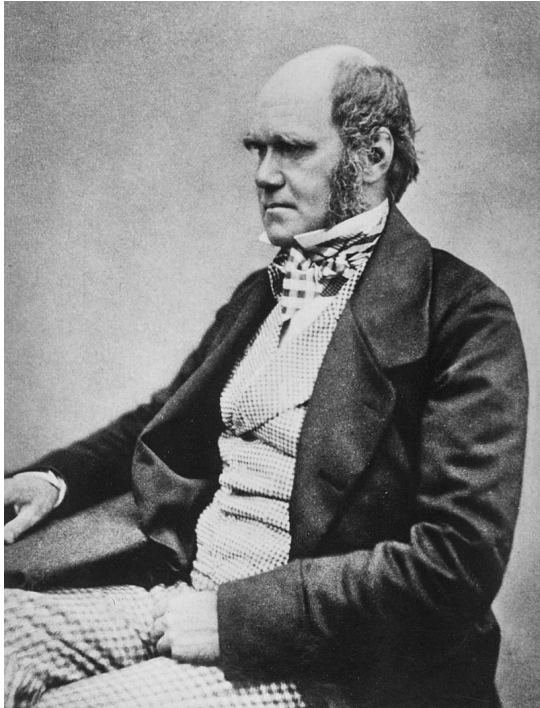






Two Humanist heroes compared.

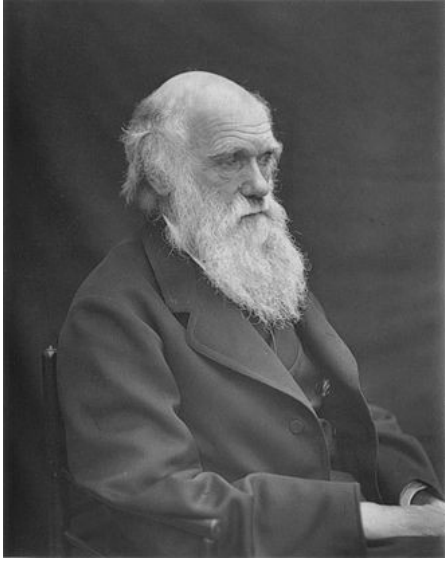
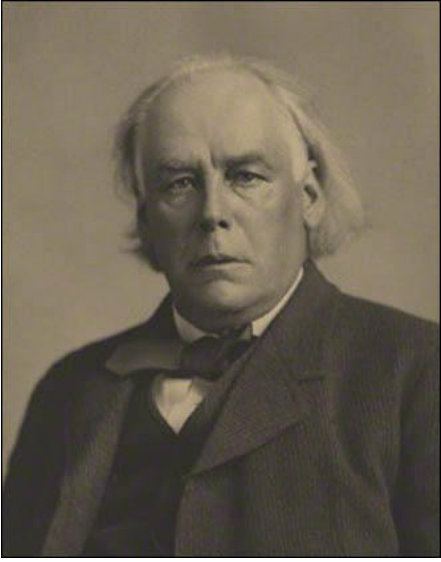

Both were prominent Victorians. Darwin was 24 years older than Bradlaugh.

	Charles Darwin 1809 - 1882	Charles Bradlaugh 1833 - 1891
		
<p>Summary of achievements</p>	<p>His major lifetime work was discovering and expounding the detail of his theory of evolution by natural selection.</p> <p>This theory undermined belief in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible by demonstrating that Genesis is incompatible with science.</p> <p>But he was also active in other areas of natural science, including geology</p>	<p>He was an atheist whose lectures and texts undermined belief in the New Testament and the Jesus of the Holy Bible by demonstrating the lack of credibility of the Gospels.</p> <p>But he was much more than an advocate for atheism. He was also passionate about the need for social change, on such subjects as:</p> <p>universal suffrage (votes for all men/women), secularism, republicanism (doing away with royalty), dispossessing wealthy landowners, birth control, opposition to sabbatarianism (Sunday trading), women's rights, workers' rights (trade unions), home rule for India, home rule for Ireland. teetotalism, he was against Socialism (ie public ownership of services and production)</p> <p>Success has since been achieved in most of these fields. He had some failures: republicanism; dispossessing wealthy landowners; teetotalism. socialism (still considered by the labour party)</p>

<p>Did they ever meet? Did they know each other? (Apparently not)</p>	<p>Darwin refused to be a witness for Bradlaugh in his appeal against conviction in the “Fruits of Philosophy” trial, saying that “artificial checks to the natural rate of human increase are very undesirable and that the use of artificial means to prevent conception would soon destroy chastity and, ultimately, the family.”</p>	<p>In 1877 Bradlaugh (together with Annie Besant) had provocatively invited a fine and imprisonment by re-publishing a banned book (The Fruits Of Philosophy) which advocated birth control. They were convicted and each sentenced to six month’s imprisonment and a fine of £200. Bradlaugh wrote to Darwin asking him to be his witness in his appeal against this conviction. Darwin refused. (Incidentally, Bradlaugh won this appeal and the conviction was quashed)</p>
<p>Talents</p>	<p>An experimental scientist, with an aptitude for interpreting detail.</p> <p>He was not much interested in public debate to defend his work and his discoveries.</p> <p>The opposition was fierce, and came from organised religion. He left that to more combative personalities such as T H Huxley.</p>	<p>An aptitude for the law, even as an amateur lawyer, that earned the respect of foes and friends alike. He fought many legal cases in his career, sometimes acting alone against some of the best legal brains in the land.</p> <p>He was also a brilliant and moving speaker with a very loud voice, able to attract, control and inspire very large audiences, often 3000 or more.</p> <p>A talented writer and publisher</p> <p>A combative personality, he was also excellent in argument and debate.</p> <p>Tall, around 6ft 2ins with a hefty physique. He was not adverse to using physical violence, particularly against those that disrupted his lectures, but also at times, against the police, and in Parliament.</p> <p>But he was also a pleasant, polite, considerate, and well liked person</p>
<p>Childhood</p>	<p>He was born into a well-to-do family who had a large house in Shrewsbury. His father (Robert) and grandfather (Erasmus) were both physicians. Erasmus was a freethinker who had expounded ideas similar to evolution and natural selection. His mother Susannah (née) Wedgwood was a member of the wealthy Wedgwood pottery family.</p>	<p>He was born into poverty. The family lived in a small house in a narrow alley in Hoxton in the East End of London. His daughter Hypatia wrote “The little street has a desperate air of squalor and poverty”</p> <p>His father was a lawyer’s clerk. His mother had been a nursemaid before marriage.</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>He had private schooling as a boarder at Shrewsbury School until university age when his father sent him to Edinburgh University to study medicine, but he abandoned it. His father then sent him to Christ’s College Cambridge with a career as an Anglican parson as the objective. He did well in the course but had no</p>	<p>His schooling ended at 10 years old. Thereafter he was self educated. He became proficient in classical Greek culture, and languages including French, Hebrew, Greek, Latin.</p>

	<p>interest in becoming a vicar. While at university he re-kindled his childhood interest in natural history.</p>	
<p>Initial Employment</p>	<p>In 1831 he joined the HMS Beagle as a self-funded naturalist and gentleman companion to Captain Robert Fitzroy on a five year surveying and mapping voyage of the southern oceans.</p>	<p>In 1844, aged 11, he was employed as a clerk to a coal merchant. He became a volunteer Sunday-school teacher. He discovered atheism at the age of 16, and was then dismissed by the vicar as a Sunday-school teacher. The vicar also ensured that he lost his paid job, and induced his parents to make him leave home. Destitute, he was given a home by Eliza Sharples, the common-law widow of Richard Carlile (Who had served two prison sentences for atheism). His first public lecture was in 1850, at age 17, on the subject of “The Past, Present and Future of Theology”.</p> <p>But he continued to be dogged by poverty and debt. To get an income and get out of debt he joined the Army.</p> <p>He bought himself out of the army in 1853 at age 20. And took a job as a lawyers errand boy. He was soon promoted, and was handling legal cases on behalf of his employer even though unqualified.</p>
<p>Pictures as young men</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Painting of Darwin</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Bradlaugh as a soldier</p>
<p>Adult career.</p>	<p>On returning to England he spent many years analysing the data collected on the Beagle voyage, and publishing a number of scientific papers on biology and geology. In 1839 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society (FRS)</p> <p>In 1858, having not yet published his major work, his theory of evolution by natural selection, he discovered that Alfred Russell Wallace was about to</p>	<p>While working for his lawyer employer, he was also writing, lecturing and presenting public meetings on atheism and other social matters.</p> <p>In order to protect his employer’s reputation he adopted the pseudonym “Iconoclast”, the breaker of images.</p> <p>As a lecturer, he would travel to any part of the UK. He had various lecture tours overseas, including three to the USA.</p>

	<p>publish a similar theory to his own. Fearing that he would be forestalled, he rushed his book into print. “On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection” was published on 24 November 1859.</p> <p>He continued publishing papers and books for the rest of his life.</p>	<p>He founded various magazines. Also various societies, including The National Secular Society.</p> <p>In 1880 he was elected as Liberal MP for Northampton. He was not allowed to take his seat because as an atheist he was not allowed to take the oath. There were three by-elections each of which he won, and at each he was not allowed to take his seat. Ranged against him were the Conservative Party (particularly Lord Randolph Churchill), and Anglican and Roman Catholic MPs. At the General election of 1886 he again won, and the matter was becoming an embarrassment to the Government so the Speaker ruled that there would be no argument and he could take the oath even though he was an atheist. The howls of protest from Conservative MPs were to no avail.</p> <p>He later became a successful, respected and well liked MP even by those MPs (Including Lord Randolph Churchill) who had previously opposed him taking his seat.</p>
<p>Family</p>	<p>In 1839 he married Emma Wedgwood, his cousin. They had 10 children, seven who reached maturity.</p> <p>He was devastated by the death (by TB) of his daughter Anne Elizabeth at age 10 who he had taken to a health spa at Gt Malvern. Anne is buried in the churchyard of Great Malvern Priory.</p> 	<p>In 1855 he married Susannah Lamb Cooper, the daughter of an atheist friend. They had three children, Alice, Hypatia, Charles.</p> <p>Hypatia was named after Hypatia of Alexandria the pagan scientist who was murdered in year 415 by Christians, but also after Hypatia the daughter of Eliza Sharples, who was his girlfriend for a while.</p> <p>The marriage broke up due to his wife’s alcoholism, although they remained friends. He despatched his family to live with in-laws at Cocking, near Midhurst. while he lived in a small flat in East London. Later he moved to a nice house in St John’s Wood.</p> <p>Son Charles (Charlie) died age 11 in 1870 of scarlet fever. His wife died aged 45 in 1877. The two daughters then moved to live with their father in London as his assistants.</p> <p>He gave his daughters a good education including at a school in France. He would communicate with his daughters in French. Alice died of typhus and meningitis aged 32. Hypatia died in 1935 aged 77.</p>

<p>Photos later in life</p>		
<p>Illness and death</p>	<p>He died at age 73, at Down House, of heart failure</p>	<p>He died at the early age of 58, at his house in St John's Wood, of Bright's disease, a progressive and debilitating disease of the kidneys.</p>
<p>Funeral</p>	<p>At Westminster Abbey. A full house ticket-only Christian service attended by many people who, ironically, had religious beliefs which had been undermined by his discoveries.</p>	<p>At Brookwood cemetery, in unconsecrated ground. A massive event with some 3000 attendees, mainly ordinary people who believed in what he had done and stood for. The ashes of his daughter Hypatia are in the same grave. Nearby are the graves of his wife, his daughter Alice, and his grandson Kenneth.</p>  <p>NSS lay a wreath at the grave on the occasion of the 150 year founding of the NSS by Charles Bradlaugh</p>
<p>Statues</p>	<p>Has a statue in the Natural History Museum, and another in Shrewsbury near his old school, and another in the grounds of Christ's College, Cambridge.</p>	<p>Has a bust in the House of Commons (fitting, for a man who for 6 years was banned from the House), and a statue in Northampton, where he served as an MP</p>
<p>Atheist, Agnostic, or something else.</p>	<p>Stopped going to church in 1849. He was confirmed in his disbelief in Christianity by the death of his beloved daughter Annie at age 10. He didn't believe in organised religion. But also didn't believe in denying the existence of a God.</p>	<p>Strongly atheist. Argued that the word God meant nothing to him.</p>

Further reading	Many biographies	Several biographies, including: 1. Charles Bradlaugh: His Life and Work. by Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner (his daughter). Published 1894. two volumes. 842 pages. Downloadable online for free, and a good read. 2. Dare To Stand Alone. By Bryan Niblett, Published 2010. 391 pages. A biography of a lawyer, by a lawyer

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