



If by some miracle Charles Darwin lived until today he would have been 200 years old. It is no wonder that countries all over the world write and talk and celebrate this bicentenary year of the great man. World renowned evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins describes Darwin as "the most important being that the human species has produced."

This most important human being was originally reluctant to publish what turned

birth the Church of England owes you an apology for misunderstanding you and by getting our first reaction wrong, encouraging others to misunderstand you still." Sounds very much like Kevin Rudd's apology to the aboriginal people of Australia!

Charles Darwin gathered his evidence during a long and famous journey in the ship HMS Beagle. The journey took five sailing years. He was puzzled by the distribution of wildlife and fossils he collected on the voyage. With meticulous observation and innovative thinking Darwin came up with an explanation for the incredible variety of living things, namely that it was all due

to evolution and that this evolution was driven by the process of natural selection. By such a process organisms most suited to their environment survive and reproduce and pass on their competitive advantages to their offspring. Stated Darwin: "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone on cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."

# THE WORLD CELEBRATES CHARLES DARWIN

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out to be the most important book ever published. Darwin waited for twenty years after gathering evidence before publishing this book. So much did he fear the repercussions coming from the conventional and the orthodox. The title of the work was awkward to say the least: "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life."

How ridiculously funny it was when the church that led the charge against Darwin had to wait until just last year to issue an absurd apology to him. The statement read: "Charles Darwin, 200 years on from your

Darwin's findings about life and how it

goes the story of the sin of men and women today inheriting this original sin as though inheriting some genetic deficiency. Darwin had removed God from science!

Darwin was nervous about these implications and so he delayed the publication of his findings. He had in the meantime presented his findings to fellow scientists. He was encouraged when Alfred Russel Wallace had sent him an essay that described a similar idea. Alas! When the book eventually appeared in 1859 it shook the world.

Some churchmen did see merits in Darwin's position and tried to incorporate his ideas into their teaching. Others reviled him. One year after the publication of the book during a famous debate at Oxford University Bishop Wilberforce, a legendary speaker, tried to ridicule biologist Thomas Huxley by asking the latter whether it were through his grandfather or grandmother that he believed himself to be descended from a monkey. Huxley retorted that he was not ashamed to have a monkey for an ancestor, but that he would be ashamed to be related to a man who used his brilliant mind and oratory to cloud the truth.

The churches held science at bay for many decades. However, with the fuller understanding of genetics starting just a century ago natural selection became almost universally accepted. Darwin's ideas now



form the foundation of modern biology.

It is amusing to note that those who believe in creation are still haunting evangelist circles. During last year's presidential elections in America John McCain's running mate Sarah Palin wanted creationism taught in her native Alaska. Sarah is certain she was created by God. "If so", wrote one newspaper columnist "I reckon it must have been in the early hours when God was working in the dark, a little before he let there be light."

Much of the Christian opposition that remains today is built around the argument that all this 'design' and wonder could not have come by chance; that there must be an intelligent designer in the name of God. Richard Dawkins in his groundbreaking still best seller, God Delusion, refers to a lavishly distributed leaflet issued under the title: Life-How Did It Get Here? published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in sixteen languages. The intricate elegance of the flower Dutchman's Pipe (Aristolochia trilobata) moves Watchtower to ask: Did all of this happen by chance? Or did it happen by intelligent design?

Dawkins explains, "Design is not the only alternative to chance. Natural selection is a better alternative. Indeed design is not a real alternative at all because it raises an even bigger problem than it solves; who designed the designer?"

Darwin himself said: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely breakdown. But I can find no such case". Nobody since Darwin has found such a case.

A further blow to church thoughts came in early March this year when it was announced that research proved that monkeys and apes

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