
Creation Answers

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Who does this newsletter?

This newsletter is produced by Wayne Spencer on a Quarterly basis. Its purpose is to bring creation research within the reach of Christians and provide up-to-date reliable information on creation issues. Wayne Spencer is a creation author and former teacher who has presented papers at the International Conference on Creationism and has published in various creation publications, such as the Creation Research Society Quarterly, Creation magazine, the Journal of Creation (TJ), and Origins (from the Biblical Creation Society, UK).

This newsletter is meant to help people plug into creation resources and get informed about creation and evolution. It is provided free of charge on request. Using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary for viewing the newsletter. There are no restrictions in copying this newsletter or passing it on to others. To request to be placed on the e-mail list, send a request to wspencer@creationanswers.net.

More information on Wayne Spencer's education and publications can be found on the creationanswers.net web site. You'll also find many other resources. <http://creationanswers.net>

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A Personal Note from Wayne Spencer

Greetings,

Hello to everyone. I'm sorry this newsletter is a bit late. March was a very busy month for me after moving and having computer problems. I had a nasty computer virus that infected two of my PC's and caused a great deal of inconvenience. I lost my most recent email list for this newsletter. So, though I have email addresses for a few who recently asked for the newsletter, I may be missing a few others. Please pass this newsletter on to others you know who might be interested or others who did not receive it.

The year 2009 is a special year related to origins issues because it is the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth (on Feb. 12th) and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his book "On the Origin of Species" Many nonchristian and scientific organizations around the world have had special Darwin related events. In England there was even a special commemorative coin minted. I became interested in the personal side of Charles Darwin's life and decided to write about that in this issue. Thus, in somewhat the manner of the late Paul Harvey, radio commentator, I have called my article "Charles Darwin - The Rest of the Story."

Other recent news came from Texas where the State Board of Education made decisions about science standards related to teaching origins. I was not personally involved in that matter but I have some brief comments.

Wayne Spencer, M.S., Physics

Charles Darwin - The Rest of the Story

February 12, 2009 marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin, famous for writing the book "On The Origin of Species . . ." in 1859. The year 2009 is also 150 years since the publication of the book. Interestingly, February 12th also happens to be Abraham Lincoln's birthday. February 12th this year has been often called "Darwin Day" and has marked many special events around the world by various organizations honoring Charles Darwin. As a Christian and a creationist I cannot help but have more admiration for Abraham Lincoln than Charles Darwin. But since Darwin's books have had such influence in history and "Origin of Species" is considered an important source on evolutionary theory, it is worth knowing some about Charles Darwin the man. I certainly do not consider myself an expert on Darwin but the following is my effort to get a glimpse into Darwin's life, including his family, his values, and world view. There are some very commendable things about Charles Darwin as a person and some interesting facts about his life that most people would not know. There has been a great deal of historical research into his life. Though I may do much criticizing evolution as an idea, I do have a certain respect for Charles Darwin as a man, in spite of his thinking on origins. I will begin with an overview of Darwin's life, then go into more detail on his family and other issues.

Charles Darwin was born in 1809 in a place known as Shrewsbury in England. Charles had a strong interest in nature but was not a very good student. He was pressured by his father to go to medical school at Edinburgh University (in Scotland) but that did not go well, so he then went to Christ's college at Cambridge, to become a clergyman in the Church of England. In those years science was not highly

formalized and "education" in the sciences, except for medicine, was done more by means of informal mentoring of one "naturalist" teaching another. So scientific investigations were more of a serious hobby and often not ones vocation, unless one was a medical doctor. Charles Darwin received a general degree in Theology from Cambridge, graduating in 1831. Shortly after his graduation from Cambridge he had opportunity to travel on the ship the H.M.S. Beagle, which was charting the Southern coast of South America. Darwin mostly collected specimens and made notes on plants and animals he studied on land while the ship was charting coastline. Darwin is well known for observations of living things he made on the Galapagos islands. He kept detailed notes that were sent back to Cambridge. The journeys on the Beagle spanned five years, finishing in 1836.

Darwin returned to England after the voyage and married Emma Wedgwood at about that time. Charles Darwin became somewhat known among other scientists in England even by the time of the end of his voyages on he Beagle. Darwin was apparently supported mostly by his father during the time on the Beagle and for some time after. However eventually Darwin got what were basically stipends for writing about his collected specimens and rewriting his journal from his voyages. In the late 1830's and early 1840's Darwin wrote as a contributor to a five volume book set called "Zoology of the Voyage of the H.M.S. Beagle . . ." It was not till over twenty years after the voyages that Darwin published his book "On the Origin of Species . . ." The complete title of this book was "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life." "Origin of Species . . ." was published in November of 1859 and all 1,250 copies of it were sold out the first day it was released. Darwin later, in 1871, published a second book, "The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex." In

1872, Darwin's third book was published, "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals." Charles Darwin died in April of 1882. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in London, near scientists John Herschel and Isaac Newton. Charles and Emma Darwin had 10 children, two of which died as infants and one, a daughter named Annie died at age 10. Their other seven children survived them and several of them went on to have science related careers.

The Darwin Family

Charles Robert Darwin, the author of the "Origin of Species . . .," was born into a family financially well-to-do but with many troubles from infidelity, suicide, drug abuse, and other forms of abuse apparently. His grandfather was a prominent physician named Erasmus Darwin. Erasmus had several children, one of which was also named Charles, uncle to the famous Charles Darwin we have all heard of. Erasmus' son Robert was Charles Robert Darwin's father. Erasmus and Robert were both physicians. Erasmus' first wife Mary died at age 30. She had cirrhosis of the liver from very serious alcoholism and she died after being administered an overdose of opium by Erasmus himself. After this Erasmus fathered some children by an employee and had an affair with a married woman named Elizabeth. The woman's husband mysteriously died and then Erasmus married her and moved into her home. Erasmus had some scientific interests beyond medicine, being one of the founders of The Lunar Society in England, and also started a botanical society which translated the works of Carolus Linnaeus from Latin into English. Erasmus also wrote a notable book called Zoonomia, which has some early evolutionary ideas in it.

Erasmus and his son Robert have both been described as tyrants in running the family. Erasmus and Robert were both rather cruel to women, and they both administered powerful drugs to their wives.

The laudanum Robert gave to his wife likely had something to do with the death of his wife, Susannah. Note that at this time it was not understood how dangerous drugs like opium and its derivative laudanum were. In fact, nurses would sometimes spoon feed laudanum to infants. Laudanum was often prescribed for a variety of types of pain as well as an antidiarrheal agent. Robert was a successful businessman as well as physician and thus amassed some wealth that was sufficient to later support Charles Darwin's voyages and his researches on evolution. Robert Darwin married Susannah Wedgwood. The Wedgwood family were apparently close to the Darwin family for many years. It is said that the Wedgwood women were generally afraid to be alone with Robert. Robert and Susannah had six children including Charles Robert. Susannah died when Charles was eight years old. Charles had four sisters and one brother.

As a boy and young man Charles Darwin showed much inquisitiveness and interest in nature. He came to have a great interest in hunting. He was apparently of a much more passive quiet nature than his father. Charles' father wanted him to become a doctor but medical college did not go well. Charles did not like the sight of blood. But he did come to take much pleasure in the killing of animals in hunting, using a gun. He seems to have hunted various birds, rabbits, rats and perhaps other animals. He made many notes about hunting techniques, guns, and related matters in the hunting off-seasons. His interest in hunting continued through his years at Cambridge. In an interesting incident, Darwin once wounded a bird in hunting one day and the next day found the wounded bird and was very troubled by his conscience because of the suffering he caused the bird. This led him to stop hunting; however, this may not have been a permanent change. There is a story from his time on the H.M.S. Beagle that him and the ship captain once went around killing island birds with hammers, purely for

the pleasure of killing them. The birds were quite tame and were not afraid of people. Thus they were easy to kill. (I mention this to give a glimpse of Darwin's character and personality, not to suggest whether hunting is right or wrong. There are times when killing animals is wrong because it is unnecessary and cruel. But on the other hand, as human beings, I believe as stewards of the Earth based on Genesis 1:28 we have the right to judge whether animals live or die. Hunting is something Christians may have various views on.)

Natural Selection

By the time Charles Darwin set sail on the H.M.S. Beagle he already had studied writings from thinkers of the time who had ideas related to what we now call evolution. Darwin's ideas on how evolution happened were not actually original to him. What he is usually actually credited with is the way he used observations of animals to document evidence of natural selection. His idea of natural selection was key to his thinking. Natural selection, which came later to be called "survival of the fittest" said that varieties of animals that are stronger or can more easily survive and reproduce will become the most numerous and outlast other varieties that are not as well adapted. So natural selection was thought to explain why animals have many of their characteristics, they adapted, without limit, over generations, to their environment. Looking at it another way, natural selection is a sort of competition to survive and produce offspring. Thus the strong survive and the weak die.

Something many do not realize is that natural selection is not in conflict with a Biblical creation viewpoint. In a Biblical view, God created certain types of animals in the beginning, and those types, called "kinds" in the Bible, can adapt to their environment. This is not actually in conflict with Darwin's observations and it does not give evidence of the entire theory of

evolution. Darwin, like many evolutionary scientists today, assumed that the limited changes he observed in animals, if they continued for very long periods of time, could explain how all species could arise. But the large scale complex changes required for a reptile to change into a mammal for instance have never been observed in real animals. This is a change that is assumed to be possible over millions of years based on observations of smaller scale changes that do not come close to comparing. Darwin observed limited changes in living things, such as the beaks of finches for example, and he made broad generalizations from that.

So, natural selection is not a bad concept, but it must be understood to have realistic limits in what changes it can bring about. Foxes may adapt by natural selection to give rise to something like the arctic fox but the arctic fox will never become something other than a fox. And foxes did not descend from an ancestor that was not a fox. This fits into a creation view because this allowed living things to adapt and survive when the environment changed (such as after Noah's Flood). Thus natural selection actually demonstrates God's good provision. In fact, ideas much along the lines of what we call "natural selection" were actually written about by a creationist from the time of Darwin, Edward Blyth. Other scientists, such as one who was a friend of Darwin, Alfred Russell Wallace, also wrote similar ideas. It seems likely that Charles Darwin actually got a lot of his ideas on natural selection from Blyth. Blyth published his ideas before Darwin but Darwin gave no credit to him apparently. Even Blyth was not really the first to think of the "struggle to survive" ideas like natural selection. But Charles Darwin argued for a natural cause for the origin of all living things, unlike Blyth, who acknowledged Divine Creation in the beginning. Some evolutionary ideas can actually be traced back to Greek philosophers as well as others long before Charles Darwin. Evolution is

basically an attempt to explain where life and the universe came from without the God of the Bible. Thus elements of evolution-like ideas are common in false world views throughout human history.

In the early and mid 1800's there was a movement among well educated people to question the Bible and the creation account in Genesis. The early geologists, some of which also had some theological training, were questioning Biblical chronology and viewing the Earth as much older than in a Biblical view of history. George Lyell was a very important writer and geologist from the time of Darwin. Darwin was familiar with Lyell's book and it influenced his thinking on evolution. Darwin learned perhaps especially from Lyell how to view the Earth as very old instead of only thousands of years old. Darwin's thinking resonated with the growing philosophy of his time, which we now call naturalism. This is the assumption that everything in the world can be scientifically explained by purely natural causes (or natural processes). In other words, the supernatural cannot be invoked to explain anything about the physical world or about living things. Darwin's "Origin of Species" book addressed how animal species could come about from a common ancestor. Then his later books addressed the evolution of apes and humans, thus giving Darwin's view of humanity in many ways.

Charles and Emma

Let us return to Charles Darwin's personal life and his marriage. At the time that Charles Darwin married he apparently attended church but he did not believe in God in the way his wife did. Apparently while growing up Charles attended a Unitarian church but in his adult years he and his family apparently attended an Anglican church. Emma Wedgwood was actually Charles' first cousin. Charles Darwin's mother was Emma's Aunt. Emma seems to clearly have been a Christian,

judging from letters between her and Charles that have survived. She occasionally referred him to passages in the Bible and she was apparently very concerned about his salvation. Charles and Emma married after his voyages on the Beagle, and so Charles had already formulated most of his ideas on evolution by the time they married. He knew the implications of his ideas went against Christianity and he explained this to Emma before they married. So Emma definitely knew of his ideas on evolution, and against Biblical creation, before they married. In fact, Emma certainly knew Charles Darwin before his trip on the Beagle and her family helped persuade Charles father Robert to allow him to go on the trip. Robert had been against the idea but he eventually ended up supporting Charles financially for his time on the Beagle. I am not sure if it would have been clear at that time whether Charles was a believer or not.

Christians today have a tendency to think of Charles Darwin as a "bad man" because of his evolutionary ideas. But, remember he almost became an Anglican Minister and his degree was in Theology. He had a certain respect for Christian values it seems, as most people of the time did. Darwin was always concerned that his ideas on evolution would become a point of tension between him and Emma. In his younger years, Charles Darwin was reportedly favorably impressed with the well known William Paley, who was one of the first to develop the argument for God's existence from design in nature. But later in his life after considering what he learned from his years on the Beagle, he viewed nature as less compatible with Paley's design concepts. One tragedy in his life increased Charles' doubts about God, the death of one of his daughters, Anne, at age 10. Charles was quite close to Anne and her loss was very difficult for him. (For an excellent article on this see the following article by creationist biologist, Roger Sanders.)

<http://answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v4/n1/darwins-struggle>

Charles and Emma clearly had a good relationship. Charles wrote very fondly and admirably of his wife. Charles and Emma's children also wrote speaking very highly of their father. Charles Darwin used to sometimes involve his children in some of his experiments and research activities and he clearly spent a lot of time with his children. This is very commendable, especially in light of the fact that Charles' father and grandfather were abusive tyrants. However, his studies of living things while on the Beagle had a great effect on his thinking and it seems as his ideas on evolution solidified over the years, his doubts about the Bible and God became more ingrained in his thinking. By the latter part of his life he would stop attending church with his family and he called himself an agnostic. Note that the term "agnostic" for one who believes you cannot know if there is a god, was coined by an evolutionist scientist Thomas Henry Huxley in 1868. T.H. Huxley was known as "Darwin's bulldog" for how he defended Darwin's ideas on evolution. I would say that Darwin moved farther and farther away from faith in God in the course of his life. In fact, it is said that shortly before he died he said "I am not afraid to die." I think we should take this as an affirmation of him having no sense of concern that he would face God in eternity.

I must make a brief comment about the story of Lady Hope. Lady Hope is said to be a Christian evangelist who lived during Darwin's time. Story has it that she visited Charles Darwin late in his life when his health was poor. (There has been significant speculation about Charles Darwin's medical condition. Some believe he had health issues after being bitten by a poisonous insect during his travels. He had a variety of symptoms that plagued him for years after his travels on the Beagle. He was sometimes confined to bed for periods.)

After Lady Hope's visit to Darwin and Darwin's later death, a story began to spread that Charles Darwin became a Christian before he died. However, well known scientists of the time who had frequent contact with him as well as family who were there all maintain he did not become a Christian. Thus I think the claim that he became a Christian is clearly false and Christians should not spread this rumor.

Emma & Darwin's Unbelief

The Bible is clear that believers are not to marry nonbelievers (II Corinthians 6:14). Yet, there are many examples of Christian women who were fine examples of Christian character for the way they cared for their family, including caring for unbelieving husbands. This was indeed the case for my own mother, who was married for over 50 years to an atheist. This is one of the reasons the story of Charles Darwin and his wife caught my attention. It seems God provided Charles Darwin a good example of Christianity lived out through his wife. Emma as a young woman, perhaps in her twenties, had to care for her mother when she became bedridden and she also cared for an older sister who had scoliosis and was a dwarf. Charles had a number of health issues that plagued him often through much of his adult life. It is not clear what the causes were of his various ailments. I will not go into descriptions of them here. But suffice it to say that Emma had a lot to put up with in living with and caring for him. There is an interesting quote of Emma to Charles from a letter, regarding her concern for him in his skepticism regarding faith in God: "*May not the habit in scientific pursuits of believing nothing till it is proved, influence your mind too much in other things which cannot be proved in the same way, & which if true are likely to be above our comprehension.*"

An excellent article by creationist Russell Grigg shows that Charles Darwin had many of the same objections to faith in God that many nonchristians have today. (see

<http://creation.com/darwins-arguments-against-god>). He did not accept a Biblical view of history or chronology, he did not believe in miracles, he questioned how a good God could allow suffering in the world (which Darwin observed during his travels), and he also rejected that God should render everlasting punishment on people after death. This is why he worked so much to develop and formalize evolutionary ideas. Evolution justified his unbelief, as it does for many today. He worked hard to assemble what he thought were good arguments for evolution because there was a great tide of opinion for the Bible and against evolutionary ideas at the time.

Over the course of his life, Darwin came to think that natural selection made the intelligent design argument unnecessary. Darwin applied the struggle to survive principle to human life and believed that it actually explained both the happiness and misery of human beings. I find it unfortunate that Charles Darwin rejected Christian faith. There are answers to the above questions, at least in certain respects. Today creation research has much better answers on origins issues than was understood in Darwin's time. Though Charles Darwin was not a Christian, he showed much more concern and respect for Christians than many in the scientific community do today.

Texas Science Standards

Recently the Texas State Board of Education finalized a decision that had generated a lot of controversy. It was about a clause in the science standards relating to teaching evolution. For many years there was a phrase saying students should be exposed to “strengths and weaknesses” of different scientific theories. The scientific community objected to the implication that evolution had weaknesses inherent in this language (as they saw it). So there was an effort to remove the “strengths and

weaknesses” language. After many hearings in which the Board heard from interested citizens and from the scientific community, the decision was made to change the language. The “strengths and weaknesses” language was removed and those portions were rewritten to say that theories should be “analyzed and evaluated.” The language now emphasizes critical thinking and critically examining different viewpoints on the scientific evidence regarding origins.

Many people of a creationist or Intelligent Design perspective are glad to see the new language. However, I would say that the change in language in the standard isn't likely to make many changes in how science is taught. The language can be taken different ways. I hope it will have a positive effect on how textbooks are written. I'm afraid that both sides will take this decision as a victory for their side. Though I commend Christians who've worked hard on this issue with the Texas State Board, what I feel is really needed is action by the State Board to protect teachers jobs. If teachers are not confident that their jobs are safe, they are not likely to be very open about “evaluating” evolution or discussing the weaknesses of evolution in class.

“Darwin” film from CMI, Australia Coming

A significant new film is in preparation from the creationists of Creation Ministries International (CMI). They are making a major documentary structured around on-site footage like Charles Darwin's trip on the H.M.S. Beagle. CMI has recently changed their website address to simply creation.com. You can go there and see a video preview of the new film, which should be available later this summer. To read about the film, including some comments from early screenings, go to this webpage:

<http://creation.com/cmis-year-of-darwin-documentary>