

NINETEENTH CENTURY DARWINISM AND THE TASMANIAN GENOCIDE

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Abstract

It was widely believed in the nineteenth century that the Tasmanians were a living link between modern humans and their primate ancestors. Given the presupposition of naturalistic evolution, the Tasmanian people were often seen as less than human and, consequently, many people felt that it was not wrong or immoral to treat them like animals. This attitude eventually influenced behavior which resulted in the total extermination of the native Tasmanians. Today it is concluded that they were a distinct racial group similar to the Australian Aborigines that possessed a unique culture and were fully human. This event is only one of many examples of the numerous tragedies that evolutionary naturalism has produced in modern times.

Introduction

The story of the complete extermination of the native peoples of Tasmania in the late 1800s is a well documented example of one negative influence of early Darwinism. Tasmania, a 67,000 square kilometer (26,000 square miles) island close to the size of Ireland, is about 200 miles south of the Australian mainland, almost directly south of Melbourne. The island, once called Van Dieman's Land, is now part of Australia. The native Tasmanians, a highly isolated population of about 70 tribes and five language groups, had virtually no contact with other humans for thousands of years (Plomley, 1983; Jones, 1971). Their sole sea transportation was by small rafts, which were usually useful for only short trips (Mulvaney, 1969).

The History of Tasmania and the Conflict

Tasmania was named after Abel Jansen Tasman, a commander of two small Dutch vessels who discovered the island in 1642. It was soon visited by many others including the French in 1772 (Castelain, 1988; Plomley, 1983; Garanger, 1985). In 1777 Captain Cook made an acquaintance with the natives, calling them "mild and cheerful, without reserve or jealousy of strangers" (Bonwick, 1870, p. 6). Other explorers with the benefit of more extensive contact concluded that the Tasmanians were an intelligent people with cheerful dispositions, great politeness, kindness and sincerity (Plomley, 1983). They were also extremely skilled divers and fishermen (Bonwick, 1870). The women were described as excellent mothers, caring, affectionate, gentle and exhibiting marked maternal tenderness. Many of the younger women were described as "most affectionate," gentle, full of grace and wonderful spirit. They also concluded that, although the natives possessed a "primitive mentality," they were an intelligent people. One explorer described them to be:

... intelligent, grasping readily all my gestures. From the first moment, they seemed to understand my object perfectly, and they repeated willingly the words I had not been able to grasp the first time, and often roared with laughter when, trying to repeat what they said, I made a mistake or pronounced them badly (quoted in Plomley, 1983, p. 64).

Peron, from his extended contact with the Tasmanians, added the following details to the above:

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This gentle confidence of the people in us, these affectionate evidences of benevolence which they never ceased to manifest toward us, the sincerity of their demonstrations, the frankness of their manners, the touching ingenuousness of their caresses, all concurred to excite within us sentiments of the tenderest interest. The intimate union of the different individuals of a family . . . had strongly moved us. I saw with an inexpressible pleasure the realization of those brilliant descriptions of the happiness and simplicity of the state of nature of which I had so many times in reading felt the seductive charm (Bonwick, 1870, p. 27).

They wore necklaces and other ornaments, constructed huts, manufactured spears, waddys, spatulas, water vessels, cushions, baskets, cords and ropes, canoe rafts, and many other implements (Plomley, 1983). The island terrain and foliage, often described as a paradise, was:

diverse in scenery and in climate . . . its small area [contains a] tangled masses of mountains, great forests, innumerable lakes, picturesque waterfalls, fertile valleys and probably the roughest and most inaccessible country in all Australia. The climate is temperate, with a warm summer and a moderately cold winter. . . . The . . . coasts have moderate rainfall of up to 40 inches, the central tableland is drier; but within a few miles, in the western belt, the rain is at times practically continuous, and averages over 100 inches in the year (Laserson, 1972, p. 139).

After reviewing the positive early contacts with the Tasmanians, Bonwick sadly noted that the people, although at first "almost universally" regarded positively by English colonists, a few years later, were viewed as creatures

... whose destruction would be a deed of merit, as well as an act of necessity. Smile as we may at the simplicity of Peron, had our faith in the poor creatures been more like that of the kind-hearted Frenchman, the reader might have been spared the . . . mournful record of "The Last of the Tasmanians" (Bonwick, 1870, p. 27).

This change in attitude was due to many factors including greed, economics, the cultural, social and language differences, plus mistrust on both sides and the contingencies of history, but the factor we are focusing on here is the influence of Darwin. Although it is difficult at this point in time to accurately assess

the exact role evolution played in the events that followed, it is clear that it was not small and for years served to justify the atrocities that occurred after the Tasmanians became extinct. The native population consisted of hunter-gatherers and was biologically similar to the Aborigines living on the Australian mainland. The "scientific" view of them then was summarized by Diamond who noted that the

Tasmanians attracted the interest of scientists, who believed them to be a missing link between humans and apes. Hence when the last man, one William Lanner, died in 1869, competing teams of physicians, led by Dr. George Stokell from the Royal Society of Tasmania and Dr. W. L. Crowther from the Royal College of Surgeons, alternately dug up and reburied Lanner's body, cutting off parts of it and stealing them back and forth from each other. Crowther cut off the head, Stokell the hands and feet, and someone else the ears and nose, as souvenirs (Diamond, 1988, p. 9).

The common attitude about the Tasmanians then was expressed by David Collins, a nineteenth century judge-advocate who wrote that, in contrast to British Australia, Tasmania was "the residence of savages" (Fisher, 1968, p. 24). This belief is summarized by the eminent German evolutionist Ernst Haeckel who concluded that "since the lower races—such as the Veddahs or Australian Negroes—are physiologically nearer to the mammals—apes and dogs—than to the civilized European, we must, therefore, assign a totally different value to their lives" (Haeckel, 1905, p. 390). The West's perception of the Tasmanians was described by Mulvaney as follows:

When first encountered by Europeans, Tasmanian material culture appeared so rudimentary that evolutionary theorists later judged it a storehouse of fossil facts. Edward Tylor dubbed Tasmanians the 'representatives of Palaeolithic Man;' John Lubbock implicitly denied their humanity with his mechanistic aphorism: 'The Van Diemener [Tasmanians] and the South American are to the antiquary what the opossum and sloth are to the geologist (Mulvaney, 1969, p. 133).

The result of this belief was well put by Diamond when he stated:

If you ask any anthropologist to summarize in one phrase what was most distinctive about the Tasmanians, the answer will surely be "the most primitive people still alive in recent centuries. The label "primitive" clearly has explosive . . . racial overtones, and in the nineteenth century its application led to tragic consequences (Diamond, 1993, p. 51).

The first major skirmish with the native people of the island occurred on May 3, 1804, beginning a series of conflicts that eventually resulted in a full scale attack on them. A British officer, for reasons that are unclear today, ordered his men to open fire on the Tasmanians, killing or mortally wounding at least 50. The result was that "the friendly disposition of the natives was completely altered by this unwarranted attack and the consequent loss of life. Animosity and revenge were engendered by this atrocious act of barbarity, and the

result was a series of petty encounters . . . in which of course the natives were constantly defeated, many of them losing their lives" (Knighton, 1886, p. 272). Lieutenant Moore, the officer who gave the command to fire, was evidently drunk from an "over-dose of rations' rum," and the firing seems to have been done in order to see them flee. And flee they did, terrified "at the execution" which left in them "a deep rooted hatred of the white faces which never subsequently died out" (Knighton, 1886, p. 272; Bonwick, 1870).

The start of the slaughter came not long after the Europeans began settling in Tasmania and is vividly summarized by Diamond.

Whites kidnapped Tasmanian children as laborers, kidnapped women as consorts, mutilated or killed men, trespassed on [their] hunting grounds, and tried to clear Tasmanians off their land. . . . As a result of the kidnappings, the native population of northeast Tasmania in November 1830 had been reduced to seventy-two adult men, three adult women, and no children. One shepherd shot nineteen Tasmanians with a swivel gun loaded with nails. Four other shepherds ambushed a group of natives, killed thirty, and threw their bodies over a cliff remembered today as Victory Hill (Diamond, 1988, p. 8).

As a result of the Tasmanians' ineffective attempts to defend themselves, Governor Arthur ordered all Tasmanians to leave those areas of the island that were settled by Europeans (Bonwick, 1870). Evidently not content to deal with the situation by this order alone, in November of 1828 the European soldiers were authorized to kill on sight any Tasmanian that still lived or wandered into the areas where the Europeans resided (Diamond, 1993, p. 57). The government even sponsored "roving parties" which consisted of convicts led by police that

hunted down and killed Tasmanians. . . . Next, a bounty was declared on the natives: five British pounds for each adult, and two pounds for each child [that was] caught alive. "Black catching" as it was called because of the Tasmanians' dark skin, became big business pursued by private as well as official roving parties. . . . A commission . . . was set up to recommend an overall policy towards the natives. After considering proposals to capture them for sale as slaves, poison or trap them, or hunt them with dogs, the commission settled on continued bounties and the use of mounted police (Diamond, 1988, p. 8-9).

One account of the violence that the European-Tasmanian conflicts developed into is as follows:

A party of the Richmond police were passing through the bush in 1827, when a tribe, seeing them, got up on a hill and threw stones upon them. The others fired in return, and then charged them with the bayonet. We have Mr. G. A. Robinson's authority for stating that a party of military and constables got a number of Natives between two perpendicular rocks, on a sort of shelf, and killed seventy of them, dragging the women and children from the crevices of the rocks, and *dashing out their brains.*" (Bonwick, 1870, p. 64)

The wanton brutality against what many Whites saw as their evolutionarily inferior competitors was enormous. Women were commonly raped and many bore children by the early settlers. Many of the settlers “amused themselves by emasculating all of the native men that they could seize . . . and it was the subject of mutual boasting as to the numbers that they had thus treated, when they held convivial feasts together” (Knighton, 1886, p. 274). Knighton concludes that the whole Tasmanian record was one of outrage, torture, mutilation, murder, and robbery, relieved here and there by noble acts of philanthropy and kindly benevolence” (1886 p. 283). In short he concludes they were “hunted down like wild beasts” because this is what many people believed that they were (Bonwick, 1870, p. 66). The degree of European brutality was described by Diamond as follows:

When British settlers poured into Tasmania in the 1820s . . . racial conflict intensified. Settlers regarded Tasmanians as little more than animals and treated them accordingly. Tactics for hunting down Tasmanians included riding out on horseback to shoot them, setting out steel traps to catch them, and putting out poison flour where they might find and eat it. Shepherds cut off the penis and testicles of aboriginal men, to watch the men run a few yards before dying (Diamond, 1993, p. 57).

The Tasmanian affair was not simply a conflict between cultures but, as vividly brought out by Knighton (1886, p. 268), was also influenced by the beliefs of the “race expert scientists” who concluded that: “All attempts to civilize the Australasians many regarded as absolutely futile. It would be easier . . . to bring down the whites to the level of the natives than to raise the natives to the level of the whites. Many of the whites, it may be replied, have already sunk to the level of the black fellows, by their own unaided effort in descent . . .” (Knighton, 1886, p. 268). The evolutionists rationalized the Tasmanian situation by concluding that it is merely a fact of nature, “an illustration of that struggle for life which is going on around us now, [and] as it has been ever since man made his appearance upon earth” (Knighton 1886, p. 269). Many Christians and clergy did attempt to help them, some with much success, but their help was far too little too late (Bonwick, 1869, 1870).

The foreign office in London was fully aware that in the British colonies lived a wide variety of native peoples. They were far more worried about governing their vast empire than proving theories of evolution, and ordered the natives to be treated with amity and kindness. Consequently many of the local residents—a large number of which were convicts—and the local British government at least part of the time endeavored to deal with them justly and legally. Nonetheless, the people “. . . soon learned that the best game was raping and disfiguring Tasmanian women and killing and mutilating Tasmanian men. No one censored this practice; children were murdered, men emasculated and women stolen from their tribes” (Shepherd, 1990, p. 3). Although some whites tried to blame the conflicts on the Tasmanians, many of the settlers were convicted felons, and the evidence supports the conclusion that most of the unprovoked violence was from the Europeans (Bonwick, 1870). As Knighton (1886, p. 273) notes,

though, many offenses against the natives “could not be substantiated in the courts for want of witnesses. The only witnesses there were the white men who committed the outrages.”

Although Darwin did not publish his *Origin of Species* until 1859, evolution in various forms was widely believed by biologists and geologists in the early 1800s (Osborn, 1929). Darwin’s own grandfather was one of the first researchers to dig up an aborigine from the grave to stuff and exhibit the stolen body at the Royal College of Surgeons—the first of up to 10,000 desecrated “to try to prove their racial inferiority” and that they were the “missing” link between stone age men and fully evolved whites (Gripper, 1994, p. 32). King-Hele (1963, p. 75) stated, “After 1794, statements of the principle of natural selection and evolution came fairly thick and fast.” These ideas were widely discussed, and influenced thinking about race, especially the place of the so-called “primitive” people in the animal kingdom. Many writers predicted that all the “Blacks of Australia” were “a doomed race, and before many years they will be completely wiped out of the land” (Hatton-Finch, 1885, p. 148). Darwin himself concluded that the extinction of inferior races was the process and source of evolution, which is our creator and must be accepted as inevitable:

Extinction follows chiefly from the competition of tribe with tribe, and race with race. Various checks are always in action, serving to keep down the numbers of each savage tribe,—such as periodical famines, nomadic habits and the consequent deaths of infants, prolonged suckling, wars, accidents, sickness, licentiousness, the stealing of women, infanticide, and especially lessened fertility. If any one of these checks increases in power, even slightly, the tribe thus affected tends to decrease; and when of two adjoining tribes one becomes less numerous and less powerful than the other, the contest is soon settled by war, slaughter, cannibalism, slavery, and absorption. Even when a weaker tribe is not thus abruptly swept away, if it once begins to decrease, it generally goes on decreasing until it becomes extinct. When civilised nations come into contact with barbarians the struggle is short, except where a deadly climate gives its aid to the native race. Of the causes which lead to the victory of civilised nations, some are plain and simple, others complex and obscure. We can see that the cultivation of the land will be fatal in many ways to savages, for they cannot, or will not, change their habits (Darwin, 1896, p. 182).

These attitudes did not help to stem the slaughter against them. Nor did it help stop the following solution to the “Black problem.” After telling of how one person used strychnine to kill a large number of Blacks, Hatton-Finch noted:

As a rule, however, few people are ambitious of indulging in such wholesale slaughter, and, when the Blacks are troublesome, it is generally considered sufficient punishment to go out and shoot one or two. They are easily discouraged in their wild state, especially by anything that they cannot understand (Hatton-Finch, 1885, p. 149-150).

The End of the Tasmanians

In 1830, a mere 30 years after the British originally settled in Tasmania, the last 135 of the original population, estimated from 3,000 to as many as 5,000, were rounded up by George Augustus Robinson and transported to Flinders Island, 30 miles northeast of Tasmania (Jones, 1971). Flinders Island, a land with few trees, no rivers, violent cold winds, frequent rain, and over-run with grass-tree scrub and tea-tree thickets, is directly north of the northeast corner of Tasmania (Fisher, 1968). Robinson had long fought for the interests of natives, learned their language, and was thoroughly convinced that the blame for the native-settler conflicts lay primarily with the settlers (Bonwick, 1870). Although he was paid 300 pounds in advance, and was to be paid 700 total if he ridded Tasmania of the natives, he also likely realized that this was the only chance to save the remaining Tasmanians (Hormann, 1949).

Unfortunately, Robinson proved to be a poor administrator, and the natives also had much difficulty adjusting to their new home. The living conditions on the island were horrible, many were extremely homesick, and disease was rampant. Many of the newly transported persons soon died, as evidently did virtually all infants born on the island. Many felt that they were taken there to die, and by 1869 only three Tasmanians remained alive, William Lanne (or Lanney), a woman "with sparkling features" named Truganini, and one other woman called "Mini." Lanne died on March 5, 1859 of choleric diarrhea at age 34, and the last woman died in 1876. The interest of outsiders in these three persons was, even at this point, not humane, but because of:

. . . the interests of science to secure a perfect skeleton of a male Tasmanian aboriginal. A female skeleton is now in the Museum, but there is no male, consequently the death of "Billy Lanne" put our surgeons on the alert. The Royal Society, anxious to obtain the skeleton for the Museum, wrote specifically to the Government upon the subject, setting forth at length the reasons why, if possible, the skeleton should be secured to them. The Government at once admitted their right to it, in preference to any other institution, and the Council expressed their willingness at any time to furnish casts, photographs, and all other particulars to any scientific society requiring them . . . so valuable a skeleton would not have been permitted to remain in the grave, and possibly no opposition would have been made to its removal, had it been taken by those best entitled to hold it in the interests of the public and of science. . . Besides the Royal Society, it seems that there were others who desired to secure "Billy Lanne's" skeleton, and who were determined to have it. . . The dead-house at the hospital was entered on Friday night, the head was skinned and the skull carried away, and with a view to conceal this proceeding, the head of a patient who had died in the hospital . . . was . . . placed inside the scalp of the unfortunate native, the face being drawn over so as to have the appearance of completeness. On this mutilation being discovered, the members of the Council of the Royal Society were greatly annoyed, and feel-

ing assured that the object of the party who had taken the skull was afterwards to take the body from the grave, and so possess himself of the perfect skeleton, it was resolved to take off the feet and hands and to lodge them in the Museum . . . (Bonwick, 1870, pp. 397-398).

The demand for the bones and other body parts was primarily due to the importance of the Tasmanians in documenting and researching evolution. An example is the Royal College of Surgeons museum listed its Aboriginal skulls as "the most primitive of all existing forms of mankind" (Monaghan, 1991, p. 30). When the last woman died, Diamond noted,

Before Truganini, the last woman, died in 1876, she was terrified of similar post mortem mutilation and asked in vain to be buried at sea. As she had feared, the Royal Society dug up her skeleton and put it on public display in the Tasmanian Museum, where it remained until 1947. In that year the museum finally yielded to complaints of poor taste and transferred Truganini's skeleton to a room where only scientists could view it. . . . Finally in 1976—the centenary year of Truganini's death—her skeleton was cremated over the museum's objections, and her ashes were scattered at sea as she had requested. While the Tasmanians were few in number, their extermination was disproportionately influential in Australian history because Tasmania was the first Australian colony to solve its native problem . . . by . . . getting rid of all its natives (Diamond, 1988, p. 9).

And the extent of the problem of desecrating graves was so widespread in science that,

some of the greatest names in British science were involved in a body-snatching trade of huge proportions. Between 5,000 and 10,000 Aborigines had their graves desecrated, their bodies disinterred and parts dismembered. George Rolleson, of Oxford University's Museum of Anatomy, and Sir Richard Owen and Sir Arthur Keith, of the Royal College of Surgeons, were involved, Charles Darwin is also implicated through letters written in the 1870s and found in a Hobart archive in the mid-1970s (Monaghan, 1991, p. 33).

Were the Tasmanians An Inferior Race?

That the motivation for the slaughter involved race and natural selection aspects of evolution beliefs can not be debated:

By the mid-19th century, the scientific interest in the bones of Australian Aborigines was gaining popularity, as early Evolution theorists sought proof. . . . The interest grew to a storm soon after Charles Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. A race began to prove his hypotheses. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin positioned the Australians as crucial proof of his theories: '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.' Within 20 years, Darwin's prediction was to come true in Tasmania. Darwin himself wrote to one of his associate's museums, asking for pure-blood Tasmanian skulls

if it would not upset the feelings of the remaining natives. There were then only four Tasmanian Aborigines left. Darwin's theories had placed Aborigines as a possible evolutionary link between man and ape. Museum curators from around the world clamoured to obtain skulls. A complete set of racial crania was essential for any study. Australian Aboriginal skulls, particularly the increasingly rare Tasmanians, were much sought after (Monaghan, 1991, p. 34).

In Darwin's words, the varieties of mankind "act on each other in the same way as different species of animals—the stronger always exterminating the weaker" (Darwin, 1965, p. 230).

While there were many claims of the Tasmanians being a primitive race, judging by proximity and overt physical characteristics, they seem to be partly related to the Australian Aborigines (Thorn, 1971). The observation that many of their cultural practices, such as burial traditions were very similar, supports this conclusion (Hiatt, 1969). In a study of prehistoric Australia, Mulvaney (1969) concluded that the Tasmanian racial affiliations still remain speculative. Often mentioned racial affiliations are Negritic, Andamanese, and Murrayian morphology (Birdsell, 1949). That the Tasmanians were not an "inferior race" was evident from the observations of many qualified researchers. In answer to the question "Were the Blacks of Tasmania capable of *true civilization*?" Bonwick answered "Yes, undoubtedly;" and provided as an example,

the case of Walter George Arthur, a Tasmanian aboriginal, whom I knew well, who was captured when a mere infant, and brought up and educated at the Queen's Orphan School (at Hobart Town). His ideas were perfectly English, and there was not the smallest dash of the savage in him. He was a very conversible man, fond of reading, and spoke and wrote English quite grammatically. His spelling was also quite correct. This man had a hundred acres of land, and knew his rights in relation thereto quite as well as you do yours [and he was] . . . creditable to his acuteness, sense of right, and of honourable feelings. . . . (Bonwick, 1870, p. 353)

As late as 1926 respected scientists were still teaching that the Australians were "strongly reminiscent of the species *Neandertalensis*" and that the "former inhabitants of Tasmania [are a] . . . race probably a bit more primitive than Australians" (Wilder, 1926, pp. 341,342).

According to historical research, little evidence exists for the commonly alleged behavioral deviancy and other so-called evidences of biological "primitiveness" of the Aborigines and the Tasmanians in general (Burnham, 1980; Thomas, 1981; Mulvaney, 1969; Lockwood, 1963; Thomas, 1959; Turnbull, 1962; Healy, 1978). It is therefore difficult to conclude from the evidence that a "superior" race of individuals conquered an inferior group. Hughes even claimed that "by the 1870s, Tasmania had more paupers, lunatics, orphans, and invalids than South Australia, and Queensland combined, concentrated in a population less than half of theirs" (Hughes, 1987, p. 593). Admittedly this was true partially because a large number of ex-convicts lived there, but according to Hughes the convict population had the worst jobs, the least capital, the lowest education,

were most prone to fighting, drinking, and were more likely to be both charged and convicted of crimes.

In addition, the social system and the non-convict population did little to help matters: "Australia presented them with much the same social disabilities that had pushed them into crime in Britain," and

the unrelenting, go-getting, land-grabbing, cash-and-gold obsessed materialism of free Australian colonists, acting in a vast geographical space, but a small social one" exacerbated matters (Hughes, 1987, p. 588).

Conditions were such that Hughes expresses surprise that "with such a social ethic . . . the conviction rate was not higher." Indeed, the crime level among the convicts appeared to be rather low compared to the rate found in the general population in the average large American city today.

Hughes (1987) even claims that in the middle 1840s, very few of the criminal convictions in Australia—he estimates six percent—were for crimes committed by the natives. Part of the reason, he concludes, is that the Aborigines were "diligent family-oriented workers with a stake in their community." Bates (1973, p. 64) even believes that the moment the Europeans entered their lives "all native social and sexual taboos were broken" to the major detriment of the native people. They also possessed a rich culture and social system which the Europeans destroyed (Brown, 1988; McGrew, 1987; Goede, 1983). Much of the problem was because the authorities allowed, and even encouraged, violence against the Tasmanians:

They have been shot in the woods, and hunted down as beasts of prey. Their women have been contaminated, and then had their throats cut, or been shot, by the British residents, who . . . call[ed] themselves civilized people. The Government, too, by the common hangman, sacrificed the lives of such of the Aborigines as in retaliation destroyed their wholesale murderers, and the Government, to its shame be it recorded, in no one instance, on no single occasion, ever punished, or threatened to punish, the acknowledged murders of the aboriginal inhabitants (*The Hobart Town Times*, April 1836, quoted in Bonwick, 1870, p. 70).

The extermination of the Tasmanians solved the "native problem by Hitler's final solution." The same end has not befallen the mainland Aborigine population partially because they were far too numerous to exterminate in the same manner as the Tasmanians. The new settlers came close though: Diamond claims that after the arrival of the British colonists in 1788, the Aborigine population declined from 300,000 to a mere 60,000 in 1921. Grattan (1942, p. 40) concluded that the Aborigines, whom he notes that Elkin classifies as the "Australoid race," were utterly different from the other native peoples in this part of the world such as the Polynesians, and were at times "brutally slaughtered as one might slaughter vermin." They were also slaughtered for science; "murdered for the body-parts trade" (Monaghan, 1991, p. 33).

The conclusion of one early evolutionist reveals the attitude toward genocide that the Darwinist belief structure engendered: "the Negro alone, . . . of the

dark races, appears to be able to hold his own in the great struggle for existence, when brought into competition with the white man. We may deplore the fact, but *we cannot alter the laws of nature*" (Knighton, 1886, p. 285, emphasis mine). The inferior races were destined to be wiped out in the great struggle for life that Darwinists then believed created all life. The Aborigines were in the way of the new settlers, not unlike the wild animals. Because they interfered with the new population they were not only not to be empathized with, but must be wiped out for the benefit of the superior race. Anthony Trollope expressed the prevailing nineteenth-century attitude toward Australian Blacks: "it is their fate to be abolished" (1873, p. 75) and as an inferior race they "cannot live on equal terms with the white man" (pp. 68-69). Further, the Aborigines are "infinitely lower in his gifts than the African Negro" (p. 69). When they are killed, one would not report it to the police, Trollope notes, and "no one but a fool would say anything about it" (p. 73). They needed "to go" but they "should perish without unnecessary suffering" (Trollope, 1873, p. 76):

If you ask what sort of race the Blacks of Australia are, nine people out of ten will immediately answer . . . that they are physically and intellectually the most degraded race in the world . . . for the purpose of gauging their physical and intellectual merits, we can only do so by comparing [races] with each other. When compared with those nations of the Old World . . . the Australian Black is, of course, a very low specimen of the human race indeed (Hatton-Finch, 1885, p. 137).

Darwin himself used the Aborigines and the Tasmanian holocaust as prime evidence for his theory of natural selection (Monaghan, 1991; Darwin 1896, p. 182). His words on their demise illustrate an example of the tone of his 1859 work *The Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*:

When Tasmania was first colonised the natives were roughly estimated by some at 7000 and by others at 20,000. Their number was soon greatly reduced, chiefly by fighting with the English and with each other. After the famous hunt by all the colonists, when the remaining natives delivered themselves up to the government, they consisted only of 120 individuals, who were in 1832 transported to Flinders Island. This island, situated between Tasmania and Australia, is forty miles long, and from twelve to eighteen miles broad: it seems healthy, and the natives were well treated. Nevertheless, they suffered greatly in health. In 1834 they consisted of forty-seven adult males, forty-eight adult females, and sixteen children, or in all of 111 souls. In 1835 only one hundred were left. As they continued rapidly to decrease, and as they themselves thought that they should not perish so quickly elsewhere, they were removed in 1847 to Oyster Cove in the southern part of Tasmania. They then consisted (Dec. 20, 1847 of fourteen men, twenty-two women and ten children (Darwin, 1896, p. 183-184).

What occurred was not just massive killing and genocide, but according to Dr. Broca:

The English have committed upon the Tasmanian race, and that in the nineteenth century, execrable atrocities a hundred times less excusable than the hitherto unrivaled crimes of which the Spaniards were guilty in the sixteenth century in the Antilles (quoted in Bonwick, 1870, p. 66).

After they were forced from their homeland and moved to Flinders Island, Darwin notes that they could not compete with the more advanced races:

Disease and death still pursued them, and in 1864 one man (who died in 1869), and three elderly women alone survived. . . . With respect to the cause of this extraordinary state of things, Dr. Story remarks that death followed the attempts to civilise the natives. 'If left to themselves to roam as they were wont and undisturbed, they would have reared more children, and there would have been less mortality.' Another careful observer of the natives, Mr. Davis, remarks, 'The births have been few and the deaths numerous. This may have been in a great measure owing to their change of living and food; but more so to their banishment from the mainland of Van Diemen's Land, and consequent depression of spirits' (Darwin, 1896, p. 184).

The Australian Aborigines too were hunted and "slaughtered wholesale," and "the bones from their sacred graves [were] dug up to prove the racist theory of white superiority." The carnage was to the extent that proving "racial inferiority" became a "new export industry" of Australia (Gripper, 1994, p. 32). The motivation was to prove that "the Aborigines were the 'missing link' between Stone Age men and 'fully evolved' whites" (Gripper, 1994, p. 32). In the words of Shepherd:

Ironically, the Tasmanians were more interesting in death than they had ever been in life. Darwin's theory placed this society so low on the evolutionary scale that their lifestyle and, concomitantly, their dead bodies became fascinating to scientists. Their graves were robbed so that physicians and anthropologists could study their anatomy; science was the excuse. The discovery of the remains of Neanderthal man paralleled the discovery of the Tasmanians, societies that were almost equally primitive. The Royal College of Surgeons in London had the largest collection of Tasmanian skeletons, and in what may be the final injustice, this collection was destroyed by a German firebomb during the second World War (Shepherd, 1990, p. 4).

Summary

In the concatenation of social, cultural, religious and other influences, Darwinism played a clear, if not a major role, in the demise of the Tasmanian race. Darwin taught that the "inferior" races would become extinct and these teachings influenced many influential people (Bergman, 1992). Clear evidence existed long ago as to the outcome of evolutionist beliefs if applied to humans. Many Christians of this era were also heavily influenced by Darwinist ideas of inferior races, and some even used Biblical arguments to justify the racial inferiority belief. An example is the conclusion that certain races were "the beasts of the earth" or black skin was a sign

of the curse that God put on Ham and all his descendants as mentioned in Genesis 3:14, 7:21 and 8:17, (Buswell, 1964).

The negative role that Darwin's theory played in this history is clear, and the suffering it has caused has been, and continues to be, enormous. If the British fully believed and acted consistently on the belief that all humans were children of Adam, and were all brothers and sisters, the Tasmanian holocaust would likely never have occurred. Never would the "long series of cruelties and misfortunes" that befell these people have happened (Bonwick, 1870, p. 56).

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Assessment of World Views: Creation, Progressive Creation, and Theistic Evolution

At the heart of the creation/evolution debate is the starting point of one's world view. After the foundational premise is assumed, the interpretation of the data of the sciences, the arts, the humanities and human history follows logically. Therefore, we must examine these foundational assumptions and assess their truth content.

There are three common *a priori* assumptions that form the foundation for the respective world views. These are as follows:

1. Creation — "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth".
The creation week, which was seven rotations of the earth in duration, was at the beginning of the history of the universe, which has existed for at least 300,000 weeks.
2. Progressive Creation and Theistic Evolution — "Throughout history God created the heavens and the earth."