

Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if we only take time to look.

Questions to ask yourself

What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?

Which incidents made you *think* or *feel* most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?

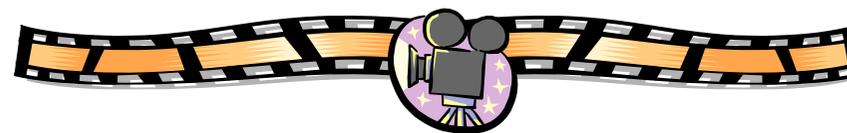
What issues did the film raise for you?

What character(s) do you most identify with and why?

Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

Some facts about the film

- Paul Bettany and Jennifer Connelly portray husband and wife in the movie, and are actually married in real life.
- It is often thought Darwin may have had Ménière's disease. This idea is based on a common list of symptoms which were present in Darwin's case, such as tinnitus, vertigo, dizziness, motion sickness, vomiting, continual malaise and tiredness. Darwin himself had the opinion that most of his health problems had an origin in his 4-year bout with sea sickness.
- Darwin remained close friends with the vicar of Downe, John Innes, and continued to play a leading part in the parish work of the church. He considered it "absurd to doubt that a man might be an ardent theist and an evolutionist" and, though reticent about his religious views, in 1879 he wrote that "I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. – I think that generally ... an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind."
- *Creation* is based on real-life letters and documents of the Darwin family. It is an adaptation of *Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, His Daughter and Human Evolution*, Randal Keynes' best-selling biography of Charles Darwin. Keynes is Darwin's great-great grandson.



**A chance to watch films together.
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

**9th Jan Toy Story 3 (2.30pm with FEATURES
@ Tackley)**

6th Feb Departures

6th Mar Heavens Above!

3rd Apr Precious

8th May Creation

5th Jun Keeping the Faith

**Films start at 5:30pm
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

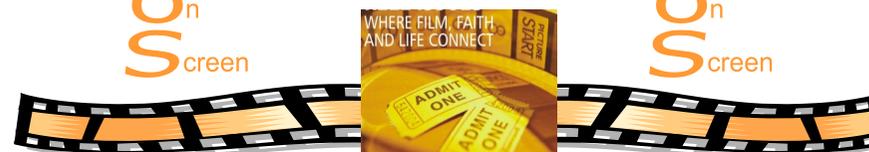
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Creation

Creation is the powerful and true-life tale of Charles Darwin and the most explosive idea in history. A world-renowned scientist, and a dedicated family man struggling to accept his daughter's death, Darwin is torn between his love for his deeply religious wife and his own growing belief in a world where God has no place. He finds himself caught in a battle between faith and reason, love and truth.

The film came out in 2009 to mark the 150th anniversary of the publication of "The Origin of Species" in 1859. Darwin's work itself can be seen as the culmination of many years of developing thought. Evolution was not a totally new idea and had been floating around for at least a century. Indeed, Darwin's grandfather had been one of the early exponents. Alongside that was the idea that the Bible may not, after all, provide a scientific explanation of how things came to be and an increasing number of liberal theologians were quite comfortable, as many of us are today, with the idea that the Bible is a historical source but not a document in which every word is historically true. Nonetheless, for many people in 1859, such ideas would have still been shocking. In the film, we see something of the indignation of the local church minister. In contrast, one of Darwin's friends comments with glee that Darwin has killed God. However, that was not Darwin's intention. He had no particular desire to destroy religion. His faith ebbed and flowed over the years, especially after the tragic death of his daughter Annie, but his chief problem with Christianity was not natural selection. Rather it was that other Victorian preoccupation, the doctrine of eternal damnation.

Suffering

Part of the tension Darwin feels as a result of his theory is the way suffering is built into fabric of universe. Myriad lives are created only to be immediately extinguished—thousands of trout die just so a few may live. How does that sit alongside a benevolent God? Revd Innes doesn't feel it is his place to speculate on the mind of God, but how do you respond to such wasteful extravagance and the needless suffering that seems to be inbuilt into the natural world?

Belief

Think of a belief you hold firmly—why do you believe it? How have you come to the beliefs you hold? What would it take to change your mind? Sometimes our beliefs come from our upbringing, our family, the culture(s) we are exposed to. Other beliefs come from being told something by someone else, an authority we trust. Sometimes our beliefs are formed from our own sifting of the evidence and reaching a conclusion which makes sense to us. But all scientists will tell you that theories are only as good as the next set of results. Our understanding of things remains incomplete. Even Jesus entered into dialogue with others (eg. the Syro-Phoenician woman) and was persuaded by the arguments. And the Bible itself encourages us to test everything and then hold on to the good. Yet it can be very hard to admit we are wrong. Are there things you believe which are non-negotiable? If so, what and why?

Grief

The death of Annie affected both parents very deeply. In such situations, there are always nagging questions: "Did I do enough? Was it my fault? Why didn't I go with her?" How do we cope in such situations? Guilt gets us nowhere, but how can we lay things to rest? And what role might the church have to play to help in such situations?

Memorable Quotes

- Charles** Nature selects for survival; man for appearance.
- Charles Huxley** You talk as if we were at war.
Yes. Science is at war with religion, and when we win, we'll finally be rid of those damned archbishops and their threats of eternal punishment.
- Charles** No, Mr Huxley. We live in a society and it is a society bound together by the Church.
- Charles Innes** Thomas Malthus calculated that ... we would be knee deep in trout. But most of the eggs are destroyed or eaten so that the numbers remain stable. That's the beauty of God's plan.
- Charles** It doesn't strike you as a wasteful plan, these myriad lives created only to be immediately extinguished?
- Innes** They provide food for others.
- Charles** But thousands, John. Thousands die so that only a few may live. Is not the sum total of happiness in some sort of massive deficit?
- Innes** Charles, it is really not my duty to speculate on the mind of God, but it does seem to me that nature is at peace.
- Annie Charles** What are you so scared of? It is only a theory.
No, they're right. It changes everything. Suppose the whole world stopped believing that God had any sort of plan for us. That nothing mattered. Not love, not trust. Not faith, not honour. Only brute survival. Apart from anything else, it would break your mother's heart.
- Emma** Do you really care so little for your immortal soul? Charles, do you not care that you may never pass through the gates of heaven and that you and I may be separated for all eternity? ... I think you are at war with God, Charles. We both know it is a battle you cannot win.
- Charles Emma** How dare he torture our children for expressing the truth?
It is not the truth as he sees it.
- Emma** I let her go. That's the truth. And more than anything, I have hated myself.
- Emma** The fact of it is, knowing everything I now know, I would marry you again tomorrow, my love.
- Charles Emma Charles** I've finished. You decide.
About what?
Well, about what should be done with it. Someone needs to take God's side in all of this. I'd much rather it was you than Innes.
- Emma Charles** Supposing I think it should be destroyed?
Well, then you must do what you think is right. Read it first.
- Emma** May God forgive us both.