowler noted that Darwin realized

he must be very careful to minimize the materialistic aspects of his theory in any public pronouncement. He knew that, whatever the growing dissatisfaction with creationism, the vast majority of naturalists and ordinary people would only be willing to tolerate a process of “creation by law” if they felt that the law somehow expressed a divine purpose. In the

1844 Essay he had even introduced the concept of natural selection by first creating the image of a quasi-divine overseeing Power, which could pick out useful variants just as the animal breeder does in a domesticated species.¹¹

Desmond and Moore, in their massively detailed biography of Darwin, described him as “shrewd,” explaining that years of “cajoling” his correspondents, which is “a bit like extracting money from his father — had taught him how to get what he wanted,” and what he wanted — his life goal — was nothing less than to replace supernaturalism with naturalism.¹² Ironically, geologist Charles Lyell’s “religious beliefs had formed the ‘essential fabric’ of Darwin’s own ideas on species and varieties.”¹³

Deception Required to Replace Supernaturalism with Naturalism

Darwin and many of his disciples knew that deception, such as inferring that a “quasi-divine Power [God]” was required to direct evolution, was needed in order to convert the world to the evolutionary naturalism worldview — the goal of many leading Darwinists, including T. H. Huxley and Ernest Haeckel.¹⁴ Many of Darwin’s leading disciples knew that using the misleading “quasi-divine Power” claim was deceptive, which was obvious from later sections of Darwin’s 1844 essay.

Darwin and his disciples did not believe that a “quasi-divine overseeing Power” existed that “picked out useful variants” to sire the next generation, but rather they believed natural selection functioned without “forethought and depends solely on the day-to-day operations of the most ordinary natural laws. The metaphor of the superintending Being was merely a device that would help those with theistic beliefs to come to grips with the idea.”¹⁵ Darwin also tried to convince his readers that his idea “belonged under the aegis of traditional religion” when he knew full well that it did not.¹⁶

Darwin also claimed that he was “determined” to “give the arguments on *both* sides” and “view all the facts . . . to see how far they

favor or are opposed to the notion that wild species are mutable or immutable.” Adding that he wanted to use his “utmost power to give all arguments and facts on both sides . . . I intend . . . to show (*as far as I can*) the facts and arguments for and against the common descent of species.”¹⁷ Of course, Darwin intended to do no such thing. His claims of “balance and doubt were a public mask. Despite appearances, he knew exactly what he was doing. For fifteen years he had committed himself unequivocally to one side.”¹⁸

In other words, Darwin used the deceptive temporary stop-gap ploy to gradually lead the populace to naturalism and atheism. Although the theistic implications of Darwin’s theory do not openly appear in his *Origin of Species*:

The very term “natural *selection*” helped to encourage the view that nature was, after all, an intelligent agent. It was in Darwin’s own interest to preserve as much as possible of the traditional view that natural development represented the unfolding of a divine purpose.¹⁹

Darwin’s theory in fact did not involve any divine purpose, but rather was a purely naturalistic mechanism involving only genetic variation caused by his now rejected theory of gemmules and natural selection.²⁰ Today the origin of new information is theorized to be caused by such genetic mechanisms as mutations. Furthermore, the end goal of the Darwinian movement was very clear, namely “to take control of areas of thought once regarded as the province of theologians and moralists.”²¹ To achieve this goal, Darwinists had to deal with the opposition that was often based on efforts to resist the atheism that Orthodox Darwinism implied and often openly advocated.

Darwin was very open about his views in his private writings, admitting that he “could not see how anyone ought to wish that Christianity be true,” but he “kept up a public front of traditional belief and went to great lengths to convince readers that his views were not ungodly.”²² For example, in the second edition of *Origin of Species* Darwin favorably quoted the “leading critic of skepticism” to

deceptively make it appear that his ideas could be interpreted “in the context of conventional natural theology.”²³

Darwin’s work was designed to disprove theism and for this reason he realized the process of overthrowing the theistic worldview would be slow. He had to be discreet. In a letter to Charles Lyell dated March 28, 1859, Darwin debated the best approach to get his 1859 book accepted, noting that *The Origin*

is not more *un-orthodox*, than the subject makes inevitable. That I do not discuss [the] origin of man. That I do not bring in any discussions about Genesis, &c., and only give facts, and such conclusions from them, as seem to me fair. — Or had I better say *nothing* to Murray, and assume that he cannot object to his much unorthodoxy, which in fact is not more than any Geological Treatise, which runs slap counter to Genesis.²⁴

Although a clear motivation of Darwin was to completely overthrow theism, most of his disciples realized that, initially at least, the most feasible route to atheism was to convert the population to theistic evolutionism, then to atheism, because

most of Darwin’s opponents were concerned about those aspects of his theory, which “tended to undermine the old belief that nature was a divinely planned structure. They were willing to accept evolutionism but *only* if they could believe that it represented a process with a structure and a goal that was imposed on it by God.”²⁵

Darwin saw the usefulness of exploiting the “useful idiots” who supported the idea that no inconsistency existed between evolution and theism even though Darwin and his key disciples knew full well that there was an unbridgeable chasm between the two worldviews, as documented in chapter 2.²⁶ For this reason, he exploited the language of natural philosophy in order to undermine natural philosophy by using theological language and ideas to convince readers that his worldview was similar to that of theistic evolutionists.

In short, as Moore argued, Darwin used theological language to convince readers of non-theistic evolution — evolution that did not need God but was not antagonistic to God.²⁷ Thus, Darwin “used theological tradition for persuasive advantage rather than fighting it to affirm his own convictions” about the unnecessary role of theism in explaining the origins of variety in the living world. The core leaders of the Darwin movement, such as Huxley and Haeckel, were “unwilling to accept Darwin’s totally open-ended view of the evolutionary process,” but insisted on the honest view that the direction of evolutionary change was “under the control of purely material forces. In the end, the success of Darwinism rested not on a general acceptance of the selection theory but on the exploitation of evolutionism by those who were determined to establish science as a new source of authority in Western civilization.”²⁸

Bowler noted that many of the scientists who opposed Darwinism were not biblical creation diehards as commonly claimed, but they

were willing to accept the general idea of evolution and adapt it to their own beliefs. But on the whole they were suspicious of the ideological agenda that lay implicit in the Darwinians’ appeal to the universal efficacy of natural law. They objected to the image of haphazard development at the heart of Darwin’s theory because they wished to retain the view that nature was in some senses the expression of a divine purpose and because they did not believe that progress was merely the summing up of a vast multitude of trivial everyday occurrences.²⁹

Politics Critical

The clear implications of Darwinism were a key problem that Darwin had to overcome. Selling Darwinism necessitated tact and required deliberate reconstruction efforts to produce an image that would encourage people to accept Darwin’s worldview. For this reason, Darwin “exploited ideas that he himself rejected, especially those involving religion” to help sell his idea to the public.³⁰ That

politics were critical in the Darwinian revolution is also illustrated by the fact that Darwin had built up a large network of scientists, including biologists, who he prepared to receive his ideas. Darwin then worked on them, gradually converting them to his worldview. To do this, Darwin

carefully built up his contracts with those biologists whom he saw would be most likely to welcome a new initiative, including even those such as Huxley. . . . The glue that would hold the supporters together, *despite their different scientific interests, was the belief that natural developments were governed by law rather than divine predestination.* By presenting evolution as a process governed solely by the normal laws of nature they could imply that social progress was the result of individual human efforts, the centerpiece of the liberal philosophy.³¹

Actually, a central issue in Darwin's later life was the long-term goal of making converts from theism to agnosticism or even atheism. For example, Desmond and Moore wrote, "Hooker was coming around," but had not yet "embraced Darwin's new gospel. . . . the problem Hooker still faced was a common one: the origin of life itself."³² Darwin, realizing this problem was common, "kept ultimate origins out of the picture" in order to sell his "new gospel."³³ It was well recognized that one could argue for changes in life forms, but to argue for the naturalistic origin of life was far more difficult, especially after Louis Pasteur, Francesco Redi, and others had documented that life can only come from life. Darwin also depended on his disciples

to fight his battles both in the public arena and in the "behind the scenes" activities of the scientific community in which new policies were decided. Fortunately, he had chosen followers who were particularly adept at playing the political game.³⁴

Darwin also "relied heavily on a variety of rhetorical strategies to produce a persuasive argument."³⁵ Politics and rhetorical

strategies were not only critical in overthrowing creationism, but were often more important than the science of establishing evolution itself. Even Darwin's central supporters, including Huxley, had only a limited commitment to certain aspects of Darwin's theory that were viewed as central by modern biologists.

Many scientists, such as Huxley, were willing to fight on Darwin's side of the battle to overthrow creationism even though they had major reservations about Darwin's theory itself, especially his central idea of natural selection. Nonetheless, they worked tirelessly to overthrow theism and to establish Darwinism as the only accepted origins story. When Huxley finally "began to use the idea of evolution in his paleontological work, his real inspiration was Haeckel's largely non-Darwinian" ideas.³⁶ Even major disagreements were dealt with by Darwin in such a way so as to ensure that his friends and critics alike stayed in his camp.

Some biologists began to develop openly non-Darwinian theories of evolution based on Lamarckism or the idea of inherently progressive trends. Darwin's great achievement was to force the majority of his contemporaries to reconsider their attitude toward the basic idea of evolution, but he did this despite the fact that many found natural selection unconvincing.³⁷

This step was taken by Darwin purely for political expediency. The fact is, the majority of committed Darwinians, even though most were not from the same scientific background and accepted Darwin's theory for different reasons, all "shared a commitment to scientific naturalism."³⁸ A major reason Darwin was forced to rely heavily on politics to achieve his revolution was because he had little scientific evidence to support his theory.

In 1859, when Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, he had no more evidence in support of his theory than did the Creationists, whose view of the world he was attempting to overthrow. Darwin's argument had so many

theoretical weak spots that he was forced, in large parts of the *Origin*, to argue not so much the correct theory as the least objectionable one. Far from delaying publication of his ideas, as earlier scholars have suggested, given the quality of Darwin's evidence and the nature of his theory, he was probably forced to publish his ideas too soon.³⁹

In short, Darwin was trying to sell "an uncertain theory on a highly controversial subject" to the public.⁴⁰ The opposition to Darwinism was also often due to non-scientific reasons, especially social and religious. Although "many scientific arguments against evolution" existed,

underlying most of them was a desire to resist the Darwinians' assumption that evolution could be used as a model for the liberal view of progress favored by the middle classes. Some of the arguments could be well appreciated by a pseudo-Darwinian such as Huxley, since they often reflected the underlying values of the morphological tradition in biology. But the Darwinians can be distinguished from their opponents quite clearly on the question of design or purpose in the universe.⁴¹

Bowler concluded that even a

pseudo-Darwinian such as Huxley wanted to use evolutionism as a means of rejecting the traditional view that nature can only be explained as an expression of a higher Power whose intentions are fulfilled by the pattern of evolutionary development. The opponents *did* wish to retain this view and they were prepared to marshal an impressive battery of arguments to defend their alternative image of evolutionism.⁴²

Even Darwin's classic magnum opus "the *Origin of Species* was tailored as much as possible to" sell his idea to the public more than to scientists.⁴³ Darwin also took a great interest in promoting his theory and kept in close touch with his key disciples, such as Hooker

and Huxley, who were battling for Darwinism in the outside world.⁴⁴ This “battle” often resembled a modern political war.

Darwin as a Super Salesman

Darwin actively campaigned to win the political war, and for this reason he built up an “immense communications network that allowed him to draw information from — and to influence — an ever-increasing number of biologists.”⁴⁵ Much of his vast correspondence was designed to convert others to his worldview. The political issues were also very important for many of Darwin’s followers. For example:

Huxley’s decision to promote a thoroughly progressionist version of evolutionism may also have been prompted by his recognition of the growing social tensions of the 1860s. In his campaign to persuade working men that their interests lay more with reform than with revolution, the inevitability of evolutionary progress offered an excellent model on which to base his image of social development.⁴⁶

One of many examples of Darwin’s activity in propagating his evolution ideas was a letter dated April 6, 1859, sent to Alfred Russel Wallace. In the letter, Darwin noted that Asa Gray, whom he had been working on, finally “converted” to his ideas. Darwin could hardly contain himself when he declared “our best British Botanist . . . is a *full* convert, and is now going immediately to publish his confession of Faith; and I expect daily to see proof-sheets.”⁴⁷ In a letter dated March 14, 1861, Darwin wrote to one correspondent who was not persuaded by his arguments. Darwin bragged, “I have been successful converting some few eminent botanists, zoologists, and geologists” and realized that conversions will be slow.⁴⁸ The extent of his efforts at converting others is documented by the fact that in a half century he exchanged more than 14,000 letters with some 1,800 correspondents, and “just managing his voluminous mail was truly an astounding feat.”⁴⁹