Darwinism and Religion

Yesterday I talked about the charge that intelligent design is not science but religion. Today I would like to look at the other part of the debate. Does Darwinian evolution function as a sort of secular religion?

Nancy Pearcey writes in her book *Total Truth* that "Darwinism functions as the scientific support for an overarching naturalistic worldview." Today scientists usually assume that scientific investigation requires naturalism. But that was not always the case.

When the scientific revolution began (and for the next three hundred years), science and Christianity were considered to be compatible with one another. In fact, most scientists had some form of Christian faith, and they perceived the world of diversity and complexity through a theistic framework. Nancy Pearcey points out that Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, and others sought to understand the world and use their gifts to honor God and serve humanity.

By the nineteenth century, secular trends began to change their perspective. This culminated with the publication of The Origin of Species by Charles Darwin. His theory of evolution provided the needed foundation for naturalism to explain the world without God. From that point on, social commentators began to talk about the "war between science and religion."

By the twentieth century, G.K. Chesterton was warning that Darwinian evolution and naturalism was becoming the dominant "creed" in education and the other public arenas of Western culture. He said it "began with Evolution and has ended in Eugenics." Ultimately, it "is really our established Church."

Secular evolutionists may not have church services, but it is easy to see that naturalism and Darwinism have become the main pillars of a secular view of the world. That may explain why

most debates about origins quickly become so intense. Expect more and more controversy as scientists and commentators challenge the theory of evolution.

Darwin Day

February 12, 2009 is being promoted internationally as Darwin Day. Aside from being Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday it is also Charles Darwin's 200th birthday. It's not too difficult a guess to say that the emphasis on Darwin is due in large part to the continuing success of groups around the world arguing that Darwinism is not all that it has been made out to be.

In America 40% of the general public still does not accept that a purely naturalistic process is responsible for all we see in the living world. This drives the community of evolutionary biologists and all humanist and atheist groups positively bonkers. They all but blame the decreasing enrollments in science programs in this country on this continuing reticence to accept Darwin.

Some see the need, therefore, to increase education on all things Darwin on the occasion of Darwin's anniversary and all the contributions of the man and the idea. We will hear how Darwin revolutionized biology. The often repeated quote of Theodosius Dobzhansky, a mid-20th century evolutionist, that "nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution," will be repeated ad nauseum.

There is no doubt that Darwin made impressive contributions about the ubiquitous nature of small scale changes in biological populations over time. Not all things Darwin are to be considered suspect. But separating the good from the bad can be a daunting challenge at times.

The recent documentary film, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, received howls of protest at the accusation that Darwinism made a contribution to the Nazis' eugenics program and ideas of racial purity. Never mind that these connections have been considered historical facts for decades. Richard Weikart's excellent book, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism*, makes the case in great detail from the German literature of the early decades of the twentieth century. But casting aspersions on Darwin in a very public setting just isn't tolerated. People might get the wrong idea, you see, that Darwin is anything less than THE saint of modern biology.

You should also pay no attention to the fact that when the great Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes, finished his soldiering in the Civil War, he became a convinced Darwinist after all the suffering he witnessed and participated in. This led to his rethinking about law in general. He soon realized that since all things biological change over time, so should the law that we govern ourselves by. Holmes was the original activist judge, making law instead of interpreting law. He firmly believed that law was a product of evolving cultures and traditions.{1}

The innovator in moral philosophy of education John Dewey was decidedly Darwinian. The originator of the still popular Values Clarification moral approach believed that moral values evolve just like biological features, and students must be free therefore to arrive at their own values. We simply can't know if our values are better or preferable than another's. When given a choice, most parents prefer their children be taught a clear system of right and wrong but most teachers prefer to teach a values clarification approach.{2}

If we're going to be bombarded with Darwiniana this month and for the rest of the year (since 2009 is also the 150th anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of*

Species) let's appeal for some balance. Since even Abraham Lincoln is being reevaluated as perhaps not the great President many have idolized him to be, why not Darwin?

Check out Probe's numerous articles on the various problems with Darwinian practice and thinking. Also stop by the Discovery Institute's website at www.discovery.org/csc to keep up with the latest news through articles, podcasts, and news briefs.

Let's teach more Darwin for sure. But let's try to tell the whole story and not just the laundered propaganda of the evolutionary elite.

Notes

1. Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), p. 228-229, 237.
2. Ibid., 238-242.

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The Galapagos Islands: The Bohlins' Visit

The Galapagos Islands, off the coast of Ecuador, are where Charles Darwin received the inspiration for the theory of evolution. In observing the islands' ecosystem and how its bird and reptile inhabitants compared to similar South American cousins, Darwin assembled what has become the driving philosophy of science.

In May 2003, Dr. Ray and Sue Bohlin visited the Galapagos Islands with a different perspective, focusing on intelligent

design and the natural limits to biological change. Here is their report.

1 – Why Visit the Galapagos Islands?

2 – Thursday PM: Bartolome

3 – Friday AM: Punta Espinosa

4 – Friday PM: Tagus Cove

5 – Saturday AM: Punta Moreno

6 – Saturday PM: Urbina Bay

7 – Sunday AM: Darwin Research Station

8 – Sunday PM: Santa Cruz Highlands

9 – Monday AM: Beach Visit

10 – Galapagos Wrap Up: ICR Lecture, What It All Means

The Galapagos Islands: Evolution's Sacred Ground

Dr. Bohlin helps us understand the significance of the Galapagos Islands in the birth of the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin. Based on personal observation on these unique isolated islands, he explains why he is not convinced that the animals of these islands make a case for the evolution of all living things.

What’s So Important About the Galapagos Islands?

The Galapagos Islands are located in the Pacific Ocean, 650 miles off the coast of Ecuador in South America. They are isolated from any other island group or land form.

What’s so important about the Galapagos Islands? Here are four reasons:

First, because they are extremely isolated, the Galapagos Islands are home for dozens of species of both plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. The Galapagos Tortoise, for example, is the largest reptile found anywhere on the planet, and it lives longer than any animal known to man. The oldest is currently over 170 years old and lives in a zoo in Australia. Other unique animals include the Flightless Cormorant, the Marine Iguana, the Galapagos Penguin, and Darwin’s Finches.

There are even unique forms of plants including numerous forms of cacti and at least thirteen species of sunflower or daisy-like plants, one of which is a “sunflower” tree with bark and no tree rings.

Second, Darwin’s visit to the Galapagos for five weeks in 1835 on the HMS Beagle provided the starting point for the development of his theory of natural selection. Darwin had believed that God individually created each species. However, when he saw and studied variations between similar species from island to island, he correctly reasoned that a natural process made more sense. However, he eventually threw the baby out with the bathwater by reasoning that all species arose by a natural process through natural selection. Darwin’s Finches continue to be used as a textbook example of evolution today.

Third, similar to the Hawaiian Islands, the Galapagos Islands are volcanic. There is a geological hotspot deep in the

earth’s crust underneath the Pacific tectonic plate where magma flows to the surface. The hotspot remains stationary. However, as the Pacific plate moves from west to east, new volcanic islands begin to appear beneath the sea until they eventually poke above the surface to create a new Galapagos island. The youngest of the islands is the island of Fernandina which is the westernmost island. It is estimated geologically to be 800,000 years old. The oldest islands off to the east are estimated to be 3 million years old.

Fourth, two major ocean currents affect the climate of the Galapagos. First, from the south comes the Humboldt Current from Antarctica. Second, a deep-water current comes from the west. Upon reaching the islands, this cold deep water current brings with it a large supply of nutrients that feed the bottom of the food chain. Consequently the western waters of the Galapagos are colder and richer in marine life. These cold-water currents keep the temperature of the islands rather moderate for islands on the equator. In the Galapagos, the waters usually range from the 60s to the 70s F (15-22 degrees Centigrade), creating a more temperate climate for these equatorial islands.

All these factors combine for a most unique experience. The Galapagos have been a “poster child” for evolution ever since Darwin. We’ll see how well that holds up.

What Evidence of Evolution Do Darwin’s Finches Provide?



Click to see Ray's picture report of his trip to the Galapagos Islands

In May 2003 I had my first opportunity to visit the Galapagos Islands with a group led by several scientists from the Institute of Creation Research. Our goal was simply to see for ourselves many of the unusual animals and plants which so heavily influenced Darwin in the development of his theory of natural selection.

Look in almost any high school biology textbook and you will find some mention, if not a whole section, on what are now known as *Darwin's finches*. Darwin's finches are comprised of thirteen different species of small finches that arose from a single species that colonized the islands. The finches have adapted to differing food sources ranging from different size seeds, to insects, to cactus flowers, to even blood. The major feature of these finches that has changed is the size and shape of their beaks, but the differences are very subtle.

When we got our first glimpse of the finches we found out just how subtle the differences in beak size and shape really are. Without being able to compare two or three birds right next to each other, we found it virtually impossible to identify them. This observation confirms recent research by Princeton researchers Peter and Rosemary Grant. The Grants have come to the Galapagos Islands every year since the mid-1970s. They have banded, measured, and weighed literally thousands of finches of nearly all species.

Of the thirteen species, six are called ground finches, and they feed on different size seeds and cactus flowers. These

finches particularly differ almost exclusively in their beak size or shape. The Grants have found that these finches will "evolve" to larger and smaller beaks depending on the seed availability based on a wet or dry rainy season.

They also learned that most of these six ground finches will interbreed, and the hybrids are fertile, meaning they can also breed among themselves. This information is quite startling because it means that these six species may actually be one species. And the actual degree of change is quite miniscule. The average beak size may change by only a half a millimeter from dry to wet season. These six finches are also indistinguishable in their mtDNA.

These species are so similar in the field that some of the workers and guides from the Darwin Research Station on the Galapagos have a saying: "Only God and Peter Grant can identify Darwin's finches."

As an icon of evolution, the finches are far less than hoped for.{1} Yes, they do document the reality of natural selection. But the degree of selection is quite small and seemingly insignificant. They are a wonderful example of the ability God has given His creatures to be fruitful and multiply in a fallen world.

Why Save the Galapagos Tortoise?

The word Galapagos is Spanish for *saddle*. The islands were named for a particular variety of Galapagos tortoise known as the saddleback. These tortoises inhabit the drier islands and feed primarily on many varieties of prickly pear cactus. The saddle refers to a striking feature of their shell that forms a large space just above the neck that allows the tortoise to reach high to grab a succulent piece of cactus.

Since the islands were named for the saddleback tortoise they are a symbol of the islands. As I mentioned earlier, these

tortoises are the largest living reptiles. They are also the longest living animals in the world. There is a female Galapagos tortoise in a zoo in Australia by the name of Harriet. Harriet was reportedly taken from the Galapagos Islands by Charles Darwin himself. She eventually was taken to Australia and is reported to be 173 years old, born around 1830. This would make her the oldest living creature on earth.

Harriet is a dome tortoise as opposed to the saddleback variety. Dome tortoises eat low-lying grasses, vegetation and fruits. When Darwin came to the Galapagos Islands in 1835, there were approximately 300,000 tortoises on eleven islands. There are five different varieties on the largest island, Isabella. The five varieties are found associated with the five large volcanic craters where water accumulates and grass is abundant. The other ten varieties inhabited a specific island, one variety of tortoise per island.

The islands were a favorite stopping place for whaling ships and ships crossing the Pacific. Sailors would come on shore and round up twenty to thirty tortoises to be used as food on the long voyage. A tortoise could remain alive with little or no food or water for months, providing fresh meat for the long voyage.

In addition, as people began colonizing the islands, they brought with them rats and mice that would eat the tortoise eggs. Introduced goats and pigs competed with the tortoises for food. Consequently, the tortoise population has been reduced to around 20,000. Some of the specific island varieties have gone extinct. Lonesome George has become the symbol of the plight of the giant tortoise. He is the only remaining member of the tortoises from Pinta Island, and he seems to be refusing to breed.

The Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz Island in the Galapagos is involved in an extensive captive breeding program, trying to reestablish the tortoises in areas where

they have disappeared. But why? If evolution is true, then let natural selection take its course. If they survive, fine. If not, that's just life in an evolutionary world. In Genesis, however, we are commanded to have rule and dominion over God's creatures. Wherever practicable, we have a biblical mandate to preserve the creatures He has made in the environment He provided for them (Psalm 104). So the Darwin Research Station is unwittingly acting on a Biblical worldview.

Strange Creatures of the Galapagos

Though the Galapagos Islands are world famous, they didn't particularly impress Darwin when he first arrived. In his book, *Voyage of the Beagle*, he wrote, "Nothing could be less inviting than the first appearance. A broken field of basaltic lava, thrown into the most rugged waves, and crossed by great fissures, is everywhere covered by stunted, sunburnt brushwood, which shows little signs of life."{2}

Though we may disagree with Darwin on many of the conclusions he drew from his observations of the Galapagos wildlife, he was nonetheless an excellent observer and rather humorous reporter. For instance, one of the well-known inhabitants of the Galapagos is the marine iguana, the only lizard in the world to feed in the sea. Darwin described it this way,

> *"It is extremely common on all the islands throughout the group, and lives exclusively on the rocky sea-beaches, being never found, at least I never saw one, even ten yards from shore. It is a hideous-looking creature, of a dirty black colour, stupid, and sluggish in its movements."{3}*

Darwin aside, these creatures are fascinating. They feed on algae and seaweed close in to shore. They swim easily with a serpentine movement with their limbs tucked close to their body. Since the water is so cool, they need several hours to sun themselves before entering the water for breakfast. They

will only stay in the sea for about twenty minutes and never longer than an hour. When warming themselves, they lie perpendicular to the sun so their body is fully exposed to the sun. When maintaining their temperature they will face the sun directly and lift their chests off the ground to allow the sea breeze to provide ventilation.

The marine iguana's cousin, the land iguana eats cactus pads and leafy vegetation and never ventures toward the sea. They also didn't impress Darwin terribly much. He described them this way.

> *"We will now turn to the terrestrial species, . . . Like their brothers the sea-kind, they are ugly animals, of a yellowish orange beneath, and of a brownish red colour above: from their low facial angle they have a singularly stupid appearance. . . . In their movements they are lazy and half-torpid."*{4}

Evolutionists suggest that these two species derived from a common ancestor over ten to twenty million years ago (although the oldest island is only 3 million years old!). But we learned that these two species would interbreed on occasion. The hybrids live for only seven to eight of the usual forty years, and their eating habits are strangely intermediate. The hybrids will eat cactus but not leafy vegetation, and will eat seaweed and algae but only at low tide when they can scramble over the rocks to get it. They won't enter the water. This level of hybridization makes it unlikely they are as old as evolutionists suggest.

Evidence for Evolution on the Galapagos Islands?

Thus far we have reviewed some of the amazing animals and plants found on the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean. The mockingbirds, tortoises, and finches played a role in the

formulation of Darwin’s theory of natural selection. The Galapagos Islands and their varied and diverse wildlife continue to serve as examples of evolutionary change.

In my brief five-day visit to the Islands, I made a number of observations that cast doubt on the evolutionary significance of these islands.

Earlier this week we talked about Darwin’s finches. These thirteen finches most likely are descended from a flock of more than thirty finches that colonized the islands about 2 million years ago according to evolutionists. They vary considerably in their beak size and shape as they have adapted to different food sources. As much as these finches have been studied, there is still a great deal we don’t know.

For instance, we know nothing of the genetics of beak size and shape. It’s certain that beak size is a heritable trait, but just what the genetic cause of the variation is, we don’t know. As we said earlier, there may be as few as six actual species of finches on the islands, not thirteen. The changes in beak size and shape may simply have been due to genetic variation the original flock carried with them to the islands in the first place.

The changes between species are very small as we found out trying to identify them. The selection that has been documented varies only from dry to wet years and no overall trend has been observed. So Darwin’s finches are not much of an example of evolution after all.

Another strange creature on the Galapagos Islands is the flightless cormorant. Cormorants are birds that inhabit the shores of lakes, rivers, and oceans. They usually feed by diving into the water for fish. Cormorants will then perch above the waters surface and dry their feathers by holding their wings out for maximum air exposure. Flying requires dry wings.

The flightless cormorants of the Galapagos have wings so reduced that they are unable to fly at all. They catch fish by swimming in the water much as a penguin does using their large powerful feet for propulsion. The reduced wing size is probably due to a single mutation that short-circuits wing development in the cormorant chick. The change is indeed quite dramatic, but the change involves a loss of a feature, not the gain of a new adaptation. This is often the case in the origin of new adaptations. Something is lost, not gained. Evolution must be able to explain the gain of new features, not simply explain how an organism managed to survive when it lost an important structure. So even the dramatic case of the flightless cormorant is not real evidence for evolution.

The Galapagos are a naturalist's wonderland. They guard their mysteries in a shroud of isolation and time. They are a good example of the fact that there is much to learn about the world God created.

Notes

1. Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing 2000), p. 159-175.

2. Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Harvard Classics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 377-378.

3. Ibid, p. 390.

4. Ibid, p. 392.

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Christian Rumors

Madalyn Murray O'Hair

No doubt you've heard them and wondered if they were true. Stories about Madalyn Murray O'Hair's campaign against Christian radio, Janet Reno's definition of a cult or Charles Darwin's supposed deathbed conversion. Are they true or not?

Believe me—I see more than my share of these myths and rumors. Because of my public visibility and presence on various web pages, I probably get a lot more e-mail messages than most people do. So I probably see a higher percentage of myths and rumors than most. Yet, I am amazed at the number of rumors flying around the Internet.

And we get lots of phone calls at Probe from people wondering if various stories they have heard are true. Others forward e-mail messages they receive and ask if they are true, before they forward them to others.

Many of these messages are relatively harmless ones like the promise that you will get free M&Ms if you forward an e-mail message to someone. This apparently has mutated into the belief that IBM will send you a free computer if you forward a particular e-mail. Supposedly IBM is doing this because of a recent merger between Hewlett-Packard and Gateway. As my teenage daughter likes to say, "Yeah right!" Oh, and don't forget about the GAP offering free clothing because of a supposed merger with Abercrombie and Fitch.

Some other rumors are harmful to companies. One example would be the false rumor that an executive with Proctor and Gamble announced he was a Satanist on the *Sally Jesse Raphael Show*. The original rumor had this happening on *The Donahue Show*. And then there's the rumor that the designer Liz Claiborne told the *Oprah* audience that she donates profits to the Church of

Satan. None of these rumors are true, yet these e-mails still show up in Probe's inbox on a fairly regular basis.

In this article I want to address what I consider to be the major myths and rumors that are spread by the Christian community. With so many, I had to be selective; so I tried to focus on those persistent myths spread by Christians and some of the rumors which seem to nearly have a life of their own.

The most persistent rumor in the Christian community over the last few decades is the mistaken belief that atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair has been trying to ban religious broadcasting through petition RM 2493. Back in December 1974, there was a petition by Jeremy Lanaman and Lorenzo Milam to investigate radio stations with non-commercial educational licenses. The FCC unanimously rejected the petition in August 1975. But somehow the original information mutated into the current rumor that Madalyn Murray O'Hair was trying to remove Christian radio stations from the airwaves. The rumor wasn't true when she was alive, and certainly isn't true now. Nevertheless, the FCC has received millions and millions of bogus petitions. Let me state once again, the rumor isn't true and all of us should do what we can to stop the rumor.

Janet Reno, Enemy of Christians

I am trying to address what I consider to be the major myths and rumors that are spread by the Christian community. Many of these show up in e-mails, while others are repeated by Christian speakers and believed to be true, even though they are false.

One persistent rumor has been attributed to former Attorney General Janet Reno, who supposedly defines Christians as belonging to a cult. Let me quote from one variation of the e-mail.

> *Are you a cultist, ACCORDING TO JANET RENO?? . . . I*

> *certainly HOPE SO!! Attorney General Janet Reno, "A cultist is one who has a strong belief in the Bible and the Second Coming of Christ; who frequently attends Bible studies; who has a high level of financial giving to a Christian cause; who home schools their children; who has accumulated survival foods and has a strong belief in the Second Amendment; and who distrusts big government. Any of these may qualify a person as a cultist but certainly more than one of these would cause us to look at this person as a threat, and his family as being in a risk situation that qualified for government interference." Janet Reno, Attorney General, USA Interview on 60 Minutes, June 26, 1994 Do you qualify? Are you (as defined by the U.S. Attorney General) a threat? If any of these apply to you then you are!! This worries me. Does it worry you? Let's impeach her too!!! Everyone in this country "The land of the free" with computer access should copy this and send to every man, woman and child who can read.*

The quote is a hoax, but that didn't stop many Christians from trying to send this e-mail to nearly everyone they knew that had access to the Internet. Even now that Janet Reno is no longer Attorney General, this e-mail still circulates on a fairly regular basis.

Here are the facts. According to CBS, Janet Reno did not appear on *60 Minutes* in 1994. And it is doubtful that she would ever say something so inflammatory on this program or any other program. If she had, certainly it would have made front-page news to define millions of Christians as "cultists" and a "threat" to society.

The Office of Legislative Affairs in the Justice Department says they believe the quote first appeared in the August 1993 edition of the "Paul Revere Newsletter" published by the Christian Defense League in Flora, Illinois. The group has been described by some as a "far right hate group" holding to

racist and anti-Semitic views. The newsletter subsequently ran a retraction.

This is the unfortunate origin of this persistent e-mail message. Unknowingly, Christians circulated a rumor started by a group bent on attacking the Attorney General. They did so because Christians were attacked as being cultists, thus they spread a rumor that was not true.

Joshua's Long Day

One story that has been around for quite a long time is the myth of NASA discovering Joshua's long day. As the story goes, computers at the space agency discovered that as they went back in time the calculations did not work. Scientists doing orbital mechanics calculations to determine the positions of the planets in the future realized that they were off by a day. A biblical scholar in the group supposedly solved the question when he remembered the passage in Joshua 10:13 which says that "the sun stood still, and the moon stopped" for about a whole day.

Attempts to verify the story through the NASA Spaceflight Center in Maryland never materialized. But that didn't stop the spreading of the story that NASA found computer evidence of a missing day, which thereby verified the story of Joshua's long day.

As it turns out, the apparent origin of this story precedes NASA by many years. Harry Rimmer wrote about astronomical calculations recorded by Professor C.A. Totten of Yale University in his 1936 book *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*.{1} He quotes professor Totten, who said, "[A] fellow professor, an accomplished astronomer, made the strange discovery that the earth was twenty- four hours out of schedule!" He says that Professor Totten challenged this man to investigate the question of the inspiration of the Bible. Some time later, his colleague replied: "In the tenth chapter

of Joshua, I found the missing twenty-four hours accounted for. Then I went back and checked up on my figures, and found that at the time of Joshua there were only 23 hours and 20 minutes lost."

Researchers have gone back to Professor Totten's book *Joshua's Long Day and the Dial of Ahaz* (published in 1890) and have not been able to find the story of the astronomer. Instead they find his argument for the lost day based upon the chronology of Jesus Christ. He believed that Christ must have been born at the fall equinox and that the world was created four thousand years before Christ was born. He therefore calculates that the world was created on September 22, 4000 b.c. This day must be a Sunday, but using a calendar we find that this date was a Monday. Therefore, argues Professor Totten, Joshua's long day accounts for this "missing day."

As you can see, there is no story about NASA scientists, nor are there even skeptical astronomers. He makes a number of very questionable assumptions in order to supposedly "prove" Joshua's long day.

The story of NASA verifying Joshua's long day is a myth that has been passed down for decades and apparently has its origins from stories recorded even before NASA existed. The story is false.

Darwin's Deathbed Conversion

One of the most persistent stories is the *supposed* conversion of Charles Darwin and his *supposed* rejection of evolution on his deathbed. Christian speakers and writers retell this story with great regularity even though there is good evidence that Darwin remained an agnostic and an evolutionist to the day of his death. And even if the story was true (and it is not), its retelling is irrelevant to whether the theory of evolution is true. Darwin did not recant, and scientists would continue to teach the theory even if he had changed his mind.

The origin of this story can be traced to one “Lady Hope” who started the story after the death of Charles Darwin. On one occasion, Lady Hope spoke to a group of young men and women at the school founded by the evangelist D. L. Moody at Northfield, Massachusetts. According to her, Darwin had been reading the book of Hebrews on his deathbed. She said he asked for the local Sunday school to sing in a summerhouse on the grounds, and had confessed: “How I wish I had not expressed my theory of evolution as I have done.” She even said he would like her to gather a congregation since he “would like to speak to them of Christ Jesus and His salvation, being in a state where he was eagerly savouring the heavenly anticipation of bliss.”{2}

D. L. Moody encouraged Lady Hope to publish her story, and it was printed in the Boston *Watchman Examiner*. The story spread, and the claims have been republished and restated ever since.

The claims were refuted at the time and were subsequently addressed by Darwin’s son and daughter when they were revived years later. In 1918, Francis Darwin made this public statement:

> *Lady Hope’s account of my father’s views on religion is quite untrue. I have publicly accused her of falsehood, but have not seen any reply. My father’s agnostic point of view is given in my Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, Vol. I., pp. 304-317. You are at liberty to publish the above statement. Indeed, I shall be glad if you will do so.*

Darwin’s daughter, Henrietta, writing in the *Christian* for February 23, 1922, said she was present at her father’s deathbed. “Lady Hope was not present during his last illness, or any illness. I believe he never even saw her, but in any case she had no influence over him in any department of thought or belief. He never recanted any of his scientific views, either then or earlier. We think the story of his

conversion was fabricated in the U.S.A." She concluded by saying, "The whole story has no foundation whatever."

So that is the history of the story of Charles Darwin's deathbed conversion. It simply is not true.

Satanic Affiliations

Now I would like to conclude by looking at rumors linking various individuals and groups to Satan.

One individual linked to Satan is J. K. Rowling, the author of the best-selling *Harry Potter* series. Although we at Probe have expressed some concern over the books, we believe some of the criticism concerning her has been unfair. One purported quotation making the rounds comes from a satirical publication known as *The Onion*. Supposedly she says, "I think it's absolute rubbish to protest children's books on the grounds that they are luring children to Satan. People should be praising them for that! These books guide children to an understanding that the weak, idiotic Son of God is a living hoax who will be humiliated when the rain of fire comes." The quote goes on to use pornographic language.

Editors at *The Onion* made up the quote along with just about everything else in the article. The fictitious article includes mock quotes from blaspheming children planning satanic rituals. It claimed that fourteen million American children have joined the Church of Satan because of the *Harry Potter* series. Unfortunately, many Christians did not understand that the magazine is a blatantly satirical tabloid attempting to lampoon Christians concerned about the *Harry Potter* series.

A similar rumor surfaced in the 1980s when chain letters and petitions supposedly documented that the Procter & Gamble symbol was really a satanic symbol. According to the story, the company's historic "man in the moon" symbol was the devil.

And Procter & Gamble executives supposedly appeared on a TV talk show (Phil Donahue or Sally Jesse Raphael) to boast that their company gave some of their profits to the Church of Satan.

I think the lesson this week is that Christians should be more discerning. If you receive a letter or e-mail full of sensational information, you should ask yourself why this is the first you have heard about it. If Janet Reno or J.K. Rowling or an executive with Procter & Gamble said the things they allegedly said, wouldn't you have heard about it long before you received this letter or e- mail? If it sounds incredible, maybe that's because it isn't credible. If you have questions, feel free to write us or call us at Probe or check out the numerous Web sites dedicated to debunking myths, rumors, and urban legends. In the meantime, we should all learn to be more discerning.

Notes

1. Harry Rimmer, *The Harmony of Science and Scripture* (1936), 281-282.
2. Ronald W. Clark, *The Survival of Charles Darwin: a Biography of a Man and an Idea* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1985), 199.

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