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Darwinism and Its Discontents

This book presents an ardent defense of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution against its many critics by one of the leading experts on this subject. Offering a clear and comprehensive exposition of the thinking of Darwin, Michael Ruse brings the story up to date, examining important issues such as the origins of life, the fossil record, the mechanism of natural selection, and rival theories such as punctuated equilibrium, the story of human evolution (including the recently found "hobbits," *Homo floresiensis*), fraud in biological science, literary approaches to evolution, and the philosophical and religious implications of Darwinism, notably a discussion of Creationism and its modern-day offshoot, Intelligent Design theory. Ruse draws on the most recent discoveries but writes with a minimum of jargon. His book will appeal to many readers, from professional biologists to concerned citizens who worry that Darwinism is a naturalistic religion that is forced on schoolchildren in the face of their own deeply held Christian convictions. Openly revealing his own beliefs, Ruse aims throughout to present information and critical tools so that readers can make informed decisions for themselves.

Michael Ruse is one of the world's leading authorities on the history and philosophy of Darwinian evolutionary theory. He is the author of many books; his most recent book with Cambridge University Press is *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? The Relationship between Science and Religion* (2001). A Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, he has been a Herbert Spencer Lecturer at Oxford University and a Gifford Lecturer at Glasgow University, and he has also held Guggenheim and Isaak Walton Killiam fellowships.

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*For David Castle
Stephen Haller
Jean Lachapelle
Eduardo Wilner*

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Acknowledgments

I have been thinking about the ideas in this book for about four decades and have decided that the time has come to put them all together. In a way, this book is a kind of prequel (as they call it in the cinema) to my earlier book with Cambridge University Press, *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian?* Many people told me that they enjoyed and agreed with that book, but that they could not see how any right-thinking person could be a Darwinian. This is my answer to those people. The days have passed when I could make a trilogy, and follow with a book about how one must be a Christian, but I hope nevertheless the reader will sense my respect for a religion that I do not share. I have been trying out the ideas in this book for many years, most recently in my Gifford Lectures given at Glasgow University in 2001; in my Herbert Jennings Lectures given at Baylor University in 2003; and in my Robert Grant Lecture given at University College, London, in 2005. I have provoked enough discussion to take comfort in something Charles Darwin once said, namely, that everyone likes a false hypothesis because it is so much fun refuting it. Some of this material has been privately printed, and I have felt free to reuse it.

A book is a bit like an iceberg. The author's name is on the cover, but ninety percent is below the surface, with the names of many others who deserve credit. First and foremost, I want to pay my respects to the late Terry Moore, my editor for many years at Cambridge University Press, who died of cancer at too early an age. It was his idea that I write this book, and it was he who helped me find the tone and topics. Wherever Terry is now, I hope he can take time off from singing hymns or shoveling coal to read what he set in motion.

I never write a book without three people at my shoulder, encouraging and criticizing. The first is David Hull, philosopher of science and longtime mentor, now retired from Northwestern University; the second is Robert J. Richards, philosopher and historian of biology at the University of Chicago; and the third is Edward O. Wilson, entomologist, sociobiologist, and brilliant popular writer of Harvard University. Our shared love of evolutionary ideas infuse this volume. Here at Florida State University, many friends and colleagues have been ready sources of information and help. These include Joseph McElrath, who fed me all sorts of useful items about Darwinism and literature; Dean Falk, whose brilliant work on the “hobbit” (*Homo floresiensis*) is in itself a complete argument for the importance of Darwinian ways of thinking; Zach Ernst in the Philosophy Department, whose thinking is so much more rigorous than mine; Joseph Travis, whose knowledge of evolution is equaled only by his fund of good stories about individual evolutionists; and John Kelsay, who has taken time from his work on the Islamic concept of war to discuss with me many of the theological and metaphysical issues that I cover in this book.

My various assistants have been invaluable. Special thanks go to Charlie Alt, who did so much of the legwork. Martin Young did the artwork. At Cambridge University Press, Beatrice Rehl took over after Terry’s death and has been a constant encouragement, and once again Russell Hahn converted a manuscript mess into something that can be read with ease. At home, my family – Lizzie, the kids, the dogs, the cats, and most of all the ferrets – made sure I did not become totally obsessed with this project.

Finally, let me say what a joy it is to dedicate the book to David Castle, Stephen Haller, Jean Lachapelle, and Eduardo Wilner. They were my four doctoral students at the University of Guelph in my final decade of teaching there (1990–2000). They could not be four more different people, and I could not be more proud of each and every one.