

The United Church **Observer**

The United Church Observer offers support to Darwin museum exhibit

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The United Church Observer, the independent magazine affiliated with The United Church of Canada, is proud to announce it has become a sponsor of “Darwin: The Evolution Revolution,” a travelling exhibition focusing on the life and work of Charles Darwin currently on display at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

“We were dismayed to learn that the exhibit had been unable to secure corporate sponsorship in Toronto or in any of the other North American cities where it has been mounted,” said Editor/Publisher David Wilson. “Our support is modest but symbolic. If a small church-based operation such as *The Observer* doesn’t fear a backlash from those who oppose Darwin’s theory of evolution, then secular corporate entities with much greater resources shouldn’t fear it either.”

The Observer has been independently incorporated since 1986, Mr. Wilson added. “We are acting independently here, using our own resources,” he said. “We do not speak for The United Church of Canada.”

The Darwin exhibit has been praised as a comprehensive chronicle of one of history’s most influential thinkers. Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection, developed over several decades in the mid-19th century, was a key that opened the door to scientific discoveries that have helped humans achieve a better understanding of the way life began and continues to be shaped.

“There is nothing in the exhibit that threatens or diminishes religion or people of faith in any way,” Mr. Wilson said. “If anything, it shines a light on the inherent beauty and wonder of a creation that is constantly and eternally evolving.”

Added Rev. Lee Simpson, the *Observer's* director of operations: "Creation is a process guided by a Divine Spirit and, like God, it is beyond the capacity of any one person or even any one faith community to understand it completely. Anything that gets us closer to understanding God's earth gets us one step closer to saving it."

Mr. Wilson noted that *The United Church Observer* has a long history, dating back to Darwin's own time, of advocating a respectful relationship between religion and secular education. Egerton Ryerson, who founded the magazine in 1829, was a Methodist minister and widely regarded as the father of public education in Upper Canada.

Despite near-universal acceptance in the scientific community, Darwin's theory of evolution can still stir up controversy. Recent battles in the United States over the teaching of faith-based alternatives to evolution in public schools have generated headlines worldwide and raise fundamental questions about the relationship between religion and science as well as the separation of church and state.

"Frankly, I'm alarmed by the apparent creationist chill that has greeted the Darwin exhibit wherever it has been mounted," said Mr. Wilson. "This magazine has reported on the evolutionary wars in the U.S., and if there's one thing we've learned, it's that the politics of creationism and intelligent design are more bark than bite — and the bark is only as loud as people's fear of it. The Darwin exhibit deserves support, and we're not afraid to say so."

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