
Decr. 14. 1866.

Dear Madam.

It would have gratified me much if I could have sent satisfactory answers to yr. questions, or indeed answers of any kind. But I cannot see how the belief that all organic beings including man have been genetically derived from some simple being, instead of having been separately created bears on your difficulties.— These as it seems to me, can be answered only by widely different evidence from Science, or by the so called “inner consciousness”. My opinion is not worth more than that of any other man who has thought on such subjects, & it would be folly in me to give it; I may however remark that it has always appeared to me more satisfactory to look at the immense amount of pain & suffering in this world, as the inevitable result of the natural sequence of events, i.e. general laws, rather than from the direct intervention of God though I am aware this is not logical with reference to an omniscient Deity—Your last question seems to resolve itself into the problem of Free Will & Necessity which has been found by most persons insoluble.2

I sincerely wish that this note had not been as utterly valueless as it is; I would have sent full answers, though I have little time or strength to spare, had it been in my power.

I have the honor to remain dear Madam. | Yours very faithfully | Charles Darwin.

P.S. I am grieved that my views should incidentally have caused trouble to your mind but I thank you for your Judgment & honour you for it, that theology & science should each run its own course & that in the present case I am not responsible if their meeting point should still be far off.
To John Fordyce  7 May 1879
Down Beckenham | Kent [Heene, Worthing.]
May 7th 1879

Private

Dear Sir

It seems to me absurd to doubt that a man may be an ardent Theist & an evolutionist.—1 You are right about Kingsley. 2 Asa Gray, the eminent botanist, is another case in point—3. What my own views may be is a question of no consequence to any one except myself.— But as you ask, I may state that my judgment often fluctuates. Moreover whether a man deserves to be called a theist depends on the definition of the term: which is much too large a subject for a note. In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God.— I think that generally (& more and more so as I grow older) but not always, that an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind.4

Dear Sir | Yours faithfully | Ch. Darwin