

Was Darwin's end goal to 'murder' God?

Jerry Bergman

Darwin made it very clear that his goal for developing his theory of evolution by natural selection was to devise another 'creator' to account for the existence of life, namely evolution. This was documented in his 1844 letter to Joseph Hooker.¹ This goal of Darwin created a nearly life-long conflict with his conscience, which began when he first devised his naturalistic evolutionary theory. The data shows that, in the minds of many scientists and academics, Darwin successfully murdered belief in God. Evidence from his writing and life suggest that this was at least his unconscious (and possibly his conscious) goal, though he never openly acknowledged it. There were many good reasons for him not doing so; had he proclaimed such a goal, it would have been enormously counterproductive to his work. Moreover, his wife and many of his friends were Christians.

It's like confessing a murder

In a letter to Joseph Hooker (figure 1), dated 11 January 1844, Darwin (figure 2) wrote, in contrast to his original belief, that he now believed "species are not immutable (it's like confessing a murder)."¹ In a *Scientific American* paper titled "Darwin on a Godless Creation: 'It's like confessing to a murder'", Marty explained in detail the background of Darwin's statement:

"Before marriage, Charles Darwin had confessed everything to her [Emma]. That he was in the process of rewriting the history of life. That, according to his convictions, all living things descended from a common ancestor. And that species were not to be attributed to God's endless creativity, but were the product of a blind, mechanical process that altered them over the course of millions of years."²

His conviction that humans are the product of a blind, mechanical process over millions of years supports what is argued here. Namely, that Darwin's goal (either unconsciously or possibly at some level consciously), in developing his theory of evolution by natural selection was to 'murder' God by replacing Him with another 'creator' to account for life's existence. Darwin knew that the main reason people believed in God in his day (and in ours as well) was the fact that evidence of creation requires a creator. Linked to this was the common belief in his day that species never change (although even some creationists at the time believed they could vary, within clear limits). Darwin acknowledged that even just admitting to having departed from the belief that species were fixed was like confessing a murder.³ If Darwin could come up with another theory that satisfactorily explained at least the origin of the biological creation, he realized that the main reason people gave for believing in God would no longer exist. This would result in many giving

up belief in God, which history has confirmed is exactly what has happened.⁴ As evolutionist Michod puts it:

"Before Darwin, people of the Judeo-Christian or Moslem traditions had assumed that living things must have been created by a being such as God. Darwin showed that the creator of all living things was, in fact, not a divine being who stood apart from life, but a *process* intrinsic to life—natural selection. Ultimately, this process provides the rationale for our existence, and it is in this process that we must seek an explanation of our basic nature, the origin of our needs and desires, and the process of sex."⁵

Darwin's theorizing affects his health

The theory Darwin developed, which ended up displacing God in the minds of many, was evolution by natural selection. However, Darwin himself had doubts about its ability to account for all of creation, and this had a critical effect on his health. The 'murder-caused-guilt' hypothesis can account for many of Darwin's frequent debilitating health problems, which were mostly psychological, and possibly due to Darwin's conflicts about his goals for (or at least the outworkings of) evolution.⁶ An analysis by Freud's disciple, Alfred Ernest Jones, from a study of Darwin, compared

"... the reactions of the two men who discovered the relation of Natural Selection to Evolution, which meant displacing God from His position as Creator specially concerned with mankind, and removing Him to an infinitely remote distance ... Darwin, the one who stood in such awe of his own father, said it was 'like committing [*sic*] murder'—as, indeed, it was unconsciously He [Darwin] paid the penalty in a crippling and lifelong neurosis, and in an astonishing



Figure 1. Joseph Dalton Hooker

display of modesty, hesitancy, and dubiety concerning his work. The other, A.R. Wallace, compensated for the displacement of the supernatural by bringing it back in another sphere, by his quite naïve adherence to spiritistic beliefs.”⁷

Colp summarized Jones’s conclusion by noting that, by ‘murder’ Darwin “meant ‘parricide’, the murder of God the father.”⁸ One of the world’s leading Darwin scholars, Michael Ruse, agreed with Jones, writing that

“Darwin knew his theory was much better than Chamber’s [rival theory] ... but it was evolutionary and materialistic nonetheless When telling Hooker of his evolutionism, Darwin confessed that it was like admitting to a murder It was a murder ... of Christianity, and Darwin was not keen to be cast in this role. Hence the *Essay* [which became the *Origin of Species* finally published in 1959] went unpublished.”⁹

Colp also features the word ‘murder’ in a different context, though still related to the discussion of the implications of Darwin’s theories. He refers to Darwin’s

“... moral feelings about his theory of evolution: evolution operates, not by the morally tolerable Lamarckian mechanism of ‘slow willing’, but by the

morally intolerable mechanism of ‘murder’. ‘Murder’, the massive murder of all unfit, aptly describes and characterizes the War of Nature.”¹⁰

Colp further observed that Darwin realized “his theory would be viewed with opprobrium equivalent to that attached to murder and that he would receive a punishment equal in severity to that given to a murderer,” and for “the murder of God, of Christianity Darwin must have believed that it was honest, manly, and courageous to confess what he really believed and to face his punishment.”¹¹ Indeed, Darwin received as punishment a lifetime of illness.

Darwin’s success in adversely influencing Christianity

Darwin’s theory has ‘remade the world’, converting the West from the Christian world to the post-Christian world.¹² MIT Fellow Angela Saini wrote this about the Genesis creation account, concerning which

“... the naturalist and biologist Charles Darwin published *The Descent of Man*, sweeping away these religious creation myths and framing the human species as having one common ancestor many millennia ago and as having evolved slowly like all other life on earth.”¹³

In only a few years, Darwinism both took over the world of academia and became the dominant view of the educated members of Western society. In short, Darwinism is considered “the single most important idea of the nineteenth century. It is also an account of issues and concerns that are still very much with us, including ... the enduring conflict between science and religion.”¹⁴

Many leading scientists have been very clear that their open opposition to Christianity is based on their belief in evolution. One example was related by Oxford Professor emeritus Richard Dawkins. Dawkins related a 1996 meeting with his friend, Nobel Laureate James Watson, the founding genius of the Human Genome Project, for a BBC television documentary that Watson was then involved in. Dawkins asked Watson, a former Catholic until he learned about evolution

“... whether he knew many religious scientists today. He [Watson] replied: ‘Virtually none. Occasionally I meet them, and I’m a bit embarrassed [laughs] because, you know, I can’t believe anyone [today] accepts truth by revelation.’”¹⁵

Another example occurred at a recent conference held at New York’s City College when a member of the audience

“... asked a panel of Nobel laureates whether a true scientist could also believe in God. Chemist Herbert Hauptman answered with a definitive ‘No!’—reasoning

that quality science and supernatural beliefs are irreconcilable, and adding that such beliefs are ‘damaging to the well-being of the human race’.”¹⁶

Anecdotal examples such as those noted above are useful, but limited. Furthermore, the religion of scientism teaches that no “immaterial and supernatural forces exist.”¹⁷ It is believed that only the material world exists, nothing else. The incompatibility of theism and evolution is evident from the huge disparity in beliefs between scientists and laypeople.

“While only 6% of the American public describe themselves as atheists or agnostics, 64% of scientists at ‘elite’ American universities fall into these classes This figure is much higher for more accomplished scientists. A survey by Larson and Witham (1998) showed that 93% of members of the National Academy of Sciences, America’s most elite body of scientists, are agnostics or atheists, with just 7% believing in a personal God. This is almost the exact reverse of figures for the American public as a whole.”¹⁸

The survey by Larson and Witham is one of many studies that attempted to show scientists in the most favourable light possible, yet still documented the large religious faith dichotomy between the average American and leading scientists. Before Darwin, few exceptions existed to the conclusion that virtually all scientists were theists and creationists; after him, the situation has reversed, and very few now identify as theists, far less still as creationists.¹⁹

A former ministry student, now an atheist after he learned about evolution, Michael Shermer wrote:

“On January 14, 1844, Charles Darwin wrote a letter to his friend Joseph Hooker, recalling his voyage around the world on the HMS *Beagle*. After five years at sea and seven years at home thinking about the origin of species, Darwin came to this conclusion: ‘At last gleams of light have come, & I am almost convinced (quite contrary to the opinion I started with) that species are not (it is like confessing a murder) immutable.’

Like confessing a murder. Dramatic words. But it doesn’t take a rocket scientist—or an English naturalist—to understand why a theory on the origin of species by means of natural selection would be so controversial. If new species are created naturally—not supernaturally—what place, then, for God? [emphases in original]”²⁰

Darwin knew he was murdering God, a conclusion that doesn’t take a rocket scientist to come to. LaGard Smith also accepted this view, adding that God is dead in the minds of most eminent scientists.²¹ Smith also said that

“... by definition from Darwin on down evolution

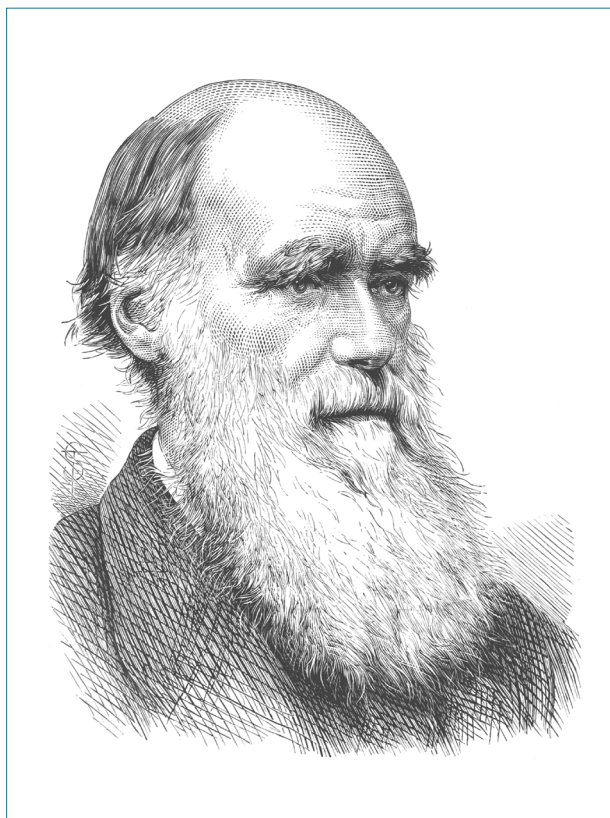


Figure 1. Charles Darwin

is a wholly *natural* process without some purposeful intelligence [such as God] involved at any point from microbe to man, it is misleading, disingenuous, and unworthy of intelligence to use the term ‘evolution’ when contending that in some supernatural way God was in control of the enterprise [emphases in original].”²²

In one of the definitive biographies of Darwin, Brent wrote Darwin’s vision of nature was

“... founded upon old-fashionably mechanistic and materialistic beliefs ... showed nature running without the necessity of guidance or intervention ... organized by logic and proceeding by its own energies, that led to his years of devotion to it his theory, and to his stubbornly reiterated defense of its principles. He resented when great scientists like Herschel wrote that ‘an intelligence, guided by purpose, must be continually in action to bias the direction of the steps of change’, since it was precisely the *elimination* of that hypothetical intelligence [God] that seemed to him his greatest triumph [emphasis added].”²³

Michael Ruse writes that the results of Darwin’s murder was a revolution in the 19th century and

“... naturalist Charles Darwin was at the heart of

it. However, contrary also to what many think, this revolution was not primarily scientific as such but more religious or metaphysical, as people were taken from the secure world of the Christian faith into a darker, more hostile world of evolutionism.”²⁴

Conclusions

Professor Hopper opined that the Darwinian establishment conversion to the idea that evolution was the creator, not God, changed the world by negating the reason most people believe in God.²⁵ The results are clear: large numbers of scientists are either agnostics or atheists, and the vast majority of the most elite scientists in the West are atheists. Destroying the evidence for God as the creator was, in Darwin’s words, like confessing a murder, namely the murder of God. I agree with Darwin’s wife, Emma, who correctly diagnosed her husband’s health problems as being “always affected by his mind.”²⁶ This knowledge of what his life’s work was in effect doing to belief in God naturally produced enormous internal conflicts in Darwin’s mind. This resulted in a major toll on his health until he died, diagnosed today, from his symptoms, as congestive heart failure at age 73.²⁸

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