

A widespread misconception is the ideas that Darwin was the originator of the Evolutionary Theory. This is not the case at all. Charles Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, had written a book presenting Evolution as the origin of all types of life. About the same time the famous French scientist, Lamarck, wrote a series of books maintaining that all life had developed from a simple beginning and that a central purpose had directed the development in such a way that all present ^{later} types of life would develop from it. Just a few years before Darwin wrote a leading English journalist and publisher issued an anonymous work which he called "The Vestiges of Creation." This book was widely discussed. Charles Darwin studied it carefully and made comments on just about every page. Thomas Henry Huxley wrote a scathing review in which he endeavored to tear it to pieces. Disraeli, in one of his novels presented a character as stating dogmatically: "Don't you realize that man has developed from a frog or a jelly fish or something like that?" Scientists tended to ridicule the work, but it aroused great popular interest. The philosopher, Herbert Spencer, supported a sort of Lamarckian Evolution long before the name of Darwin was ever mentioned in this connection. People were seeking an escape from Genesis, and what was needed was the name of a thoroughly recognized scientist to support it. Scientists felt that no explanation of the universe without purpose in it could be found. If there were a purpose that directed the universe then it was natural to believe in the Bible that claimed to be written by God the Creator. Only if purpose could be eradicated could Genesis be reasonably abandoned.

Darwin's theory was not an original presentation of a theory of Evolution. It was an explanation of how Evolution could occur without any element of purpose being involved. His subject was not Evolution but development of species ^{but} ~~by~~ means of pure ^{by} accidental development resulting from the survival of the fittest. This idea of a struggle for existence resulting from survival of the fittest had been advanced by several others during the previous half-century. Darwin would seem to have come to the idea independently and he differed from the previous writers by