Hope for God's Creation makes a compelling argument for creation care that is consistent with theologically orthodox doctrines in a way that suggests kindness, love, and hope. Nonetheless, to people who do not need to be convinced, some of the book might seem repetitive and defensive. Spencer's repeated defense of Christianity against blame for environmental problems, his description of science, and his fear of the danger of liberal values may deter people concerned about the synergistic effects of environmental degradation, poverty, displacement, and other harms to human flourishing.

Spencer does not say much about the Christian mandate to care for the poor, typically a major part of any discussion about creation care theology. He also does not mention the differential effects of environmental degradation on poor or racial minorities. Neither does he talk about evangelical brothers and sisters around the world. There is no mention of the World Evangelical Alliance, Lausanne Movement, or the many Christian organizations working globally on creation care issues.

Spencer cites Francis Schaeffer to represent Christian environmental ethics, and Katherine Hayhoe, contemporary climate scientist and Christian, to represent current Christian environmental concepts. However, he does not cite many prominent theological writers or engage with some of the doctrines one might expect in this discussion, such as the Kingdom of God or the nature of the Church. Perhaps in a follow-up book, Spencer may address how orthodox doctrines transpose into action in a world in which the majority of Christians are not American. For his target audience, evangelical Christian Americans, though, this book is a valuable contribution.

Note

[1]Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–7, https://archive.org/details/HistoricalRootsOfEcologicalCrisisV.

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Evolutionary Theory

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ORIGIN STORY: The Trials of Charles Darwin by Howard Markel. W.W. Norton, 2024. xii + 352 pages, including endnotes and index. Hardcover; $35.00. ISBN: 9781324036746.

Howard Markel, a physician and prominent historian of medicine, has written several books about pediatrics; quarantines; epidemics; cocaine addiction; the Kellogg brothers of Battle Creek, Michigan; and the discovery of the structure of DNA. Extrapolating from that list, a book about Darwin is somewhat surprising; the only obvious connection is Darwin's generally poor health. *Origin Story* is shorter than its pagination implies, with generous margins, seventy pages of endnotes, wide spacing between lines of text, and many low resolution, black-and-white images that sometimes add nothing of value.

The narrative, however, is well written, often engaging, and heavily based on primary sources that are the raw materials from which historians create history—newspapers, magazines, published correspondence (especially from the massive modern edition of Darwin's letters[1]), and unpublished manuscripts. Markel draws effectively on contemporary descriptions of personality, appearance, and character, such as poet William Allingham's observation that Darwin was "tall, yellow, sickly, [and] very quiet" (p. 169).

What were Darwin's trials? His illnesses, concerns over how his theory would be received, and a deep anxiety to be fully credited for discovering natural selection. Markel provides a wealth of detail on each. Unsurprisingly, much attention is given to medical history, especially Darwin's famous maladies, which have inspired diverse diagnoses by qualified experts. While cautioning readers not to expect certainty, Markel favors the view that Darwin "likely suffered from systemic lactose intolerance" (p. 171), as evidenced by his constant battles with headaches, indigestion, nausea, and flatulence.

His poor health directly impinged on the legendary debate about evolution at Oxford in 1860 between Bishop Samuel Wilberforce and anatomist Thomas Henry Huxley, a close friend of Darwin whose nickname "Darwin's Bulldog" encapsulated his love of rhetorical conquest. Ironically, Darwin himself was absent. Why? "Instead of defending his controversial work to his colleagues at Oxford, the self-proclaimed invalid was at a water cure in Surrey" (p. 175). Historical literature devoted to the debate is voluminous. Markel has read everything important—one footnote by itself runs nearly two pages. His comprehensive narrative fairly presents the complexities facing historians. Which original sources are most reliable? What were the biases of their authors? Can we determine with any confidence what actually happened? Many historians have doubted the oft-repeated story that Wilberforce impugned Huxley by asking whether the ape in his family tree was his grandfather or his grandmother, inviting an equally insulting riposte from Huxley. The report in the influential literary magazine, *The Athenaeum*, did not contain this story, but in 2017, Richard England found a local newspaper account that did, effectively altering the historical landscape.[2] Markel's emphasis on this raucous exchange as an important moment in the reception of Darwin's theory is fully justified.

Equally commendable is his treatment of Darwin's dilemma, when Alfred Russel Wallace sent Darwin an essay outlining essentially the same theory of evolution by natural selection that Darwin had formulated twenty

years earlier—but had not yet published. Markel chastises Darwin, Charles Lyell, and Joseph Dalton Hooker for "the subtle devaluation of Wallace's essay" (p. 54) in their carefully orchestrated handling of it at a meeting of the Linnean Society and the subsequent publication in their journal, all designed to ensure Darwin's priority. However, the statement that "Wallace coined the term *Darwinism*" (pp. 65–66) in 1889 is not correct. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it was used in 1860 by Huxley and twenty years earlier in reference to the views of Charles's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, not to mention the title of Charles Hodge's 1874 book, *What Is Darwinism?*

Just one aspect of this book merits serious criticism: shallow and sometimes misleading coverage of Christian beliefs and their role in the history of science. Perhaps the author's bias is partly to blame. At one point, he describes "the doctrine of materialism" as a "foundational point of modern science" (p. 225), *ipso facto* ruling out any higher dimension(s) of reality, even for humans, although neither mechanistic neuroscience nor reductionist philosophy has solved the mind-body problem.

I do not begrudge Markel his point of view, but a better understanding of religious ideas could have made an otherwise excellent book even better. For example, he speaks of "the hidebound history of Christianity" (p. 8) as if theology never changes or engages changing science in productive conversation. Darwin's critics did not hold "that God created each species perfectly, in His image" (p. 43), a distinction reserved only for humans. The broad assertion that "natural theologists" (Markel's peculiar term for natural theologians) simply "shoehorned the 'facts' they discovered into awkward explanations of the Holy Scriptures," whereas Darwin and Hooker "were fearless in letting the data they collected carry them to logical, fact-based conclusions" (p. 27), is unwarranted. It has never been the job of theologians to discover scientific facts (even if some have done so), and the natural theologians of Darwin's day cannot be blamed for drawing speculative theological inferences from the science of the time, any more than we can blame Darwin for drawing speculative theological inferences from his own theory.

The most important natural theologian in Darwin's circle, the brilliant Anglican priest, polymath, and Cambridge professor William Whewell, was an accomplished mathematician with a profound respect for scientific facts, a few of which (related to the tides) he helped discover. His ideas about philosophy of science and natural theology strongly influenced Darwin, who quoted with implicit approval a passage from Whewell's *Bridgewater Treatise* (a major work on natural theology) opposite the title page of *On the Origin of Species*. Nevertheless, in the footnote accompanying this very point, Markel speaks dismissively of Whewell's "inner conflict on science and religion" concerning the possibility of life on other worlds, because "he argued [in another work] that human life existed only on earth, thanks to God's special relationship with his greatest creation, and railed against those who tried to usurp Judeo-Christian doctrines with unproved scientific theories" (note 56, p. 284). It is instructive that Michael J. Crowe, the leading expert on nineteenth-century debates about this issue, offers a very different assessment of Whewell's position. He "drew heavily on widely available scientific information," treating "the question of extraterrestrial life as a scientific question, rather than an issue that must be decided on religious grounds."[3]

Finally, Merkel's unqualified claim that Lyell's ancient earth was "blasphemous" (p. 22), when first proposed in the early 1830s, contradicts the fact that orthodox Christian scientists and clergy had for decades been finding ways to embrace it without denying biblical truths. Elsewhere he writes unambiguously about Lyell's "Christian faith" being opposed to human evolution (p. 96). This fails to capture the complexity of Lyell's religious beliefs. According to Martin Rudwick, although Lyell never actually "abandoned his earlier nominal allegiance to the liberal wing of the Church of England," by the 1850s Lyell "had become *de facto* a Unitarian after seeing the role of that denomination in America," which he had visited several times starting in 1841–1842.[4] He and his wife worshipped often at the Little Portland Street Unitarian Chapel in London. At the same time, he could not comprehend how the human mind could supervene the rest of nature, if it had arisen from such primitive forms of life. Even as a Unitarian, Lyell continued to believe in human pre-eminence and a providentialist interpretation of natural history inspired by natural theology, while vociferously attacking the biblical literalism of the scriptural geologists (intellectual ancestors of today's young-earth creationists). This theological perspective ultimately lay behind his lifelong struggle with common ancestry. Yet, Markel fails to mention Darwin's very similar quandary: "With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?"[5] Perhaps the author's materialist convictions are also evident here.

Despite my reservations, I recommend this book to anyone interested in Darwin's trials, which were very important parts of his life and career. The wealth of detail and the liberal use of primary sources cannot be ignored.

Notes

[1]Frederick Burkhardt et al., eds, *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, 30 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[2]Richard England, "Censoring Huxley and Wilberforce: A New Source for the Meeting that the *Athenaeum* 'Wisely Softened Down,'" *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 71 (2017): 371–84, https://doi.org/10.1098/rsnr.2016.0058.

[3]Michael J. Crowe, "William Whewell, the Plurality of Worlds,

and the Modern Solar System," *Zygon* 51 (2016): 431–49, 441, https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12265.
[4]Martin Rudwick, "Lyell, Charles," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 34, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford University Press, 2004), 856.
[5]Darwin to William Graham, 3 July 1881, Darwin Correspondence Project, "Letter no. 13230," accessed 15 January 2025, https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-13230.xml.

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THE SACRED CHAIN: How Understanding Evolution Leads to Deeper Faith by Jim Stump. HarperOne, 2024. 261 pages. Hardcover; $29.99. ISBN: 9780063350946.

Jim Stump has served as the host of the *Language of God* podcast for BioLogos since 2019. Many ASA members, including myself, have been interviewed by Stump over the past half-decade. I have frequently interacted with Stump through our common work with BioLogos, both in his role as vice president of the organization and as host for its podcast.

In this book, Stump steps from behind his microphone and tells his own story. His voice sounds the same written as it does spoken. His methods are also the same: he continues to gather evidence through interviews. But in this book, Stump uses his feet as well as his voice, as he travels to about a dozen locations throughout America, Europe, and Africa, combining the data-driven experiences of research with those of a pilgrim searching for relics. These relics are ancient genes and bones, which tell a story of the transition from animal to human.

Stump's travelogue starts in a board room meeting years ago, which resulted in his departure from the Christian university where he had taught. He writes that his "crime" was believing that "human beings evolved over time" (p. 2). In the rest of the book, Stump speaks to us outside the board room, as he wrestles with the evidence for deep time and human evolution, all in the context of his personal philosophy in which science and faith do not only co-exist but also cooperate and co-inhere.

This is a book about a person of faith accepting science, not about a scientist becoming a person of faith (for those stories, turn to Francis Collins and Sy Garte). Stump's story is divided into five parts, with short chapters that read easily, interspersed with black-and-white illustrations by his daughter, Sloan Stump.

The first part is titled "Bible," although it might be titled "Church," because the first chapter focuses on interpretation rather than the Bible itself. Its centerpiece is not quotations, but social science data: for example, a large graph showing the increased acceptance of evolution over time (p. 20). Stump contrasts this data with a personal visit to the Ark Encounter theme park, which is built around a young-earth interpretation of Genesis.

Stump concludes the first part by suggesting that there are ways to read Genesis other than with wooden literalism. To support this claim, he quotes C.S. Lewis on how the "human qualities of the raw materials show through" (p. 54) in scripture. Stump recalls standing over Lewis's grave as a sort of anticlimax: "Nothing mystical or magical happened. … But a pilgrimage like ours to Oxford put flesh and blood on our idea of C.S. Lewis. He was a real guy" (p. 56). Likewise, Stump argues that scripture shines with God's truth despite its "human qualities."

The patience of the Creator is the subject of the next three sections: "Time," "Species," and "Soul." Stump uses vivid metaphors to illustrate the depths of time. One of these is "God's Weekly Planner for Creation," which shows the deep timespan of creation—if the billions of years of natural history were mapped to a seven-day week in a planner, then "all the events that interest us [humans] would be packed into the last hour of the week" (p. 67). A second metaphor is a stack of baseball cards as tall as the Washington Monument, which shows "there are 120,000 generations between us" and the first ancestors of genus *Homo* (p. 126).

In what becomes almost a running joke, his travel plans are repeatedly thwarted. Stump remains "philosophical," almost Stoic, as he retells these events. A vivid section in the middle of the book occurs when Stump finally reaches one of his destinations in France, seeing for himself cave paintings of mammoths in a cave where bears had scratched up the walls. "The difference between [the paintings] and what the hibernating bears left behind is shockingly obvious" (p. 135). The random bear-claw scratches are natural—but the graceful pigment-strokes left by human artists are something else entirely.

As a reader, I want to spend more time thinking about why the paintings look the way they do, and what it means that humans create beauty, while animals can embody it. As a scientist, I wonder what it means that the oldest such paintings were discovered in Indonesia, not Europe. But to address these questions, we are going to need a bigger book. As Stump says himself, the goals of his book must be more modest, because "the beauty and complexity of art and literature have to be experienced in their entirety. That experience can't be summed up in words without massive reduction in meaning" (p. 91).

Yet Stump has no choice but to sum up his reactions in words. Many of his reactions can be aligned with ancient philosophers: he reacts to his woes like Boethius did (who wrote philosophically about his unjust imprisonment) and Stump builds from a material, even chemical, view of the evolution of the universe like Lucretius and Epicurus did (although Stump builds to a Christian theology that