



Retire Darwin Day?

S. Joshua Swamidass 

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This article is by Jonathan Schulz, a Young Earth Creationist and a LCMS Lutheran. When we first launched the Peaceful Science forum, I invited him to be a moderator, and he has been with us ever since. Jonathan runs a forum, [Creation/Evolution Debate](#), and a blog where he [first posted](#) this article. I was impressed by the balanced perspective he offered on [Darwin Day](#). He makes reasonable request to retiring the holiday, and I think this request merits serious consideration. He has a point. Science is much bigger than Darwin. So is [evolutionary science](#). Without disparaging Darwin's many contributions, a more "inclusive origins dialogue" might place less focus on idolizing or demonizing him. This question has come up before ([here](#) and [here](#)). Should we retire Darwin Day?

February 12th might look like an ordinary day on the calendar, but this date—the birthday of Charles Darwin—has been designated an unofficial holiday dedicated to the celebration of science. This unofficial holiday has been dubbed "[Darwin Day](#)." In this article, we will take a closer look at the life and work of the man behind Darwin Day and what exactly this celebration represents.

First, let's take a look at the person of Charles Darwin. Darwin remains a controversial figure—sometimes demonized on one side of the origins aisle and sometimes idolized on the other. The truth is that Charles Darwin, like all of us, had virtues *and* vices. In spite of having some racist ideas, [Darwin supported the abolition of slavery](#) and his racist beliefs were [less pronounced](#) than was common for his time. Also, Darwin was not solely responsible for the [religious and social problems](#) fueled by evolutionary theory. In fact, Darwin [had neglected to publish his research](#) for many years due to concerns over evolution's sociological and theological implications. It is important to note that the destruction of Christianity was not Darwin's motive or goal when formulating his theories.

Next, let's examine Darwin's scientific research. [Darwin's research did have some positive impacts](#). The theory of [microevolution](#)—the idea that the traits of a species can change to an extent as the species adapts to its environment—provided answers for many biological questions and is well supported by the evidence. Microevolution is important to the paradigms of creation science, as it shows how all of the species we see today could have originated from the species brought on the ark during Noah's Flood. Ironically enough, many [creationists could also be called evolutionists in that they agree with microevolution](#). However, to be fair, many of my fellow creationists would probably be more comfortable with terms

such as "adaptation" or "speciation" which have more specific nuances.

However, creationists and evolutionists decidedly part ways when evolutionists extrapolate microevolution across a timeline of millions of years, coming up with what we will call "macroevolution." Macroevolution is the hypothesis that microevolutionary changes are unlimited and can gradually add up over the generations to ultimately transform one kind of organism into another. Unlike microevolution, macroevolution *cannot* be directly observed. Ultimately, Darwin is the father of both macroevolution and microevolution, and the varied conclusions drawn from his research are still a cause of controversy today.

Finally, let's analyze Darwin's overall impact. Darwin's work had a huge effect on the way many people think about science and theology, and laid the foundation for a new way of viewing the world. His ideas led to the near deification of naturalistic science in the popular imagination, igniting one of the most heated debates in the history of faith and science. In this way, [Darwin's ideas have had a radical impact on society and modern thought](#). Ultimately, even if Darwin isn't considered one of the greatest scientists, he remains one of the most influential.

When choosing a scientist to honor with an unofficial holiday, however, Charles Darwin remains a controversial choice. The question is posed: "Why do we not observe 'Einstein Day,' 'Galileo Day,' or 'Linnaeus Day'?" Why choose *Darwin's* birthday for the celebration of science? My guess is that Darwin was not chosen for his scientific accomplishments, but rather because he has become an icon of atheism. As Richard Dawkins wrote in his book [The Blind Watchmaker](#): "Although atheism may have been logically tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." For many, Darwin and evolution represent the arrival of science as the ultimate authority in our modern age and the final vindication of atheism.

Ultimately, it is good to take a balanced view of Charles Darwin who, like all of us, had his accomplishments and shortcomings. Darwin is not a devil to be despised anymore than he is an idol to be venerated. Still, we need to re-evaluate the purpose and value of Darwin Day. Choosing Darwin as the namesake for an unofficial scientific holiday does more to alienate those who disagree with Darwin's macroevolutionary conclusion than it does to elevate good research.

In the journey toward a more gracious and inclusive origins dialogue, perhaps retiring Darwin Day could be a small but worthwhile step that we are all willing to take.

References

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