**Darwin—the Hero against Racism?**

by [Bodie Hodge](https://answersingenesis.org/bios/bodie-hodge/) on April 19, 2017

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**Did Darwin Try to Free Us from Racism?**

More and more, I hear people claim that Darwin tried to rescue the Western world from a racist mindset. I wonder if these people read Darwin’s thoughts on the subject? Let’s just start with the title of Darwin’s first book on “favoured races”: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection for the Preservation of Favoured Races*. Though the book focuses on animal evolution, Darwin does briefly comment on the supposed races of man in the preface to the sixth edition.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The entirety of Darwin’s work in his follow-up book, *The Descent of Man*, is predicated on a racist view. Racism is intrinsic to an evolutionary worldview. Man, through evolution, deviated into variant races. This is the teaching of Darwin. It is how Social Darwinists (those who take Darwin’s ideas and apply them socially) justified many racist views in their day. Darwin argued that the civilized Caucasian race was clearly the most evolved.

In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin said:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes, as Professor Schaaffhausen has remarked, will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Social Darwinism has played the “race card” for over a century. For example, Benjamin Tillman, [Adolf Hitler](https://answersingenesis.org/sanctity-of-life/the-results-of-evolution/), and [Margret Sanger](https://answersingenesis.org/sanctity-of-life/eugenics/what-about-eugenics-and-planned-parenthood/) all used Darwin’s views on race; and his views still persist today. Because Benjamin Tillman has been in the news recently, let’s evaluate his Social Darwinistic views and application of Darwin’s ideas to Clemson University.

For those who don’t know, Tillman was instrumental in founding Clemson University. Tillman was also a racist and proud of it. Because of this, in recent years, people have been calling for his name to be removed from a building named for him [Tillman Hall] at Clemson.[[3]](#footnote-3) Tillman once argued, “The old struggle of survival of the fittest is beginning . . . and it is not saying too much to predict that the negro must do better or ‘move on.’”[[4]](#footnote-4) His views were squarely in line with his Darwinist understandings. In *The Descent of Man*, even Darwin argued that the most advanced cultures were the result of Anglo-Saxons immigration.[[5]](#footnote-5)

When someone separates or groups “blacks,” “whites,” and other supposed races into different categories, they are ultimately applying Darwin’s understanding of race. For example, if a person with light skin applies for a scholarship at a college and is rejected because of “race,” that categorization is based on Darwin’s view, not a biblical view. Yes, racism existed before Darwin (a result of sin), but with Darwinism, it exploded.

It has only been in recent times that some evolutionists are rejecting Darwin’s view and now borrowing from the biblical view that all people are of one race—the human race/Adam’s race. A recent article states

Race is perhaps the worst idea ever to come out of science.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The modern concept of “race” didn’t come out of *science*, which is a methodology; instead, it came out of previously held racist views fueled in large part by evolution over 150 years ago. The article continues:

That’s not to deny that people vary in skin color and other visible traits. Whether you’re dark or light, lanky or stocky depends in part on the sunlight intensity and climate in the regions where your ancestors lived.[[7]](#footnote-7)

This argument, presented in the article, is a rehash of Darwin’s oversimplified and erroneous view.[[8]](#footnote-8) Allow me to explain. In Africa, at the equator, people are dark skinned. As we move away from the equator to the Middle East, people have a more middle brown skin tone. Much farther from the equator, in places like Scandinavia, people have a very light brown skin tone. Thus, the evolutionary position is that more direct sunlight results in darker-skinned people.

Malaysian People. Image by Trish pt7, via [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iban_girls.jpg).

Inuit People. Image by Ansgar Walk, via [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inuit-Kleidung_1.jpg).

However, this simplistic view fails extensively when we move over in longitude. Malaysia, which is very close to the equator, has people that can be very light brown skinned. Moving a significant distance from the equator to Tasmania, the Aborigines, Australia’s original inhabitants, were extremely dark. Go much farther in latitude to Alaska, and we find that the Inuit can be an olive shade to middle brown. But there are several factors which determine skin shades in relation to geographic location. Genetics (especially in isolated homogeneous cultures), diet (especially those high in vitamin D),[[9]](#footnote-9) or possibly even colder ambient air temperature, (which causes people to wear more clothes),[[10]](#footnote-10) are or may also be factors, so pinning most skin shading on sunlight intensity (which may be a minor factor) is a gross oversimplification. Without knowing about genetics, Darwin developed this false view, which still carries over to modern times.

Graves—who is the author of several books, including 2005’s *The Race Myth*—said a key turning point occurred when Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. From his travels around the world, Darwin realized that there was no scientific reason to divide people into four races. It made just as much sense to him, he wrote later, to divide them into anywhere between two and 63 races.[[11]](#footnote-11)

But not *one*. Darwin clearly believed in a racist view of no fewer than two races and potentially more. He also presumed that the top race (Caucasian in his view) would no doubt exterminate the lesser races and even many apes in the struggle to survive. Thus for Darwin, it would open the door for the Caucasians to evolve to an even higher state without going backward on the scale.

Biblically, there is [one race, the human race](https://answersingenesis.org/racism/are-there-really-different-races/). Recently, the field of genetics has been catching up with the Bible. Genetically, there is only one race. You need to understand that this came as a surprise to many evolutionists. However, many evolutionists still live contrary to this (e.g., DNA codiscoverer [James Watson](https://answersingenesis.org/racism/dna-pioneer-in-evolutionary-racism-storm/), though he apologized for his public comments, still believes in higher and lower races of man).[[12]](#footnote-12)

Government forms still persist in categorizing citizens into races (e.g., Caucasian). Even the press, general public, polls, and so on still divide people by “race.” When are people going to start answering the question correctly?

When asked about race, it almost makes you want to answer, “I’m part of the human race.”[[13]](#footnote-13) And let that be that.

<https://answersingenesis.org/racism/darwin-hero-against-racism/>

1. “In 1813 Dr. W. C. Wells read before the Royal Society ‘An Account of a White Female, part of whose skin resembles that of a Negro’; but his paper was not published until his famous ‘Two Essays upon Dew and Single Vision’ appeared in 1818. In this paper he distinctly recognises the principle of natural selection, and this is the first recognition which has been indicated; but he applies it only to the races of man, and to certain characters alone. After remarking that negroes and mulattoes enjoy an immunity from certain tropical diseases, he observes, firstly, that all animals tend to vary in some degree, and, secondly, that agriculturists improve their domesticated animals by selection; and then, he adds, but what is done in this latter case ‘by art, seems to be done with equal efficacy, though more slowly, by nature, in the formation of varieties of mankind, fitted for the country which they inhabit. Of the accidental varieties of man, which would occur among the first few and scattered inhabitants of the middle regions of Africa, some one would be better fitted than others to bear the diseases of the country. This race would consequently multiply, while the others would decrease; not only from their in ability to sustain the attacks of disease, but from their incapacity of contending with their more vigorous neighbours. The colour of this vigorous race I take for granted, from what has been already said, would be dark. But the same disposition to form varieties still existing, a darker and a darker race would in the course of time occur: and as the darkest would be the best fitted for the climate, this would at length become the most prevalent, if not the only race, in the particular country in which it had originated.’ He then extends these same views to the white inhabitants of colder climates. I am indebted to Mr. Rowley, of the United States, for having called my attention, through Mr. Brace, to the above passage of Dr. Wells' work.” Charles Darwin, “An Historical Sketch of the Progress of Opinion on the Origin of Species, Previously to the Publication of the First Edition of This Work,” preface to *On the Origin of Species,* 6th ed. (London: J. Murray, 1859). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Charles Darwin, “Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals,” chap. 3 in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex,* in *Great Books of the Western World,* Vol .49, ed. Robert Hutchins, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Tyler Kingkade, “Clemson Faculty Push To Stop Honoring Unapologetic Racist Benjamin Tillman,” Huffington Post, July 6, 2015, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/06/clemson-faculty-tillman_n_7736530.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Social Darwinism, *Dictionary of American History,* The Gale Group, 2003, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/social-darwinism#1G23401803913>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Charles Darwin, “Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals,” 326–328. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Faye Flam, “Science’s Biggest Blunder,” Bloomburg, October 3, 2016 (updated October 11, 2016), <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-10-03/science-s-biggest-blunder>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Charles Darwin, “Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals,” 336. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Fariba Kolahdooz et al., “Dietary Adequacy of Vitamin D and Calcium Among Inuit and Inuvialuit Women of Child-Bearing Age in Arctic Canada: A Growing Concern,” *PLOS One,* November 4, 2013, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3817094/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Avery Foley, “Did Clothing Help Determine Our Shade of Skin?,” Answers in Genesis, <https://answersingenesis.org/human-body/did-clothing-help-determine-our-shade-of-skin/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Faye Flam, “Science’s Biggest Blunder.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “James Watson Complains That His Racist Remarks Have Affected His Career,” IFL Science, accessed February, 21, 2017, <http://www.iflscience.com/health-and-medicine/james-watson-sell-nobel-prize/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Many government forms have recently been changed to more frequently ask for ethnic group affiliation rather than race. It should also be pointed out that sometimes medical surveys ask this information in order to be able to target genetic diseases that are more prevalent among certain people groups (e.g. Tay-Sachs Disease). Therefore, in some instances, it is probably beneficial to provide as much ethnic background information as possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)