

**DARWINISM TESTED
BY THE SCIENCE OF
LANGUAGE**

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Darwinism Tested by the Science of Language by August Schleicher & Dr. Alex V. W. Bikkers

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AUGUST SCHLEICHER & DR. ALEX V. W. BIKKERS

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Translated from the German

OF

PROFESSOR AUGUST SCHLEICHER,

WITH PREFACE AND ADDITIONAL NOTES,

BY

DR. ALEX. V. W. BIKKERS.

LONDON :

JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, 74 & 75, PICCADILLY.

1869.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

LAW and order pervade the universe; as we proceed in unbiassed investigation of the realm of nature we see the clouds of wonder and ignorance dispelled by the torch of knowledge and truth. As the Italian poet has it:—

La maraviglia
Dell' ignoranz' è la figlia,
E del saper
La madre.

I have always looked upon the idea of creation from nothing as so absurd, so inconsistent, so unphilosophical, as hardly to deserve the very name of an idea except by way of courtesy.

My favourite study, glossology, or the science of language, was the first to convert

me to Darwinism. Here, as elsewhere, I trusted to the grand principle of analogy which underlies so many more of the mysteries of nature.

Ever since 1864, when Fritz Mueller published his remarkable pamphlet, "fuer Darwin," a test of Darwinism by one particular group of animals, the Crustacea, it occurred to me that other investigators of natural science might apply the main principles laid down in the "Origin of Species" to their own particular branch of study.

It is but fair to say that Dr. Mueller had been forestalled in his attempt by one of his countrymen, August Schleicher, a distinguished glossologist, and a Professor at the University of Jena. His open missive (or public letter) to Professor Ernst Haeckel, his learned colleague and the great champion of Darwinism in Germany, is the pamphlet here presented in an English garb.

As the translator of Dr. Mueller's treatise says of himself—"My chief object has been to furnish, as nearly as possible, a literal version of the original, regarding mere elegance of expression as of secondary importance in a scientific work." It is always hard to have to deal with any scientific dissertation written on a subject, the terminology of which is still unsettled, and in a language living on its own stock, possessing such words as *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, *Ursprache*, *Grundsprache*, *lautlich*, *Lautform*, and others of a similarly embarrassing nature.

Not the shadow of a doubt lurks in my own mind that the science of language, although still in its infancy, is the highest and at the same time the easiest test of Mr. Darwin's theory.

It is with such a conviction that I venture to issue this English translation of Professor Schleicher's brochure, not only as an addi-

tional witness to the soundness of Darwin's theory, nor even as a mere adding of material to the literature of Darwinism, already represented by the names of Bree and Daubeny (1860), of Von Pelzen (1861), of Rolle (1863), of Flourens (1864), of Hallier and Young (1865), of Haeckel and O. E. Schmidt (1866), of Professor Omboni (1867), of Buechner and Twemlow (1868), and last, not least, of Fritz Mueller, whose testimony hardly reached England before the beginning of this year.

The fruit of my labour may be regarded in no other light than that of an humble palm-leaf on the shrine of a man who has promulgated truth in his attempt to cut short the existence of error.

It may not be superfluous for the non-professional student of language to receive the additional assurance that all data furnished by the German glossologist, as far as his

own department is concerned, are acknowledged axiomata in the science of language, with the sole exception, perhaps, of the very bold statement (p. 47) concerning the impossibility of a common origin of speech, in which I for one do not concur.

Not until after I had finished my translation of Professor Schleicher's remarkable pamphlet did I receive information of the author's premature demise, which occurred at the close of the past year. I embrace this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Professor Ernst Haeckel of the University of Jena for this and other valuable communications directly or indirectly connected with the subject of Darwinism.

A. V. W. B.

LONDON, *Oct. 5th*, 1869.