

The religion that is afraid of science  
dishonors God and commits suicide.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Asking for Trouble

[From *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* By Kenneth R. Miller]

There is, however, a deeper problem caused by the opponents of evolution, but it is not a problem for science. It is a problem for religion. Like our priest, they have based their search for God on the premise that nature is *not* self-sufficient. By such logic, just as Father Murphy claimed that only God could make a flower, they claim that only God could have made a species. Both assertions support the existence of God *only* so long as they are shown to be true, but serious problems for religion emerge when the assertions are shown to be *false*.

If a *lack* of scientific explanation is proof of God's existence, the counterlogic is unimpeachable: a successful scientific explanation is an argument *against* God. That's why this reasoning, ultimately, is much more dangerous to religion than it is to science. Eliot Meyerowitz's fine work on floral induction suddenly becomes a threat to the divine, even though common sense tells us it should be nothing of the sort.

The reason it doesn't, of course, is because the original premise is flawed. The Western God created a material world that is home to both humans and daffodils. God's ability to act in that world need not be predicated on its material defects. There is, therefore, no theological reason for any believer to assume that the macromolecules of the plant cell cannot fully account for the formation of a flower. Life, in all its glory, is based in the physical reality of the natural world. We are dust, and from that dust come the molecules of life to make both flowers and the dreamers who contemplate them.

The critics of evolution have made exactly the same mistake, but on a higher and more dangerous plane. They represent no serious problem for science, which meets the challenge easily. Their claims about missing intermediates and suspect mechanism can be answered directly by providing

the intermediates and demonstrating the mechanisms. Religion, however, is drawn into dangerous territory by the creationist logic. By arguing, as they have repeatedly, that nature *cannot* be self-sufficient in the formation of new species, the creationists forge a logical link between the limits of natural process to accomplish biological change and the existence of a designer (God). In other words, they show the proponents of atheism exactly how to disprove the existence of God—show that evolution works, and it's time to tear down the temple. As we have seen, this is an offer that the enemies of religion are all too happy to accept.

Once again, the premise of the argument is flawed. If their God exists, He acts in the world today in concert with natural laws and works His will in the present through the contingent events of human and natural history. All that evolution does is to point out that the workings of natural processes are also sufficient to explain the contingent events of natural history in the past, including the origin and extinction of species. There is neither logical nor theological basis for excluding God's use of natural processes to originate species, ourselves included. There is therefore no reason for believers to draw a line in the sand between God and Darwin. The opponents of evolution have put their money on the wrong horse, and they fail to see that betting so consistently against science is a losing proposition—not for science, but certainly for religion.

As a Christian, I find the flow of their logic particularly depressing. Not only does it teach us to fear the acquisition of knowledge, which might at any time *disprove* belief, but it suggests that God dwells only in the shadows of our understanding. I suggest that if God is real, we should be able to find Him somewhere else—in the bright light of human knowledge, spiritual *and* scientific.