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Darwinism and Evolution: Three Nova Scotia Religious Newspapers Respond, 1860-1900

EVOLUTIONARY SCIENCE was one of the most vigorously debated topics among British and North American intellectuals during the latter half of the 19th century. By proposing a natural mechanism that could explain the origin and adaptation of species, Charles Darwin intensified the assault on the traditional Biblical interpretation of creation. While historians have examined the impact of Darwinism and evolutionary science in Great Britain and the United States,¹ they have only partially considered the response in Canada. Over the past 15 years, Pat Roome, Robert Taylor, Brian McKillop, Carl Berger, Ramsay Cook and Michael Gauvreau have made a valuable contribution to understanding the nature of the Darwinian controversy in Canada.² Their studies, however, have given little attention to developments in the Maritimes.³ Moreover, when discussing the religious reaction,

- 1 One of the best books on the religious reaction is James Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms With Darwin in Great Britain and America 1870-1900* (London, 1979). Jon H. Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America: Protestant Intellectuals and Organic Evolution* (Madison, 1988) provides the most comprehensive discussion of the impact of Darwinism and evolutionary science on American Protestant intellectuals. See also David Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter Between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought* (Grand Rapids, 1987) for a re-evaluation of how American evangelicals responded to the Darwinian challenge.
- 2 See P. Roome, "The Darwin Debate in Canada 1860-1880", in L.A. Knafla *et. al.* eds., *Science, Technology, and Culture* (Calgary, 1976); R.J. Taylor, "The Darwinian Revolution: The Response of Four Canadian Scholars", Ph.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1976; A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Kingston and Montreal, 1979); Carl Berger, *Science, God, and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto, 1983); Ramsey Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian Canada* (Toronto, 1985); Michael Gauvreau, "History and Faith: A Study of Methodist and Presbyterian Thought in Canada 1820-1940", Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1985 and Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada From the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Kingston and Montreal, 1991).
- 3 Recently Barry Moody has briefly discussed how Acadia and Maritime Baptists responded to scientific controversy between the 1850s and the 1870s. He argues that academics and theologians at Acadia, as well as Baptists generally, debated rationally and open-mindedly with the new scientific ideas. Moreover, a broad-based outlook stemming from an undeveloped "collective orthodoxy" allowed them to accommodate easily these ideas. See Barry Moody, "Breadth of Vision, Breadth of Mind: The Baptists and Acadia College", in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher*

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they did not provide comprehensive analysis of denominational responses. Their remarks were based principally on the views of a small number of Protestant intellectuals at the university level. Thus, there is no extensive examination of denominational responses equal to those done in the United States and Britain. Insights into this neglected area of research can be gained by examining how three of Nova Scotia's religious newspapers, the *Christian Messenger* (Regular Baptist),⁴ the *Wesleyan* (Methodist)⁵ and the *Presbyterian Witness*,⁶ responded to Darwinism

Education (Kingston and Montreal, 1988), pp. 25-28. Further evidence of this "breadth of mind" appears in Rawlyk's "J.M. Cramp and W.C. Kierstead: the Response of Two Late Nineteenth Century Baptist Sermons to Science, in P. Bogaard, ed., *Profiles of Science and Society in the Maritimes Prior to 1914* (Fredericton, 1990), pp. 119-34. As Bogaard explains, this collection focuses on "the interplay between science and society" generally in the Maritimes. Two other related pieces of interest in this collection are Suzanne Zeller, "George Lawson: Victorian Botany, the Origin of Species and the Case of the Nova Scotia Heather", pp. 51-62 and Leslie Armour, "McCulloch, Lyall, Schurman, and Kierstead: Four Philosophic Responses to Science, Religion and the Unity of Knowledge", pp. 101-16.

- 4 The Regular Baptists of Nova Scotia emerged from the disintegration of the New Light-Congregational Church during the late-18th and early-19th century. Of central importance in their theology was the acceptance of only people who had been first "regenerated by the Spirit" into the Church. In contrast to the Free-Will Baptists, who were predominant in New Brunswick, the Regular Baptists also upheld the Calvinist doctrines of "particular election, limited atonement, and closed communion". A growing interest in education and the belief that a weekly religious newspaper would promote the Church's interests more effectively led to the publication of the first issue of the *Christian Messenger* in February 1837. Rev. Stephen Selden became the editor in 1856 and remained so until his retirement in 1884 led Rev. E.M. Saunders to succeed him. Saunders' subsequent sale of the paper preceded the amalgamation of the *Christian Messenger* and the *Christian Visitor* to form the *Messenger and Visitor* which was published out of Saint John in 1885. See Barry Moody, ed., *Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada* (Windsor, 1980); S. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, 1972), p. 171; *The Christian Messenger*, 19 August 1868 and "What is a Baptist Church", *Christian Messenger*, 1 December 1875; "Friends and Subscribers of The *Christian Messenger*", and "Origin of the Proprietorship of The *Christian Messenger*", *Christian Messenger*, 5 November 1884; "An Additional Word", *Christian Messenger*, 31 December 1884; and "The Consolidated Paper", *Christian Messenger*, 24 December 1884.
- 5 Nova Scotia's Methodists traced their roots to a group of Wesleyan Methodists from Yorkshire, England who settled on or near the Chignecto Isthmus between 1772 and 1775. As followers of John Wesley, they promoted an evangelical Arminian version of Christianity that stressed the universality of atonement, the necessity of rebirth, the witness of the Spirit, and Christian perfection (a uniquely Methodist doctrine that called on followers to aim each day of their life for a sinless condition of holiness). Like the Regular Baptists, Maritime Methodists' interest in education prompted them to organize their own religious press for the benefit of their followers. After several ill-fated attempts, the *Wesleyan's* first issue appeared in 1849. During the period of this study, ten ministers occupied the editor's chair. See John Reid, *Mount Allison University: A History, Vol. 1, 1843-1914* (Toronto, 1984), p. 6; "A Presbyterian Testimate of Evangelical Arminianism" [*Presbyterian Witness*], *The Wesleyan*, 19 February 1891; "The Evangelical Movement of the Eighteenth Century", *Wesleyan*, 12 March 1891; Ahlstrom, *History* (New Haven, 1972), pp. 325-327; for information on Methodist educational efforts see Reid, *Mount Allison*, pp. 3-6, 14-16, 18-25, 32-33, 74 and 108; Gauvreau, "History and Faith", pp. 46-64; on the establishment of a religious press see D.W. Johnson, *History of Methodism in Eastern British North America* (Sackville, 1925), pp. 392-6; Gertrude Tratt, *Tratt's List of Nova Scotia Newspapers* (Halifax, 1979), pp. 106-8; on the editors, see Johnson, pp. 393-5 and Tratt, pp. 107-8.
- 6 During the second half of the 18th century, New England Planters and Scottish immigrants comprised the first Presbyterians to arrive in Nova Scotia. Their theology, which stemmed from the Reform

and evolutionary science in the second half of the 19th century. In this study the opinions of the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* are discussed from 1860 to 1900; the *Christian Messenger's* response is considered from only 1860 to 1885 because the paper ceased to exist after 1884. By concentrating on the views found in the religious press rather than those contained in the works of university intellectuals, this study seeks to grasp more clearly how the debate on Darwinism and evolutionary science appeared to lay-readers within the church and in this way sheds light on the insufficiently understood area of popular religious thought and culture.⁷

Responses to Darwinism and evolutionary science in the latter half of the 19th century often resembled, yet were also distinct from, those found elsewhere in North America and in Great Britain. To comprehend the response of the Nova Scotia newspapers, their intellectual outlook must be kept in mind. It was shaped particularly by their theology, a Baconian conception of science and the two-theologies tradition. Although these newspapers shared a belief in certain orthodox Christian doctrines (such as creation as unique and separate divine acts,

tradition of John Calvin and John Knox, granted reason a greater role in grasping religious truth. Thus, unlike Nova Scotia's Methodists and Baptists, Nova Scotia's Presbyterians belonged to a tradition of rational thought that emphasized a rigorous combination of doctrine and discipline. The *Presbyterian Witness* first appeared, as an unofficial publication promoting the beliefs of the Free Church, in January 1848. Ten years later, Robert Murray became the chief editor of the newspaper and remained so until his death in 1913. See J. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto, 1987); Ahlstrom, *History*, pp. 325-27; Gauvreau, "History and Faith", pp. 15-46; "The Presbyterian Witness for 1868", *Presbyterian Witness*, 21 December 1867; "Fifty-Years", *Presbyterian Witness*, 1 January 1898 and "Nestor of Maritime Journalism is called to His Long Rest", *The Halifax Herald*, 13 December 1910 as well as J.T. McNeill, *The Presbyterian Church in Canada 1875-1925* (Toronto, 1925), p. 198.

- 7 This article is based on the author's M.A. thesis, "Darwinism and Evolutionary Science Critiqued: The Response of Three Nova Scotia Religious Newspapers 1860-1900", University of New Brunswick, 1990. He would especially like to thank Professors Phil Buckner and Steve Turner for their encouragement and helpful comments throughout the course of this project. Each denomination's religious newspaper was printed weekly in Halifax, but were regional in orientation. Although the editors aimed at having every household receive their paper, ministers and Sunday School teachers were their principal audience. The contents covered a variety of local as well as national and international topics. These included religious discussions on doctrine, morality, education, North American and European political developments and scientific discoveries and controversies. The authors of the articles were from within and from outside the region. The re-publication of articles from other periodicals was common and indicated that these papers participated in an international network. This may seem to undermine the Nova Scotia character of these newspapers. Nonetheless, it cannot be overlooked that when an article was reprinted from elsewhere, a Nova Scotian selected it from various alternatives. By choosing to publish one article over another, the editors indicated how they perceived and wished their readers to interpret the Darwinian debate. Furthermore, since each paper proclaimed a specific religious message, it seems unlikely that the editors would have published anything antagonistic to their denomination's cause. This suggests an affinity between the Church's opinions and those the editors printed. Despite possible differences of opinion within each denomination, the decision to reprint the ideas of others is revealing.

original sin, the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ as well as eternal life in Heaven or damnation in Hell), their theological traditions placed varying emphasis on rationality and evangelicalism. This produced differences in the number, complexity and kinds of issues addressed, including whether rational argument or evangelical preaching was Christianity's best defence against evolution. When placed within the framework of competing conceptions of science, the responses of the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* to Darwinism and evolutionary science become especially meaningful. For the rise of Darwinism and evolutionary science, the decision of most scientists to prefer evolution over special creation reflected the emergence and acceptance of a new conception of science. The editors of these newspapers, however, recognized that the conflict between Christianity and evolutionary science arose primarily from a dispute over whether theological referents constituted a legitimate part of a scientific explanation. Ultimately, this led them to conclude that concessions to evolution were logically unnecessary.⁸ Darwinism and evolutionary science did not destroy their confidence in the concord of nature and the Bible. Thus, in contrast to the view among Canadian historians, this study asserts that while the editors of these religious newspapers believed reconciliation was possible, they did not think evolution forced Christians to abandon special creation or secularize their faith.⁹ From this conclusion we may also question the tendency to trace the intellectual roots of Canada's social gospel movement to the collapse of orthodox religious belief in the face of Darwinism.¹⁰

Each of these weekly religious newspapers responded confidently to the challenge of Darwinism and evolutionary science during the second half of the 19th century. In defence of their beliefs, they vigorously upheld the two-theologies tradition. Conceiving God as the creator of nature and the author of the Bible, each paper stressed that His works and His Word could not and did not disagree.¹¹ To

8 When examining the religious response to Darwinism and evolutionary science in the latter half of the 19th century, 20th century historians have often interpreted the reaction in terms of a war between science and religion. Picturing science and Christianity as perennial enemies, they have perceived the evolutionary debate as another battle to liberate the human mind from the shackles of religious superstition. Yet James Moore has argued that although "the idea of science and religion at war is an integral part of western intellectual culture", it is historically inaccurate. In contrast, he states that "the history of science is not a conflict between two contending powers [science and religion], but a record of the divergent opinion within and among the scientists themselves". While most scientists interpreted nature within a Christian framework, some sought a materialistic explanation of the universe that minimized or eliminated God's role in creation. See Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*, pp. 19 and 86; see pp. 19-100 generally.

9 Most recently, David Marshall also contends that Canadian clergymen accommodated their faith to evolution because it undermined orthodox belief. See D. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief 1850-1940* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 45, 50, 54-5 and 70-1.

10 Although for different reasons, this conclusion confirms Gauvreau's argument on the intellectual roots of the Social Gospel. See *The Evangelical Century*, pp. 288-9.

11 As central as Baconianism to the popular understanding of the whole scientific enterprise was science's religious significance. The study of nature was believed to present overwhelming natural evidence that nature was God's "handiwork". Nature's order and underlying unity presented the

support the harmony of science and religion, their editors indicated that signs of design/purpose in nature manifested thoughtful planning and thus the involvement of a divine intelligence. It seemed irrational to attribute them to a random physical force such as natural selection.¹² The editors also maintained that many past and present prominent scientists were pious Christians and that the results of scientific investigation confirmed the concord of science and religion. Moreover, experience demonstrated that any conflict between them would ultimately be resolved.¹³

To account for contemporary difficulties, the editors blamed human error. As popularly understood, Bacon's inductive method restricted science to the visible world and consisted of patiently and humbly collecting, describing and classifying natural phenomena, without any preconceptions, over an extended period. Subsequently, the investigator would draw inferences from the patterns observed and eventually obtain knowledge of the laws of nature. By prematurely postulating

investigator with a sense of the "divine presence". In particular, the adaptation of complex structures to specific functions displayed purposeful design and thus implied a benevolent and wise Designer. Consequently, Christians spoke of two ways to know God (the "two-theologies" tradition): revealed religion (revelation - through His Word) and natural theology (through using reason when studying his creation). Since God was responsible for the Word and nature, science and religion were ultimately harmonious. Nonetheless, the incapacity of the carnal mind to comprehend the spiritual realm restricted science to the natural world. As long as reason respected its limits and remained within its legitimate sphere, allowing religion to interpret revelation and acknowledging the need to combine reason and revelation to understand completely man and the world, science and religion were in accord. See T.D. Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill, 1977), pp. 86, 111-12, and 138.

- 12 "Lecture", *Christian Messenger*, 7 January 1863; "The British Association for the Advancement of Science", *Christian Messenger*, 19 September 1866; "The Works and Word of God", *Christian Messenger*, 16 February 1870; "1877", *Christian Messenger*, 10 January 1877; "Luthardt's Apologetical Discourses", *Christian Messenger*, 14 January 1880; "Christ the Light of the World", *Christian Messenger*, 4 August 1880; "Joseph Cook's Lectures III", *Christian Messenger*, 5 March 1884; "The Science of Scripture", *W*, 18 April 1860; "Notes and Comments" [*Moravian*], *Wesleyan*, 3 December 1885; "The Glory of God" [by Boyd], *Presbyterian Witness*, 8 September 1860; "Keep Your Eyes Open" [*New York Observer*], *Presbyterian Witness*, 4 January 1862; "Science and Revelation", *Presbyterian Witness*, 18 November 1865; "Human Progress and Christianity", *Presbyterian Witness*, 27 March 1869 and "A Word More on Science and Philosophy", *Presbyterian Witness*, 18 December 1880.
- 13 "The Bible in the Advance of Science" [*Christian Messenger*], 8 January 1879; "The Voice of Nature", *Wesleyan*, 24 October 1860; "Christianity" [*Christian Quarterly Review*], *Wesleyan*, 26 January 1883; "Notes and Comments" [*Mobile Register*], *Wesleyan*, 1 January 1885; "Notes and Comments" [*Wesleyan Christian Advocate*], *Wesleyan* 26 November 1885; "Notes and Comments", *Wesleyan*, 1 September 1887; "Notes and Comments" [*Advocate*], 8 September 1887; "Editorial Notes", *Wesleyan*, 22 September, 1887; "Notes and Comments", *Wesleyan*, 18 March, 1888; "Editorial Notes", *Wesleyan*, 24 January 1889; "Editorial Notes", *Wesleyan*, 19 September 1889; "Brief Notes", *Wesleyan*, 29 September 18192; "Design in Nature", *Wesleyan*, 27 April 1893; "Notes and Comments", *Wesleyan*, 30 August 1894; "Brief Notes", *Wesleyan*, 11 July 1895; "The Church and the World", *Wesleyan*, 19 August 1896; "Scientists not Agnostics" [*Ex*], *Wesleyan*, 14 October 1896; "Science and Skepticism" [*Evangelical Christendom*], *Presbyterian Witness*, 24 October 1863; "Scientific Men Not Infidels" [*Evangelist*], *Presbyterian Witness*, 10 July 1875; "Literary", *Presbyterian Witness*, 9 November 1878 and "Says the Evangelist", *Presbyterian Witness*, 10 March 1894.

generalizations, scientists deviated from the standards of true science and produced unwarranted antagonisms between science and religion.¹⁴ For the editors, the failure of Darwin and other evolutionists to provide definitive evidence of transmutation, before proclaiming it as true, explained the conflict over the relation of science to religion.¹⁵ In particular, the editors also traced tensions to an inherently flawed conception of the function and limitations of science and religion. As one *Wesleyan* article declared: “the naturalist is too often induced to believe that his method of attaining truth is the only one to be found...[and he is] tempted to believe that the only truths are those which can be demonstrated to the senses and that all else are chimeras. Therefore, instead of rising to the supreme cause; it [his method] stops short at the laws which are subordinate”.¹⁶ By studying nature and the Bible, scientists and theologians provided knowledge about God. Although neither revealed everything the other did, their observations were ultimately in harmony.

Furthermore, since reason’s capacity to comprehend nature was limited, science offered an incomplete understanding without the assistance of divine revelation. The editors dismissed, for this reason, the argument of those modern scientists who assumed that natural laws provided a sufficient explanation and now considered theological referents an illegitimate part of a scientific explanation. Since laws could not account for their own existence without a law-maker, the editors argued that natural laws could not exclude God from his works. Quoting from Dr. William Carpenter’s Presidential Address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, one *Wesleyan* article maintained: “To set up these [natural] laws as self-acting and either as excluding or rendering unnecessary the power which can alone give them effect, appears to be as arrogant as it is unphilosophical. To speak of any law as ‘regulating’ or ‘governing’ phenomena is only permissible on the assumption that the law is the expression of the *modus operandi* of a governing

14 By reasoning from experience only, rather than assuming *a priori* the existence of certain principles, Bacon’s approach was perceived as a means of preventing the intellect from making fictitious hypotheses and assuring the validity of scientific knowledge. This contrasts with modern science’s hypothetico-deductive method. Doubting pure induction’s ability to attain scientific knowledge, modern science proposes hypotheses as the basis of explanations of natural phenomena. Although observation and experiment may confirm a hypothesis as true, scientists will give it only tentative status because future research may disprove it. During the 1830s and 1840s, three of Britain’s chief philosophers of science, J.W. Herschel, William Whewell and John Stuart Mill wrote treatises revising Bacon’s method. Unlike Bacon, they emphasized that the formulation and use of hypotheses were a necessary and valuable part of science. They still maintained, however, that the truth of a hypothesis depended ultimately on inductive proof (i.e. whether it supported all the facts). see T.D. Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill, 1977), pp. 3-21, 44, 82, and 85; C. Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto, 1983), pp. xi, xii, and 31-5; Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*, pp. 194-5 and D. Hull, *Darwin and his Critics: The Reception of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution by the Scientific Community*, pp. 4-6.

15 “Who are the Bigots”, *Christian Messenger*, 31 January 1872; “The Bible and Science”, *Wesleyan*, 13 March 1861; “Inquiry After Scientific Truth”, *Wesleyan*, 10 April 1872 and references below—evolution unproven.

16 “Modern Infidelity Against Faith” [*Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*], *Wesleyan*, 4 August 1869.

power”.¹⁷ Hence, as a *Christian Messenger* article argued, “what appears to be a conflict with science is much more a conflict with the philosophy of the disciples of natural science”.¹⁸ They believed, therefore, that followers of this approach, which reflected the rise of a positivist definition of science,¹⁹ had provoked an unnecessary conflict between science and religion.²⁰

The evolutionary debate also prompted the *Christian Messenger* and the *Wesleyan* to consider whether a scientifically informed ministry, education in general, or preaching the Word and engendering conversion experiences were Christianity’s best defence against Darwinism and evolutionary science. Both papers maintained that ministers should familiarize themselves with science so that they could determine the weaknesses of scientific infidelity and present strong rational arguments against it. As long as ministers were uninformed about the controversy, they might be perceived as incompetent or practising deception and bring Christianity into disgrace similar to the time of Galileo. The papers also

17 “Inaugural Address of Dr. Carpenter”, *Wesleyan*, 25 September 1872.

18 “Luthardt’s Apologetical Discourses”, *Christian Messenger*, 31 December 1879.

19 Darwin’s theory was symptomatic of changing patterns of scientific explanation. His ideas reflected a dissatisfaction with the traditional view of science and the movement towards a positivist account of science that restricted “scientific knowledge to the laws of nature and the processes involving ‘secondary’ or natural causes exclusively”. For Darwin, the traditional views of special creation, which considered species the direct result of a Creator using miracles and laws, did not satisfy the criteria of a “scientific” (positivist) explanation: interpreting phenomena in terms of “lawful natural processes which ruled out mystery and caprice”. While Darwin attributed to God the role of making natural laws and the creation of first forms of life, the subsequent adaptation and evolution of species through natural selection was a completely natural process. Moreover, like a practitioner of the modern hypothetico-deductive method, he wished his theory to be accepted on the basis of its explanatory power. After proposing natural selection as an hypothesis to account for the origin of species, he evaluated its potential to explain facts in natural history. He concluded that it explained these facts better than special creation. Although he devoted much of the *Origin* to illustrating this point, he never proved nor claimed to prove natural selection. As historian of science David Hull declared, what ultimately mattered was not “how Darwin came to formulate his theory”, but whether his theory, if accepted as true, was “empirically meaningful and could be confirmed and at least refuted by scientific investigation”. On the emergence of scientific explanations based on secondary (natural) causes, see Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 23-45, 67-83, 106-112 and 113-41, N. Gillespie, *Darwin and the Problem of Creation* (Chicago, 1979), p. 3; M. Ghiselin, *The Triumph of the Darwinian Method* (Berkeley, 1969), p. 9 and Hull, *Darwin and his Critics*, pp. viii-ix.

20 Duncan, “President of Mount Allison Alumni Association”, *Wesleyan*, 21 April 1867; “Mysteries” [Examiner], *Christian Messenger*, 16 March 1864; “Science and Religion”, *Christian Messenger*, 6 May 1868; “The Works and Word of God”, *Christian Messenger*, 16 February 1870; “Abstracts of Prof. Jones Address”, *Christian Messenger*, 2 October 1872, p. 314; “A New Years Blessing” [J.M. Cramp], *Christian Messenger*, 1 January 1873; “Religion and Science”, *Christian Messenger*, 25 November 1874; “The Wisdom of God”, *Christian Messenger*, 27 September 1876; “Luthardt’s Apologetical Discourses”, *Christian Messenger*, 27 August 1879; “Luthardt’s Apologetical Discourses”, *Christian Messenger*, 31 December 1879; “Luthardt’s Apologetical Discourses”, *Christian Messenger*, 11 February 1880; “What the Bible Does not Say”, *Christian Messenger*, 22 March 1882; “Review of Books”, *Christian Messenger*, 24 May 1882; “Reason and Faith”, *Christian Messenger*, 31 May 1882; “Science”, *Christian Messenger*, 10 January 1883; “Correspondence”, *Christian Messenger*, 29 October 1884; “Substance of the Address by Rev. Robert Duncan, President of Mount Allison Alumni Association”, *Wesleyan*, 21 April 1867; “Modern Infidelity Against Faith”

insisted that an education that combined true science and religion would prevent the instilling of false scientific ideas in young minds.²¹

Nonetheless, the editors stressed that preaching the Word was a minister's priority and the faithful's best defence. The major function of preachers was to convert sinners to Christianity. By declaring the good news of Christ's propitiation for mankind's sins, unbelievers could be returned to God's fold to enjoy eternal life and be spared the ravages of Hell. Preachers who used the pulpit as a forum for scientific debate were not relaying the crucial message of salvation and damnation. Indeed, the editors contended that although rational argument might provide justification for Christianity, it proved less effective than preaching because the source of disbelief was the sin-laden heart, not the intellect. The most effective way to refute scientific infidels was to induce them to have a conversion experience. Unlike cold objective rationality, the warm presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart provided overwhelming certainty of God's existence and his relation to nature.²² As one *Christian Messenger* article stated:

The best, nay the only real cure for much and even most of the skepticism that now exists, is found in that vital experience which comes to the heart, that opens itself upward in earnest prayer and then puts the truth it has learned into faithful Christian service. Logic is not the needed medicine, but

[*Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*], *Wesleyan*, 4 August 1869; "Naturalism and Spiritualism" [*The Methodist*], *Wesleyan*, 3 November 1869; "God and Secondary Causes", *Wesleyan*, 5 April 1871; "Inaugural Address of Dr. Carpenter", *Wesleyan*, 25 September 1872; "The Call to Discipleship", *Wesleyan*, 5 October 1875; "Address of Rev. C.H. Paisley", *Wesleyan*, 2 July 1880; "Intellect to be Cultured and Controlled for Christ", *Wesleyan*, 26 May 1887; "The Bible and Modern Criticism", *Presbyterian Witness*, 27 February 1892; "Does the Bible Contain Scientific Errors", *Presbyterian Witness*, 19 November 1892; "Theology and Science", *Presbyterian Witness*, 27 November 1897, p. 378.

- 21 "In Understanding Be Men", *Christian Messenger*, 25 September 1861; "Professor of Natural History in Acadia College", *Christian Messenger*, 30 June 1869; "Need of Educational Endowment", *Christian Messenger*, 13 August 1873; "Voluntaryism in Higher Education", *Christian Messenger*, 25 October 1876; "The Seen and the Unseen", *Christian Messenger*, 4 May 1881; "Our Ministry II", *Wesleyan*, 24 October 1860; "Ministerial Education" [*Zion's Herald*], *Wesleyan*, 14 August 1867; "Vox et Praeterea Nihil", *Wesleyan*, 11 June 1873; "The Educational Society of the Methodist Church of Canada II", *Wesleyan*, 29 April 1876; "The Educational Society of the Methodist Church of Canada III", *Wesleyan*, 6 May 1876; "Notes and Comments" [*Holston Methodist*], *Wesleyan*, 5 March 1885 and "Methodist Denominational Education", *Wesleyan*, 19 May 1887.
- 22 "Communion With God", *Christian Messenger*, 23 December 1863; "Preachers and Preaching", *Christian Messenger*, 17 February 1864; "Biblical Preaching", *Christian Messenger*, 2 August 1865; "The Pulpit" [Baptist Magazine], *Christian Messenger*, 1 November 1865; "Materialism and its Progress", *Christian Messenger*, 23 June 1880; "Indifferentism", *Christian Messenger*, 9 February 1881; "The Drift to Infidelity", *Christian Messenger*, 8 November 1882; "Modern Infidelity", *Wesleyan*, 29 May 1861; "Revivals Against Scientific Skepticism" [*W. Christian Advocate*], *Wesleyan*, 6 November 1872; "The Mayor of Halifax and the Week of Prayer", *Wesleyan*, 15 January 1876; "Sermonic Art: Plan in Preaching", *Wesleyan*, 8 March 1879; "The Best Preaching", *Wesleyan*, 1 August 1884; "The Inner Witness" [*Churchman*], *Wesleyan*, 24 November 1884 and "Editor's Chair", *Wesleyan*, 27 November 1895.

Love; not metaphysical analysis, but an unselfish and consecrated life. For such prayer makes unseen things visible and such service fills the soul with the very powers of divine life²³

Similarly, a *Wesleyan* editorial argued:

The preacher is too often the philosopher, not delivering a message, as an ambassador from God, but constructing a system or conjecturing a theory in accord with the latest findings of the “school of thought” he most affects. He quotes modern prophets [like] Huxley, Darwin, Spencer...with pride and admiration, but has scant and at best dubious respect for the ancient prophets. His attitude is rather that of one who deprecates and apologizes than of one who speaks with authority. He is not a “voice;” he is only an “echo.”²⁴

While deeming rational argument less effective than preaching the Word, the *Christian Messenger* and the *Wesleyan* examined, like the *Presbyterian Witness*, the validity of Darwinism and evolutionary science. Although the *Christian Messenger* and the *Wesleyan* contained less coverage than the *Presbyterian Witness*, the editors of all three papers responded in similar ways. In the first half of the 1860s, they countered primarily the contentions of scientists such as Charles Lyell, who combined the discovery of bones and implements with Darwinism, to prove that mankind was much older than the traditional view of 6,000 years and had descended from an ape;²⁵ such scientists were criticized by illustrating their lack of evidence and asserting the moral, mental, spiritual and anatomical distinctness of humans.²⁶ Their emphasis on this matter appeared to reflect what they considered the most threatening aspect of transmutation: the disavowal of man’s special affinity with God and the meaning this gave human existence. Unlike the *Christian Messenger* and the *Wesleyan*, the *Presbyterian Witness* also discussed in the decade’s second half other weaknesses of Darwin’s theory such as the absence of proof that natural selection was possible.²⁷ This attention coincided with the first

23 “Skepticism and its Cure”, *Christian Messenger*, 26 November 1873.

24 “As One Having Authority”, *Wesleyan*, 11 November 1896.

25 For many years, a Christian conception of nature and science predominated in the West. Reading literally the first chapters of Genesis in the Bible, most people assumed that God directly created the universe in six days. They also believed that He made each species of animals and plants, and finally man, separately. Made in God’s image, man was set above the rest of creation. Moreover, his unique intellectual, religious and moral nature distinguished him from animals. It was also understood that since the creation all creatures, and man, had essentially retained their original immutable form. See Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 4-8.

26 “Man Versus Gorilla”, *Christian Messenger*, 3 December 1862; “The Antiquity of Man”, *Christian Messenger*, 10 June 1863; “Science” [*Bibliotheca Sacra*], *Christian Messenger*, 11 November 1863 (under “Hitchcock on Transmutation”), p. 356; “On the Antiquity of Man II”, *Wesleyan*, 1 July 1863; “On the Antiquity of Man IV”, *Wesleyan*, 5 August 1863; “The Antiquity of Man”, 17 October 1863; “Popular Infidelity: The ‘New Philosophy’”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 20 May 1865.

27 “Agassiz and Darwin’s Theory”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 9 June 1866; “The Origin of Species”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 4 April 1868; “Wonders and Miracles”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 19 September 1868; and “The Origin of Life”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 12 December 1868.

signs of a shift within the scientific community away from special creation to an evolutionary account of the origin of species and adaptation.²⁸ In addition to their more evangelical orientation, the relative lack of coverage in the *Christian Messenger* and the *Wesleyan* could also be traced to the predominance of skepticism among most scientists. Their editors seem to have concluded that evolution posed no serious danger.²⁹

By the mid-1870s, however, many other naturalists had accepted evolution (not necessarily Darwinism). Although they had initially rejected the theory because of the lack of direct evidence of transmutation (a claim which violated Baconian standards), they were increasingly persuaded by Darwin's argument in favor of evolution's explanatory power and adopted the theory as a "working hypothesis".³⁰ The failure of the scientific community to discard evolution, as the editors probably expected, led them to recognize that transmutation now posed a greater danger to Christian belief. The changing attitude of scientists also put the onus on the religious press to defend the faith. Subsequently, all three papers gave much more attention to illustrating the problematic character of evolution. They persistently informed readers that evolution was unproven. For example, they argued that the lack of transitional forms, the permanence of species and geology all contradicted claims for the transmutation of species. Thus, they maintained that by propounding a hypothesis as a verity, evolution's proponents violated the standard of true (Baconian) science.³¹ The editors also attacked Huxley's claim that protoplasm

28 While most scientists remained skeptical of Darwinism, Peter Bowler and Jon Roberts have contended that a large number began to change their minds in Great Britain and the United States throughout the mid to late 1860s. Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 177-8 and Roberts, *Darwinism*, p. x and pp. 83-7.

29 Although some scientists endorsed Darwinism relatively quickly, throughout the 1860s many naturalists still accepted a teleological view of nature and expressed doubts about natural selection's validity. Jon Roberts also states that "after an initial flurry of reviews", the scientific skepticism surrounding Darwinism led most American Protestant religious thinkers to give little attention to it again until the 1870s. See Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 182-5 and J. Roberts, *Darwinism*, p. 41.

30 Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 177-8 and Roberts, *Darwinism*, p. x and pp. 83-7.

31 "A Word for Science", *Christian Messenger*, 2 November 1870; "The Seventh Decade of the Century", *Christian Messenger*, 8 February 1871; "The Origin of Life", *Christian Messenger*, 4 October 1871; "The Evangelical Alliance" [J.M. Cramps], *Christian Messenger*, 29 October 1873; "Tendencies of Modern Scientific Inquiry", *Christian Messenger*, 17 June 1874; "Natural Selection", *Christian Messenger*, 19 August 1874; "Geology and Evolution", *Christian Messenger*, 22 September 1875; "The Development Theory", *Wesleyan*, 21 December 1870; "Law or God" [W. Advocate], 4 February 1873; "The Probable Age of the World", *Wesleyan*, 11 November 1876; "Prof. Dana on Darwin" [Independent], *Presbyterian Witness*, 27 May 1871; "The British Association for the Advancement of Science", *Presbyterian Witness*, 26 August 1871; "Questions", *Presbyterian Witness*, 18 November 1871; "Geological", *Presbyterian Witness*, 15 June 1872; "Church of the Materialists" [New York Observer], *Presbyterian Witness*, 28 December 1872; "Principal Dawson on Evolution", *Presbyterian Witness*, 22 November 1873; "Louis Agassiz", *Presbyterian Witness*, 17 January 1874 and "The Darwinian Theory", *Presbyterian Witness*, 7 February 1874.

eliminated the necessity of God to create, as Darwin conceded, the first form(s) of life. They insisted that materialism could not disprove the principle of biogenesis.³²

Although Darwin's argument for evolution's explanatory power had convinced many scientists, the editors stressed that appearances could be deceitful. A *Wesleyan* article contended that "there are likenesses [between species] which suggest some such process [as evolution], appearances sometimes seem to favor it; but the scientific man who has not learned that 'appearances are deceitful' is the unfortunate possessor of a very treacherous memory".³³ "To oppose scientific theories is not to oppose science. To criticize 'evolution' is not to antagonize actual ascertained truth. Evolution is at best a theory", a *Presbyterian Witness* article also contended, "it may fit into 10,000 facts; myriads of facts may be explained by it; and may yet require to be not only modified, but revolutionized".³⁴ The resemblances between creatures could be accounted for by a descent relationship, but they could be attributed to an independent divine special creation according to similar guidelines. As long as scientists could not prove transmutation was possible, the latter seemed much more rational.³⁵ All three papers did not consider the evolution of man any more plausible after Darwin published *The Descent of Man* in 1871.³⁶ In addition to the unverified status of transmutation itself, man's distinct

32 "The Gospel of Protoplasm" [*Christian Era*], *Christian Messenger*, 22 June 1870. Note: This article led to a brief letter to the editor exchange between Prof. William Elder of Acadia and "Laicus" over whether Huxley was a materialist. See "Mr. Editor", 27 July 1870, front page; "Mr. Editor", 3 August 1870, p. 242; "Christianity and Modern Science", 7 September 1870, "Mr. Editor", 14 September 1870, p. 290; "Notwithstanding...", 21 September 1870, p. 298 and "Mr. Editor", 19 October 1870, p. 333; "Positive Faith Against Positivists", *Christian Messenger*, 22 June 1870; "Life and Protoplasm" [*Watchmen and Reflector*], *Christian Messenger*, 19 October 1870; "Science Falsely so-Called", *Christian Messenger*, 17 May 1871; "Science and other Notes", *Wesleyan*, 18 November 1876; "The Basis of Life", *Presbyterian Witness*, 8 January 1870; "British Association for the Advancement of Science", *Presbyterian Witness*, 22 October 1870; "Prof. Huxley's Mission", *Presbyterian Witness*, 7 October 1876 and "Origin of Life" [*Christian Review*], 11 November 1876. "Science", *Presbyterian Witness*, 22 October 1870; "Prof. Huxley's Mission", *Presbyterian Witness*, 7 October 1876 and "Origin of Life" [*Christian Review*], 11 November 1876.

33 "Notes and Comments" [*Christian Intelligencer*], *Wesleyan*, 5 August 1886.

34 "To oppose...", *Presbyterian Witness*, 22 October 1887 (p. 342).

35 "Prof. Huxley and his Lectures", *Christian Messenger*, 1 November 1876; "The Origin of Species", *Wesleyan*, 25 July 1879 and "Dr. William Taylor on Huxley", *Presbyterian Wesleyan*, 4 November 1876.

36 In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin referred only briefly to man's relation to evolution. Twelve years later, in *The Descent of Man*, Darwin made explicit man's place in his theory of evolution. Given the physical, intellectual, as well as moral similarities between humans and animals and the ability of transmutation to explain it, Darwin asserted that these resemblances were "utterly inexplicable" except as the result of "descent from a common progenitor together with subsequent adaptations to diversified conditions" and that "only our natural prejudice and that arrogance which made our forefathers declare they descended from demigods...leads us to demur to this conclusion". See "The Natural Evolution of Man and Morality" [abridged from Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, in Harold Y. Vanderpool, ed., *Darwin and Darwinism: Revolutionary Insights Concerning Man, Nature, Religion and Society* (Toronto, 1973), pp. 147-59].

moral, mental, as well as spiritual nature and anatomical structure, the failure to discover a missing link bridging the gap between man and ape, the growth of civilization and evidence of man's recent origin all offered Christians legitimate reasons for upholding man's special creation and ridiculing the descent argument.³⁷

While the editors reiterated many of these arguments throughout the 1880s and 1890s,³⁸ by the late 1870s and early 1880s all three papers began to inform readers that evolution could be reconciled favorably with Christianity. They showed readers that evolution described a process of change that could not be accounted for without the supervision of a divine Creator. "If it required no less than divine power and wisdom to create life at first [as Darwin admitted]", a *Christian Messenger* article declared, "how much greater the foresight and power necessary to adjust the forces of nature so as to continue this creation by means of gradual development".³⁹ Similarly, a *Wesleyan* article asserted:

What makes the higher succeed the lower? Nothing?...[M]ust not the human reason claim its right and is there anything that it asserts with more certainty than the impossibility of creation without a Creator?... Let not Christians, then, be alarmed by evolution. It is a mere word. At best, it shows only a mode of existence and action. Its sphere is superficial. It does not touch the heart of things. The delusion of those who worship it is nothing but the same idolatry that has always led away superficial thinkers. The worship of law or

37 "Darwinian Retrogression", *Christian Messenger*, 3 January 1872; "Testamentary Address to the New York Conference", *Christian Messenger*, 31 December 1873; "The New Scripture According to Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer, and Darwin", *Christian Messenger*, 20 January 1875; "All Progress not Upward", *Christian Messenger*, 6 December 1871; "Strauss Old and New Faith" [*Guardian*], *Christian Messenger*, 19 March 1873; "Tendencies of Modern Scientific Inquiry", *Christian Messenger*, 17 June 1874; "The Bible An Authority", *Christian Messenger*, 14 February 1877; "Editorial Column", *Christian Messenger*, 30 April 1879; "How Shall Modern Skepticism Be Met", *Wesleyan*, 18 October 1871; "The Dignity of Man", *Wesleyan*, 20 August 1873; "A Tadpole or an Angel", *Wesleyan*, 12 May 1877; "The Darwinian Theory", *Presbyterian Witness*, 5 August 1871; "Darwinism Assailed", *Presbyterian Witness*, 19 July 1873; "The Tables Turned on the Darwinian School" [*Evangelist*], 23 August 1873; "The Darwinian Theory", *Presbyterian Witness*, 7 February 1874; "The Kostromos", *Presbyterian Witness*, 25 July 1874; "The Origin of Nations", *Presbyterian Witness*, 15 June 1878; "Status of Evolutionism", *Presbyterian Witness*, 21 June 1879; "Scientific Progress", *Presbyterian Witness*, 13 September 1879 and "The Latest Utterances of Science", *Presbyterian Witness*, 6 December 1879.

38 "Luthardt's Apologetical Discourses", *Christian Messenger*, 4 February 1880; "Evolution", *Christian Messenger*, 24 May 1882; "The Dogmatism of Unbelief", *Wesleyan*, 14 April 1882; "Rev. Dr. Deems on Evolution", *Wesleyan*, 5 September 1884; "Notes and Comments" [*Christian Intelligencer*], *Wesleyan*, 5 August 1886; "Current Thought" [*Christian*], *Wesleyan*, 26 May 1887; "Science and Religion", *Wesleyan*, 18 April 1889; "Notes and Comments", *Wesleyan*, 17 March 1892; "The Folly of Atheism", *Wesleyan*, 14 February 1895; "Creation and Evolution" [*The Rock*], *Wesleyan*, 21 April 1897; "Prof. Tyndall's Latest Word" [*Fortnightly Review*], *Presbyterian Witness*, 31 January 1880; "Dr. Calderwood on Evolution", *Presbyterian Witness*, 12 February 1881; "Evolution, Revelation, Science", *Presbyterian Witness*, 31 May 1890; "To oppose...", *Presbyterian Witness*, 22 October 1887 (p. 342) and "A Great Lesson", *Presbyterian Witness*, 22 October 1887.

39 "Evolution," *Christian Messenger*, 24 May 1882.

evolution is but another form of the worship of atomism or chance; but one step higher or lower than the worship of idols of wood and stone.⁴⁰

A *Presbyterian Witness* article examining Darwin's spiritual life also provided a very similar insight. It stated that "his notion of the relation of God to the world was always rather absurd. If he could trace effects to a 'natural cause' or group a body of phenomena under a 'natural law', he seemed to think that he could dispense with God. He lacked the power to conceive of God working intelligibly through and all powerfully through natural causes". Consequently, the article's author explained that unlike contemporary naturalists Asa Gray, Charles Lyell and William Carpenter, who considered evolution, natural selection, design and a "Divine hand guiding and controlling events to a beneficial end" to be compatible, he [Darwin] was unable to accept this possibility.⁴¹ Thus, contrary to the claims of Darwin and others, evolution could not minimize or eliminate God from the role in creation described in Genesis.⁴²

This view, which appeared most frequently in the *Presbyterian Witness*, paralleled the entrenchment of an evolutionary outlook among scientists as well as their growing disenchantment with Darwin's explanation for evolution⁴³ and the emergence of numerous alternative versions of evolution. Although some scientists (such as Georges J. Romanes) deemed natural selection the primary factor responsible for transmutation, others propounded atheistic or agnostic materialistic accounts of evolution (such as T.H. Huxley, Ernest Haeckel and Herbert Spencer).⁴⁴ In contrast, scientists such as American naturalists Asa Gray and Edward Cope proposed theistic interpretations of evolution that conceived of God using natural

40 "Evolution Admitted, What Then?", *Wesleyan*, 25 June 1880.

41 "Charles Darwin's Religious Life", *Presbyterian Witness*, 10 November 1888.

42 "We have heard with pleasure...", *Wesleyan*, 9 March 1883 (editorial page); "God in Natural Law I", *Presbyterian Witness*, 27 October 1877; "God in Natural Law II", *Presbyterian Witness*, 3 November 1877; "Students for the Ministry", *Presbyterian Witness*, 23 September 1882; "Evolution", *Presbyterian Witness*, 13 December 1884; "Orthodoxy and Evolution", *Presbyterian Witness*, 10 January 1885; "The Duke of Argyll on Darwin", *Presbyterian Witness*, 4 April 1885; "Charles Darwin's Religious Life", *Presbyterian Witness*, 10 November 1888; "What We Read", *Presbyterian Witness*, 12 March 1892; "Evolution", *Presbyterian Witness*, 8 December 1894; "Prof. Romanes", *Presbyterian Witness*, 16 March 1895; "Literary", *Presbyterian Witness*, 13 April 1895; "Evolution", *Presbyterian Witness*, 13 February 1897; "Spencer and Salisbury on Evolution", *Presbyterian Witness*, 22 May 1897.

43 Throughout the late 19th century, the debate over Darwinism became increasingly a debate over the cause of evolution. Although Darwin's work prompted most scientists to consider evolution as a serious and credible alternative to special creation, many remained generally skeptical of natural selection as the mechanism responsible for it. To describe this period after 1875 in which Darwinism's popularity declined drastically, Julian Huxley coined the phrase "the eclipse of Darwinism". It should be noted that by 1900 there was no unanimity among scientists regarding how evolution occurred. In fact, no consensus would exist until the formulation of the "modern synthesis", a combination of Mendelian genetics and selectionism, in the 1930s. For a discussion of this controversy, see Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 183-212, 234-43 and 259-63.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 233-65.

selection as his method of creation or as actually immanent in the evolutionary process respectively.⁴⁵ To vanquish any doubts that the scientific community's unrelenting commitment to evolution posed a danger to the two-theologies tradition, and consequently to the Bible and the integrity of Christianity, all three papers probably decided that it was important to illustrate that theistic evolutionary alternatives were available and more rational than atheistic evolution. As a *Wesleyan* article stated:

Species are not known to be transmuted and hence with [Rudolf] Virchow [the prominent German anti-Darwinian scientist] we conclude that the doctrine of the transmutation of species is not only an unproved, but in the present state of human knowledge an unprovable hypothesis and further that under these circumstances the doctrine of each species 'after its kind' has no valid presumption against it.⁴⁶

In fact, the editors may have concluded that the emergence of theistic evolution justified their criticism of Darwinism and materialistic evolutionary theories.

While they all demonstrated an openness to theistic evolution generally, only the *Presbyterian Witness* indicated that man's origin could be harmonized with transmutation.⁴⁷ This difference, which reflects the *Presbyterian Witness*' greater preoccupation with the evolutionary debate and a willingness to consider all possibilities, seems attributable to Presbyterianism's more rationalistic theological tradition. Thus, although the *Presbyterian Witness* did not deem human evolution any more probable than the *Christian Messenger* or the *Wesleyan*,⁴⁸ its more systematic theology apparently led it to examine thoroughly the potential effect of various aspects of evolution upon Christianity. (Nevertheless, the paper attacked Herbert Spencer's application of evolution to human ethics. In contrast to Christian ethics' compassion for the weak, one article strongly condemned the harsh implications of Social Darwinism: "there is a method in large cities of capturing stray and useless dogs and doing to them a painless death. Would not Agnostic

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 210-11, 214, and 247-49.

46 "The Origin of Species", *Wesleyan*, 25 July 1879.

47 "Literary", *Presbyterian Witness*, 5 January 1895; "Prof. Virchow...", *Presbyterian Witness*, 26 January 1895; "The Free Church Assembly on The Ascent of Man", *Presbyterian Witness*, 6 July 1895 and "Origin of Man", *Presbyterian Witness*, 17 September 1898.

48 "Luthardt's Apologetical Discourses", *Christian Messenger*, 3 November 1880; "Luthardt's Apologetical Discourses", *Christian Messenger*, 10 November 1880; "Luthardt's Apologetical Discourses", *Christian Messenger*, 15 December 1880; "Evolution", *Christian Messenger*, 24 May 1882; "Science", *Christian Messenger*, 11 July 1883; "Brevities", *Wesleyan*, 15 April 1881; "Brevities", *Wesleyan*, 11 March 1886; "Editorial Notes", *Wesleyan*, 3 November 1887; "Playing With the Ages", *Wesleyan*, 6 November 1890; "Notes and Comments", *Wesleyan*, 22 June 1893; "The Making of Man", *Wesleyan*, 3 August 1893; "Man's Place in Nature", *Wesleyan*, 2 May 1895; "Notes and Comments", *Wesleyan*, 6 June 1895; "Creation and Evolution" [*The Rock*], *Wesleyan*, 21 April 1897; "The Gospel of Evolution", *Presbyterian Witness*, 12 June 1880; "The Missing Link", *Presbyterian Witness*, 31 December 1892; "At Last!", *Presbyterian Witness*, 9 February 1895; "Literary", *Presbyterian Witness*, 1 June 1895; "The Structure of Man", *Presbyterian Witness*, 18 September 1897 and "The Missing Link", *Presbyterian Witness*, 18 February 1899.

Evolutionists be kind enough to gather the ‘incapables’ into convenient centres and dispose of them in as painless a manner as possible, taking care that the process shall not be too expensive”.⁴⁹

They all declared steadfastly, however, that until scientists provided definitive proof that transmutation could occur, Christians need not and should not abandon special creation. Although “some eminent Christian writers” had stated that Darwinism was compatible with Christian revelation and teleology, a *Christian Messenger* article declared that “we at all events are entitled to wait quietly until men of science settle these questions among themselves and can demonstrate the truth of their theories by substantive proof. Until then and always we know that the ‘foundation of God standeth sure’”.⁵⁰ Similarly, a *Presbyterian Witness* article indicated that Dr. James McCosh, the prominent Princeton evangelical theologian, maintained that “there need be no antagonism between creationism and evolutionism”. Nonetheless, the writer stressed that “as a theory he was entitled to hold it; as a demonstrated verity no one can yet accept it. For evolution is not demonstrated”.⁵¹ Regardless of the evolutionary debate’s outcome, the Christian faith would remain intact.

The responses of the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* to Darwinism and evolutionary science in the second half of the 19th century were similar to, but also quite different from, those expressed elsewhere. Their responses were more sophisticated than what Pat Roome proclaimed was the general Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian reaction in Canada. While the *Christian Messenger* and the *Wesleyan* considered evangelical preaching more effective than rational argument and thus gave less coverage to refuting rationally Darwinism and evolutionary science, it is too simplistic to construe this as “anti-intellectualism”. Moreover, the *Presbyterian Witness* did offer a “rationalistic and confident” rebuke of Darwinism as a non-Christian form of science but its stance extended beyond this to even include discussion of theistic evolutionary alternatives.⁵² The *Presbyterian Witness*’ extensive coverage, however, contrasts sharply with the observations of John Moir, in his recent history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; he has argued that “Canadians were slow to take up the challenge to established religious belief” and not until “after World War I, when Europe had largely abandoned discussion as fruitless and misdirected, [did] North Americans become excited about the physical shape and mentality of their ancestors”. In particular, Moir has stated that “as a body the Presbyterian Church in Canada refused to be more than mildly interested in the theory of evolution, but

49 “Benevolence and Evolution”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 27 March 1886. See also “Editorial”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 24 January 1885. Note: “The Creation and What We May Know of the Method of Creation”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 31 December 1887 and “New Lights”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 7 March 1891 critique the agnosticism underlying Spencerian evolution.

50 “Evolution”, *Christian Messenger*, 24 May 1882.

51 “Evolution”, *Presbyterian Witness*, 8 December 1894, p. 318.

52 Roome, “The Darwin Debate in Canada”, p. 187.

Darwinism made itself evident and influential in more sophisticated forms [e.g. social Darwinism].⁵³ Recently, Michael Gauvreau has argued that Canada's Presbyterian and Methodist clerics "largely side-stepped" the controversy, seen elsewhere, raised by Darwin's *Origin*.⁵⁴ If these observations are correct, it appears that the *Presbyterian Witness*' keen interest in the evolutionary debate during the second half of the 19th century was a striking anomaly and that its Maritime readers were among the most informed among Canadian Presbyterians, if not Canadians generally.

The American historian Jon Roberts and several Canadian historians have also stated that Darwin's theory initially provoked little religious reaction. Roberts' view is that this reflected the strong opposition of the general scientific community. This explanation seems to account for this lack of concern better than Roome's claims for Canada's conservative social climate, underdeveloped scientific community and the predominance of evangelical Protestantism, or Gauvreau's insistence on the existence of a difference in the tradition shaping Anglo-American and Canadian Presbyterian-Methodist theology.⁵⁵ In all three newspapers, an acceptance of Bacon's inductive method as the basis of true science as well as a belief in the immutability of species — which James Moore identified as the central factors responsible for the opposition of Protestant anti-Darwinians in Great Britain and the United States⁵⁶ — was clearly discernible in the 1860s.

Historians have maintained that the decision of scientists to endorse evolution prompted Christianity's followers to accommodate their faith with evolution. For example, Roberts has declared that most American Protestant intellectuals thought a compromise was necessary because of the changing attitude of scientists to evolution. Similarly, Peter Bowler has asserted that "reconciliation of evolution with traditional concepts of teleology and design became the chief aim of religious

53 Moir, *Enduring Witness*, p. 175.

54 For Gauvreau, "the link between Darwinism and the 18th-century world of Paleyite natural theology provides a clue to the Canadian evangelical churches lack of response to the theory of natural selection". Unlike their British or American counterparts, by the 1840s Canada's Presbyterian and Methodists' "evangelical creed", which uniquely emerged out of the encounter between the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the revivalism of the Great Awakening of the 18th century, resorted to a Baconian approach to human history rather than natural science or speculative philosophy to defend Scripture (a reflection of a transition from the use of Paley and a preoccupation with the natural world to Butler and the human world). Thus, "the overriding concern for sound scientific method was not the preoccupation of most Canadian Presbyterian and Methodist clergy who rarely shared the Victorian fascination with the natural world". Moreover, he states "their biblical and humanistic biases ensured there would be few lamentations for the shattered unity of revelation and the physical universe". Consequently, they regarded the rise of the new, rational, historical biblical criticism as a more fundamental threat to Christianity's survival than Darwinism (which was merely an "undercurrent" of infidelity). Although the humanistic emphasis of the evangelical creed permitted them to resist and accommodate easily the new criticism in the second half of the 19th century, Gauvreau states that it "left them [unlike their British and American counterparts] without the intellectual or institutional structure" to do so with Darwinism. See Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century*, pp. 289, 71, 125-31, and 287.

55 Roome, "The Darwin Debate in Canada", pp. 185-87 and Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century*, pp. 11-12.

56 Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*, pp. 193-216.

thinkers [generally] who tried to grapple with Darwin's theory".⁵⁷ Others have argued that the nature of the debate in Canada changed substantially following the appearance of the *Descent of Man*. Although opposition increased greatly, the growing support for evolution among scientists rendered a scientific critique of Darwinism less effective and prompted religious critics to concentrate on refuting the extension of Darwin's theory to human mental and moral development. Moreover, these historians have stated that the shift of opinion within the scientific community undermined orthodox theological ideas and defences. Subsequently, Canadian religious people adopted Idealist philosophy and/or a liberal, social reform-oriented version of Christianity as a means of reconciling evolution and their faith.⁵⁸ On the other hand, Gauvreau has recently contended that "the link of theology to a cultural climate infused by the study of history, rather than one dominated by philosophy or natural science, ensured the survival, unity, and coherence of English Canada's evangelical creed in the face of the challenges posed by evolutionary science and higher criticism between 1860 and 1900".⁵⁹

In the pages of the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* the discussion of transmutation intensified after 1871, but the religious newspapers did not alter their focus on the scientific merits of Darwinism. Instead all three papers gave much more attention to identifying weaknesses in Darwinism generally. It seems that the *Descent* re-opened the controversy over human evolution, which had preoccupied the editors of these papers almost exclusively in the 1860s. Unlike the Christian anti-Darwinians Moore described, the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* did not let their belief in the immutability of species and the Baconian method prevent them from discussing means of reconciling evolution and Christianity. While indicating that favorable theistic evolutionary alternatives were available and being adopted by scientists and theologians, they were not prepared, however, to abandon special creation and adopt a theistic version of evolution, like Moore's Christian Darwinians or Christian Darwinisticists,⁶⁰ until evolutionists provided definitive proof of

57 Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine*, p. ix-x; Bowler, *Evolution*, p. 206. David Livingstone's recent study also argues that in addition to human dignity, design was the central concern of American evangelical scientists and theologians. He indicates that evolutionary teleologies enabled them to resolve both issues successfully. See Darwin's *Forgotten Defenders*, pp. 6, 51 and 145.

58 See Roome, "The Darwin Debate in Canada 1860-1880", Taylor, "The Darwinian Revolution", McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*; Berger, *Science, God, and Nature in Victorian Canada*; and Cook, *The Regenerators*. Although Marshall does not identify this shift with the opinion of the scientific community, he does maintain that by the mid-1870s "the torrent of protest" diminished as "the compatibility of science and Christian doctrine was acknowledged". Subsequently, he states that "Christian beliefs had been profoundly transformed [with reconciliation producing a liberal, social reform oriented version of Christianity] between the 1870s and the 1890s". See Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, pp. 53-4 and 70.

59 Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century*, p. 287. Similarly, Robert Bruce states that "'Natural theology' began to decline as a common ground during the 1850s in the United States and not much later in Nova Scotia". Nonetheless, "the American clergy yielded to Darwinism much more readily than the Canadians". See "Foreword", Bogaard, ed., *Profiles of Science and Society*, p. 9.

60 Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*, pp. 218-19 and pp. 251-98.

transmutation. Moreover, unlike the large conservative minority Roberts identified,⁶¹ who also adhered to a Baconian conception of science and the two-theologies tradition, these papers did not believe that reconciliation should be avoided because it threatened the central authority of the Bible. Steadfastly committed to the two-theologies tradition, they argued that God's Word and his works must agree. Thus, if true science eventually proved evolution, God must have used it as his method of creation. This interpretation allowed them to overcome the challenge Darwinism posed to a theocentric and teleological understanding of nature. Their position has been supported by Jon Roberts' claim that there was no "wholesale abandonment of natural theology by Protestants who endorsed the evolutionary hypothesis. To the contrary, some Protestant evolutionists advanced arguments demonstrating that an evolutionary interpretation of the origin of species was adequate only if placed within a theistic framework".⁶² Contrary, then, to the prevailing opinion of Canadian historians on religious attitudes to Darwinism, these papers did not think evolution undermined orthodox theological ideas and defences or forced Christians to abandon special creation and liberalize their faith. This implies in turn that the intellectual origins of the social gospel movement should not be ascribed to an inability of orthodox religious beliefs to withstand the Darwinian-evolutionary challenge.⁶³

Because it went against the opinion of most scientists, who abandoned special creation for an evolutionary account of the origin of species and adaptation, the stance of the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* could be easily dismissed as a narrow-minded conservatism or an obscurantist stubbornness to recognize the verdict of science. Nonetheless, those who accept this conclusion fail to appreciate a crucial point underlying the whole debate: a dispute over what constituted a "scientific truth".⁶⁴ While Darwin and others admitted that

61 Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine*, pp. ix-x.

62 Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine*, p. 120. Livingstone's findings also support this position. He shows that Robert Owen's idealistic version of natural theology allowed American evangelicals to abandon Paley's utilitarian conception of natural theology, and reconcile evolution and natural theology. See pp. 5-7, 145 and 271.

63 According to James Cameron, Methodist and Presbyterian evangelicalism increasingly stressed social reform in the late 19th century and this suggests that it was "being tempered by a liberalism which stressed practical Christianity at the expense of orthodoxy". See Cameron, "The Garden Distressed: Church Union and Dissent on Prince Edward Island, 1925", *Acadiensis*, XXI, 2 (Spring 1992), p. 111. While there may have been a liberalization of their theology, it should not be directly traced to Darwinism. An explanation based on Christian responses to structural change in the nature of Canadian society appears more persuasive. Although William Westfall and David Marshall perpetuate the link between Darwinism and a secularization of faith because of the vulnerability of orthodox religious belief, they do direct historians' attention toward the relation between socio-economic change and religious thought. See especially Westfall, *Two Worlds: the Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Kingston and Montreal, 1989).

64 By asserting that "Christianity was refashioned [through accommodation] into a religion that accepted the discoveries of science", Marshall not only downplays the evident high regard Christians had for science and its harmony with orthodox beliefs, but implies that those Christians who did not do so were resisting truth. Such a position, however, continues to miss the essence of the debate: what was a "scientific truth". See Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, p. 50.

no concrete evidence of transmutation existed, they argued that evolution should be adopted because of its ability to explain natural phenomena more reasonably than special creation (in terms of natural laws rather than miracles). This view and the scientific community's decision to endorse it, after initial reservations over the theory's compatibility with the standard Baconian method, reflects the successful rise of a new conception of science that excluded theological referents from a legitimate scientific explanation. For the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness*, however, true science was still synonymous with a popularly-conceived Baconian definition of science that believed nature could not be scientifically understood without reference to the Bible. From this perspective, the positivist and hypothetico-deductive methodological assumptions underlying and responsible for evolution were inherently flawed. Hence, the editors believed that special creation should not be abandoned, regardless of evolution's explanatory power, until science provided concrete proof that transmutation could and had occurred.

The responses of these papers suggests that historians have missed or glossed over a significant point when considering religious attitudes to Darwinism and evolutionary science in the 19th century. Aware that evolution eventually triumphed among scientists, historians have assumed that an orthodox Christian position was unsound. Thus, they have concluded that religious people in the 19th century were compelled to alter their interpretation. This leaves the impression that those who did were "progressive", whereas those who refused were cantankerous reactionaries. To retain their doctrinal integrity, however, were Christians necessarily obliged to compromise? To answer this question, historians need to consider more carefully the events surrounding the rise of evolutionary science and the decision of most scientists to prefer it to special creation. The formulation of evolution was part of a transition within science away from a conception of science that used theological referents (such as God and miracles) to one that believed that natural phenomena must be understood in terms of lawful processes. Peter Bowler has maintained that "Darwin's most immediate effect in changing public opinion...[was creating] a growing willingness on all sides to admit that the world is somehow governed by law rather than divine caprice".⁶⁵ This raises a fundamental question: why did this change occur? Bowler has asserted that "the emergence of Darwinism represents a change within the scientific community that only can be accounted for in terms of social factors within that community and a wider revolution in the values accepted by scientists".⁶⁶ In particular, it seems that this reflected a transformation of science generally that may be attributed to an increasing inability of many scientists to believe that God directly and/or capriciously interfered in nature. Within this context, Darwin's contention that transmutation was more reasonable than special creation becomes meaningful.

65 Bowler, *Evolution*, p. 177.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Nonetheless, while Darwin's argument led many scientists to accept evolution and some Christians to reconcile their faith, the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* drew their readers' attention to two crucial points that appear to have been overlooked because historians have not questioned the evolutionists' assumptions upon which the controversy rested. First, if one still believed that God existed as well as could directly and/or capriciously interfere in nature, there was no reason to adopt transmutation. It was just as legitimate to attribute the similarities between creatures to the common guidelines of a divine Creator. The religious newspapers considered that the lack of definitive proof of evolution strengthened this position and argued against endorsing transmutation. Second, even if science provided concrete proof of transmutation, theistic alternatives were not only available, but more rational. They showed their readers that the positivist approach underlying evolution was flawed since it mistook a part (the physical) for the whole (the physical and spiritual) of reality. A conception of science based on laws excluding theological referents left the impression that a spiritual realm was either a relic of a superstitious past, or at least unscientific. These papers argued, however, that laws did not make sense without a law-giver, and that reason could not provide a comprehensive understanding without the assistance of divine revelation. Thus, Christians could legitimately uphold God's existence and direct role in creation regardless of the debate's outcome, and they need not feel intimidated by the popularity of evolution among scientists.

A more extensive examination of the Canadian religious response is still needed. It is hoped that this study will prompt a re-evaluation of past interpretations of Canadian religious attitudes to evolution. The discrepancy between the views of these newspapers and contemporary Canadian historiography could be traced to the different levels of opinion examined: those of the mainstream religious community and those of a small number of Protestant intellectuals at the university level respectively. As members of the international academic community, the latter may have considered the evidence in evolution's favor overwhelming and/or felt great pressure from the scientific community's shift to evolution because they risked being labelled ignorant. Nonetheless, as stated above, the acceptance of this view can easily lead one to assume that these intellectuals were better informed and the religious press' position represented merely a closed-minded obstinacy to the truth of evolution.⁶⁷ A more critical factor may be the failure of historians to consider carefully and empathetically the evolution debate from a 19th century religious perspective. If this course is followed it is evident, as these newspapers illustrated, that the intellectuals' position was an alternative, but by no means a necessary or

67 Although Gauvreau may be correct in establishing a difference between the tradition underlying Anglo-American and Canadian Presbyterian-Methodist theology, the existence of a dichotomy between the intellectuals and these newspapers' position suggests that there may also be a gap or lack of transmission of ideas from the elites to the popular religious press. Nonetheless, as the numerous reprints of Anglo-American articles illustrates, these papers were very familiar with the Anglo-American tradition and were not isolated from the cutting-edge of the debate.

more rational one, available for Christians.⁶⁸ Moreover, while the study of the views of Canada's Protestant university elite is valuable, it seems that a wide examination of Canada's religious press may better reflect Canadian religious opinion more generally. Two important questions remain for future consideration. For "whom" did evolution provoke a "crisis of faith?" And did mainstream Christians in 19th-century Canada really think that evolution, in the terms used by recent historians, "shattered" orthodox ideas, forced them to "salvage" their faith, that "the success or failure of a religious stand on evolution depended upon the work accomplished in philosophy", or that the "harmony of faith and knowledge rested on the possibility of objective, verifiable 'scientific' history?"⁶⁹ At least for the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness*, Darwinism and evolutionary science did not have these catastrophic effects. By demonstrating that a compromise with evolution was not only unnecessary, but also did not ultimately affect Christianity's credibility, these newspapers suggest that historians need to re-think the impact of Darwinism and evolutionary science on the 19th-century Christian population and its relation to the subsequent emergence of English Canada's social gospel movement at the turn of the century.

68 Consequently even historians such as Livingstone, Moody and Gauvreau who have argued, contrary to previous studies, that evangelicals considered accommodation a positive and healthy development rather than a fatal concession to secularization, have failed to recognize the methodological side of the issue and thus have not indicated that compromise was unnecessary. Thus, an extensive reading of Ontario Regular Baptist, Wesleyan Methodist and Presbyterian religious newspapers, for example, may reveal that the views of the *Christian Messenger*, the *Wesleyan* and the *Presbyterian Witness* were typical.

69 McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, p. 205; Cook, *The Regenerators*, p. 4; Taylor, "The Darwinian Revolution", p. 49 and Gauvreau, "History and Faith", p. 376.