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Charles Darwin.

Charles Darwin, who was born in 1809 and died in 1882, continues to be a powerful influence in the realm of thought. He lives in his works, chief of which are "The Origin of Species" (published in November, 1859), and "The Descent of Man" (1871). How vigorous is his life in the world of thought is illustrated by the present controversy resulting from the support accorded to the theory of evolution by Bishop Barnes.

The present controversy is trivial compared with that which raged in the days which immediately succeeded the publication of the "Origin of Species." Galileo found to his cost that nothing was more apt to create bitter opposition than the publication of a theory in real or apparent conflict with the accepted dogmas of religion.

In the case of Darwin, there was prejudice even wider than this. He was assailed from all quarters by upholders of orthodox religion, and he was also attacked by some scientists who, while recognising his main principle, could not accept its application in the way outlined by Darwin. "The Origin of Species" was denounced from every pulpit in Scotland and England; and it was bitterly assailed in other quarters. Yet it has lived, and, as the years have passed, it and "The Descent of Man" have won steadily increasing support, even from men prominent in the religious life of Britain. Huxley was Darwin's great champion, or, as he himself phrases it, "Darwin's bulldog."

As showing the bitterness of the controversy, it is worth recalling that, at the meeting of the British Association at Oxford in 1860, Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, referred insolently to Huxley's descent from ape, and he asked whether it was on the grandfather's or grandmother's side that he claimed the descent. Huxley's reply was: "A man has no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for a grandfather."

If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling, it would rather be a man - a man of restless and versatile intellect - who, not content with an equivocal success in his own sphere of activity, plunges into scientific questions with which he has no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeals to religious passion." With this reminder of the past and all its divisions of opinions before us, we can surely find material for thought in the fact that, within the world of organised religion to-day.