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Anticipating the bicentennial of Darwin's birth and the sesquicentennial of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, the Church of England unveiled a new section of its [website](#) [4] entitled "On the origin of Darwin," discussing Darwin's relationship to the church, the development of his own views on faith, and a brief historical sketch, bibliography, and listing of celebrations of the Darwin anniversaries. Attracting the most attention, however, was "Good religion needs good science" -- a short essay by the Church's director of mission and public affairs, the Rev. Malcolm Brown -- owing to its call for the Church of England to apologize to Darwin.

Addressing Darwin, Brown wrote, "200 years from your birth, the Church of England owes you an apology for misunderstanding you and, by getting our first reaction wrong, encouraging others to misunderstand you still. We try to practice the old virtues of 'faith seeking understanding' and hope that makes some amends. But the struggle for your reputation is not over yet, and the problem is not just your religious opponents but those who falsely claim you in support of their own interests." As the Associated Press (September 15, 2008) [reported](#) [5], however, Brown's statement was not an official apology on behalf of the church.

Reaction to Brown's call for the church to apologize for misunderstanding Darwin was mixed among his descendants. Andrew Darwin, a great-great-grandson of Darwin, [told](#) [6] the *Daily Mail* (September 13, 2008) that the apology was pointless: "'Why bother?' he said. 'When an apology is made after 200 years, it's not so much to right a wrong, but to make the person or organisation making the apology feel better.'" But Horace Barlow, a great-grandson of Darwin, thought that Darwin would have been pleased to hear the church's apology; he noted also, "They buried him in Westminster Abbey, which I suppose was an apology of sorts."

Reaction was also mixed in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, the Church of England's sister church. Episcopal News Service (September 17, 2008) [quoted](#) [7] the Rev. Norman Faramelli of Episcopal Divinity School and Boston University as concurring with Brown's apology, with the caveat that "it's not just the Church of England that owes him an apology." The Rev. Canon Ed Rodman, a member of the Episcopal Church's Executive Council and the council's Committee on Science, Faith and Technology, however, felt that it didn't go far enough, saying that it was time for the church to "fully acknowledge its culpability in discrediting Darwin's work."

The question of apologizing to Darwin arose in the Catholic Church as well, [according](#) [8] to Reuters (September 16, 2008). In discussing "[Biological Evolution: Facts and Theories](#)" [9] -- a conference of scientists, theologians, and philosophers addressing the *Origin*, to take place in Rome in March 2009 -- Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, the Vatican's culture minister, indicated that the church was not planning to issue a posthumous apology to Darwin. "Maybe we should abandon the idea of issuing apologies as if history was a court eternally in session," he said, while adding that Darwin's theories were "never condemned by the Catholic Church nor was his book ever banned."

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