

BRIDGING THE RELIGION-SCIENCE DIVIDE

Darwin's Cathedral

Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society

David Sloan Wilson

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Reviewed by Richard Faussette

The preview on the inside cover of *Darwin's Cathedral* reads:

One of the great intellectual battles of modern times is between evolution and religion. Until now, they've been considered completely irreconcilable theories of origin and existence. David Sloan Wilson's *Darwin's Cathedral* takes the radical step of joining the two, in the process proposing an evolutionary theory of religion that shakes both evolutionary biology and social theory at their foundations.

The key, argues Wilson, is to think of society as an organism, an old idea that has received new life based on recent developments in evolutionary biology. If society is an organism can we then think of morality and religion as biologically and culturally evolved adaptations that enable human groups to function as single units rather than mere collections of individuals?

David Sloan Wilson says we can. In his introduction, titled "Church as Organism," Wilson writes,

"The purpose of this book is to treat the organismic concept of religious groups as a serious scientific hypothesis...."¹

THE VIEW FROM EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY

Reading Wilson's avowed purpose and the claim on the inside front cover of his book that religion and science have been considered "completely irreconcilable theories of origin and existence," I wondered what had happened to make it so. As early as 1876, Herbert Spencer had written, "The social structure adapted for

dealing with surrounding hostile societies is under a centralized regulating system, to which all the parts are completely subject; just as in the individual *organism* the outer organs are completely subject to the chief nervous centre."²

Spencer also wrote of the "Ecclesiastical system as social bond":

Among primitive men, the customs which stand in place of laws, embody the ideas and feelings of past generations; and, religiously conformed to as they are, exhibit the rule of the dead over the living... bodies of laws regarded as supernaturally given by the traditional god of the race, originating in the way shown, habitually tend to restrain the anti-social actions of the individuals towards one another, and to enforce concerted action in the dealings of the society with other societies: in both ways conducing to social cohesion... Ecclesiastical institutions maintain and strengthen social bonds, and so conserve the social aggregate; and they do this in large measure by conserving beliefs, sentiments, and usages which evolved during earlier stages of the society, are shown by its survival to have had an approximate fitness to the requirements, and are likely still to have it in great measure.³

As we see in these words of Herbert Spencer, the first great sociologist, and as David Sloan Wilson reminds us, the idea of a society as an organism is an old one. According to Wilson, due to recent advances in evolutionary biology, the idea of society as an organism has received new life, but then why did the idea die in the first place? Wilson gives us a clue by specifying a time frame.

Evolutionary biologists in the 1960s rejected group selection so strongly that it became *heretical* to think of 'society as an organism'... for humans or any other species... the rejection of group selection was hailed by evolutionary biologists as a major event... the greatest intellectual revolution of the twentieth century.⁴

Perhaps the solution to the demise of group selection does not lie in evolutionary biology at all but in Isaac Newton's third law of motion, which states that for each action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In 1962, V. C. Wynne-Edwards published *Animal Dispersion in Relation to Social Behavior*, which stated that reproductive restraint enabled groups of individual organisms to avoid the disastrous population crashes that followed the exhaustion of available resources. The process was called group selection in contrast to individual selection because it assumed a certain degree of altruism on the part of individuals toward a group's survival. Genetic variations that did maximize breeding performance were eliminated by the extinction of the groups in which they arose. Wynne-Edwards' theory was so heavily documented it provoked an intense reaction and an immense amount of work resulting in some very important discoveries. David Lack, an ornithologist, soon persuasively argued that breeding restraint was illusory. W.D. Hamilton's brilliant concept of an individual's inclusive fitness stated that the more genes individuals share, the more likely they are to behave altruistically toward one another. "Hamilton's theory was a powerful idea solving problems of altruism and sterile sub populations that had been around since Darwin's time."⁵ In this extraordinarily productive reaction to Wynne-Edwards' challenge; the significance of group selection was lost.

Wilson, however, says "The wholesale rejection of group selection was itself a wrong turn from which the field is only starting to recover."⁶ Here he makes a number of significant statements that bode well for the future and bear repeating. He says:

We must think of religious thought as something that coexists with scientific thought, not as an inferior version of it. . . . Even massively fictitious beliefs can be adaptive, as long as they motivate behaviors that are adaptive in the real world. . . . Once the reasoning associated with scientific thought loses its status as the only adaptive way to think, other forms of thought associated with religion cease to be objects of scorn and incomprehension and can be studied as potential adaptations in their own right.⁷

Strict Darwinians had championed an age of individualism in a frenzied response to Wynne-Edwards' study of group selection. Natural selection, it seemed, now operated solely at the level of the individual, " . . . even to the extent of disrupting the cohesiveness of societies."⁸ Wilson, in *Darwin's Cathedral*, resurrects the organismic concept of religious groups. He doesn't deny individual selection; he incorporates it. His basic argument is that "Natural selection is a multilevel process that operates among groups in addition to [operating] among individuals within groups."⁹

Concluding the view from evolutionary biology, Wilson expresses his belief that "Future generations will be amazed at the degree to which groups were made to disappear as adaptive units of life in the minds of intellectuals during the second half of the twentieth century."¹⁰

THE VIEW FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

As Wilson begins his analysis of the social sciences, I was not surprised to find him saying that "The demise of functionalism in the social sciences bears an eerie resemblance to the demise of multilevel selection theory in biology."¹¹

More than once in the literature, I had found a great social scientist acknowledging an intellectual debt to Emile Durkheim. "Durkheim doubted that something as pervasive and influential as religion could be so dysfunctional. Early humankind lived too close to the edge of survival for such idle theorizing. Beliefs that failed to deliver practical benefits would soon be discarded in favor of more adaptive beliefs."¹² He became the dominant figure in French sociology.

Durkheim was responsible for the attempt to develop a 'scientific' state-supported system of morality based on collective conscience and *organic solidarity*. Leon Bourgeois, premier of France from 1895 to 1896, regarded Durkheim's work as proof that Marxist class conflict could be avoided. In Durkheim's analysis, class struggle was a temporary pathology, and organic solidarity, not revolution, was the predictable outcome of industrialization.¹³

A criticism of functionalism and one reason for its demise was that its hypotheses were difficult to test. Evans-Pritchard summarized the problem: "Durkheim's thesis is more than just neat; it is brilliant and imaginative. . . . But I am afraid that we must once more say that it is a just-so story."¹⁴

With Wilson's premise that morality and religion were biologically and culturally evolved adaptations, and despite the difficulty of bringing scientific rigor to the otherwise utilitarian perspective of the functionalists, I intuitively embraced functionalism. Just a bit farther along I encountered with trepidation an alternative to functionalism: rational choice theory. Its chief architect, Rodney Stark, was "so biting satirical that he seemed to deny functionalists the capacity for rational thought..."¹⁵ To Stark, "All aspects of religion... [could] be understood on the basis of exchange relations between humans and supernatural beings."¹⁶ To Wilson, Stark's theory ignored "the fundamental problem of social life and the role of religion in its solution."¹⁷ I was perplexed at Stark's demeaning attitude toward functionalism while brandishing a metaphysical economics. In splendid contrast, "Durkheim interpreted religion as an adaptation that enables human groups to function as harmonious and coordinated units,"¹⁸ which Wilson regards as "the central thesis of functionalism in the social sciences as it relates to religion."¹⁹ Stark denied functionalism, but as Wilson points out, "Durkheim never denied cost-benefit religious reasoning."²⁰

For Wilson, functionalism has a future. He says, "The worst that can be said about functionalism is that it failed to fulfill itself as a research program during its heyday."²¹ But he adds:

Functionalism wasn't falsified; it merely went out of fashion. Two major developments in intellectual thought may allow functionalism to succeed as a research program in the future, despite its past failures. The first is progress in evolutionary biology, which provides the foundation for functional explanations of all kinds... Advances include not only multilevel selection theory... but also the integration of ecology, evolution and behavior, the mature empirical study of adaptations and modern evolutionary approaches to human behavior. If evolution is the foundation of functionalism, then there is a new foundation upon which to build.

The second major development is the unification of the human social sciences... All sub disciplines of the social sciences need to appreciate that functional explanations must be handled with care, and that group level functional explanations require the greatest care of all.²²

If human groups "can be rigorously shown to function as adaptive units, that will be a major scientific accomplishment... Group-level adaptation is here to stay in evolutionary biology, and the human social sciences must follow suit to remain true to first principles."²³

CALVINISM – AN ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN

Wilson chooses "John Calvin's brand of Christianity as it was instituted in the city of Geneva in the 1530s" in his initial "attempt to understand a single religious community in relation to its environment from an evolutionary perspective."²⁴

Agitation for the reform of the Church is almost as old as Christianity itself. Criticism of the Church increased steadily from the 14th to the 16th centuries, but the official hierarchy did little to address legitimate concerns, particularly the

abuses and venality of the clergy. Martin Luther, a professor at a German university, challenged some of the Church's practices and struck a responsive chord, convincing many that the Church needed a thorough reformation that would restore it to its original apostolic purity.

In the wake of Luther's posting of his Ninety-Five Theses on the church door of Wittenberg and the intellectual ferment that followed, John Calvin, a young French theologian and lawyer, wrote a book considered his greatest work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin passed through the city of Geneva in 1536. Geneva had recently expelled the Roman Catholic Church as part of gaining independence from the Duchy of Savoy. Now politically independent, but still militarily dependent, split into many factions and socially disorganized, Geneva adopted John Calvin's plans for reform. Calvin set out to "unite the fractious city of Geneva into an effective corporate unit,"²⁵ just as Moses had delivered the Ten Commandments to a patchwork people only recently released from servitude. Calvin wrote a catechism that every inhabitant of Geneva had to study. Since Calvin's catechism represents "what the inhabitants of Geneva actually learned," Wilson says, "it presumably had the greatest impact on their behavior."²⁶

Elements of Calvin's catechism of 1538:

1. Obey parents
2. Obey magistrates
3. Obey pastors
4. Abandon self-will
5. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
6. Behave as a single organism
7. Don't harm or kill your neighbor
8. No lewdness and sex only in marriage
9. No theft, either by violence or cunning
10. Don't swear false oaths
11. Don't bear false testimony
12. Pay taxes and perform other civic duties
13. Behave in a civil manner

The Ten Commandments forged a cohesive community, and Calvin's catechism defined the citizen's responsibilities toward the city of Geneva. The citizens were expected to behave in a manner that benefited the group, and their leaders were expected to behave responsibly at each level of the hierarchy. Although Calvin wrote, "Pastors may dare boldly to do all things by God's word" and "may compel all worldly power, glory, wisdom and loftiness to fall down and obey [God's] majesty," he warns, "let them turn aside from this to their own dreams and figments of their own brains, then they are no longer to be considered pastors but rather as pestilential wolves to be driven out."²⁷ Calvin's church is "designed to control the conduct of the shepherd as effectively

as the conduct of the flock.”²⁸ Wilson points out that social control can be exerted from above through force or managed from within by religious beliefs such as Calvin’s catechism that modified the behavior of the citizenry. He points out that internal social controls are more efficient because they are less expensive. One of Wilson’s very important observations regards “turning the other cheek,” often misunderstood as wanton and reckless forgiving. Calvin’s catechism “provides a detailed procedure for punishing transgressions in which forgiveness is highly conditional upon *repentance*.”²⁹

“In the absence of a strong church or comparable social organization, individuals must maintain their own social order, which leads to a limited amount of cooperation at a small scale but also to feuds and rivalries that are dysfunctional at a larger scale.”³⁰ Religious organizations allow larger groups to coordinate their functions more efficiently and suppress internal discord. Coordination and cohesion are particularly relevant for a group surrounded by competing groups, as in the case of the city of Geneva. The development of greater religious discipline in one group might also be expected to have a catalyzing effect on its competitors. Marvin Harris, the anthropologist, made such an observation regarding the steamroller effect of developing state systems:

Once the state becomes a functional reality, its components resonate within a single gigantic amplifier. The more powerful the ruling class, the more it can intensify production, increase population, wage war, expand territory, mystify the peasants, and increase its power still further. All neighboring chiefdoms must either rapidly pass across the threshold of state formation, or succumb to the triumphant armies of the new social leviathan.³¹

People intuitively know that religious morality as embodied in Calvin’s catechism is vital to the health of society. Ken Ham, the fundamentalist Christian, is lambasted because he espouses Creationism over evolutionary theory, but then Ham is a religious man whose primary concern is not for the physical sciences. He says:

If Christian leaders have told the next generation that one can accept the world’s teachings in geology, biology, astronomy, etc., and use these to (re)interpret God’s Word, then the door has been opened for this to happen in *every* area, including morality.³²

Ham’s primary concern is not the age of the earth, but the viability of the Ten Commandments from which Calvin’s catechism is drawn. Is he wrong? No. The belief system and social organization that Calvin founded based on Christianity “caused a city of roughly 13,000 souls to function more effectively than it ever did before. Indeed reform minded people from all over Europe flocked to Geneva to learn and export the secrets of its success.”³³ Ken Ham champions Biblical morality because it is evolutionarily adaptive, but he doesn’t know that. As a Christian fundamentalist he can’t get past the religion he embraces to look at the science he rejects, just as a lapsed religionist can’t get past the science he embraces to consider the irrational he rejects. Wilson says religious beliefs should be

considered from both rational and adaptive perspectives. If people are inclined to adaptive behaviors by a fear of God and their behaviors are truly adaptive, then the fear of God is adaptive, however irrational that belief may initially appear to an objective observer.

“Evolutionary theories of altruism and cooperation focus almost exclusively on cheating,”³⁴ and Calvinism had elaborate controls to prevent cheating, as predicted by evolutionary theory. Powerful Genevan families were just as subject to the censures of Calvin’s church “as the most humble artisan and the evidence shows that decisions were meted out with impartial justice.”³⁵ In addition, “Calvin’s Ecclesiastical ordinances specified a decision-making structure, an educational system, a healthcare system, and a welfare system.”³⁶ The city of Geneva “created the Geneva Academy, which eventually attracted students from throughout Europe. Training was so thorough that it was said that the boys of Geneva talked like Sorbonne doctors.”³⁷

With all these advantages, Wilson says Calvinism had a dark side, but I won’t entertain it here for the following reason. Although Wilson says that “Calvin was not a paragon of virtue,” he admits that Calvin’s “moral failings occurred in exactly the contexts predicted by multilevel selection theory: social control within groups and conduct toward members of other groups.”³⁸ If one is to achieve the kind of disciplined success of Calvin’s Geneva, threats from within and threats from without must be countered as readily as they are encountered. After all, Wilson remarks: “The effect of Calvinism on Geneva was so profound that the city assumed an importance in world affairs out of all proportion to its economic significance... Calvinism caused its community of believers to behave adaptively in the real world, which is all that evolution can be expected to accomplish.”³⁹

THE SECULAR UTILITY OF RELIGION – HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

THE WATER TEMPLE SYSTEM OF BALI

The first of Wilson’s three examples that provide exceptionally clear evidence for what Durkheim called the secular utility of religion is the Water Temple System of Bali.

At the summit of a mountain in Bali is a crater lake from which the waters of Bali are said to emanate. Atop the mountain is a great temple. When it rains and water flows down the mountain a vast network of aqueducts channel the water to individual terraces planted with rice. Throughout this network, smaller temples and shrines are found around which the local inhabitants are organized for the system’s maintenance, which consists primarily of orchestrating seasonal agricultural labors. “An aerial view of the rice terraces bears an eerie resemblance to the cells of a beehive or termite colony.”⁴⁰ Each local group of agriculturalists has its own temple with its own deities and obligations within the larger system of the temple atop the mountain that adaptively relates all the groups to one another.

When Dutch scientists introduced the “green revolution” to Bali with its fast growing and high yielding rice varieties, Balinese farmers were required by law to plant them. This was the “major factor behind the yield and cropped

areas' declines experienced between 1982 and 1985."⁴¹ Scientists were forced to conclude that the "water temple system was *close to optimal* at solving the trade off between water use and pest control."⁴² Such hydraulic systems have been studied extensively. Ancient Egypt and the Mesopotamian basin both cradled hydraulic systems. Each developed a strong centralized religious component.

Here we find a now familiar and unfortunate anomaly. Though Wilson lauds the study by J.S. Lansing from which he draws his data on the water temple system of Bali, calling it "a jewel of scientific reasoning and methodology, providing powerful support for the organismic concept," he says that, "in the decade since its publication it has had no impact at all on the general debate over group selection in biology or functionalism in the social sciences."⁴³

JUDAISM

"Two facts stand out," Wilson says, "about what the People of Israel, as depicted in the Hebrew Bible, were instructed to do by their religion. First, they were instructed to be fruitful and multiply... second, they were provided with two sets of instructions, one for conduct among themselves and one for conduct among other people."⁴⁴

Wilson omits one salient fact. Biblical Jews were not only instructed to be fruitful and multiply, they were further instructed to marry well and to prize intelligence above all other human traits. Although Abraham abandons infanticide, it is Jacob, the usurper, who genetically weakens Laban's flocks while strengthening his own after he is tricked into marrying dull-eyed Leah. To accommodate quality birthing Wilson's second fact becomes his third fact and with all three facts, the steadfastly maintained genetic and cultural isolation of Judaism is comprehensible. Judaism is Wilson's first and only example of a religion with both a cultural *and* a biological component, a tribal religion with a reproductive strategy of quantity and quality birthing eminently open to evolutionary analysis.

Wilson goes on to make a statement that I will quote in full because it requires clarification:

The fact that Jewish populations around the world are genetically more similar to each other than to the populations among which they reside therefore demonstrates an extraordinary degree of isolation achieved by cultural mechanisms. Especially interesting is the fact that Judaism opposed the biological interests of the most powerful members of the community men by restricting their ability to import women from elsewhere. The genetic data shows that these constraints were largely successful.⁴⁵

Wilson is not denying that Jewish communities import and export women from elsewhere, but the exchanged women are specifically Jewish women. The men are only restricted from importing *non*-Jewish women. This is the tradition established by Abraham in Genesis when he finds Canaanite women morally

unsuitable and sends Eliezer to find the right bride for Isaac among the members of his family and the house of his father. In the Middle Ages, Jewish matchmakers or “shadkhan”

Traveled from city to city in an intricate network of cross pollination, telling the father of a young man that a perfectly suited young lady had been discovered two hundred miles away... Jewish law recognized this aspect of the shadkhan's function and stipulated that he was to be paid a higher fee when the bride and groom [came] from widely separated communities. In this way he literally interrelated whole communities and provinces.⁴⁶

There was also an additional consideration:

From the days of the Talmud and for centuries thereafter, it was the headmasters of the Higher Torah Academies who were customarily asked to recommend eligible students for marriage. The reason is obvious. In addition to possessing the necessary moral qualifications, these rabbis were also intimately acquainted both with the elite young scholars who were considered the prize grooms and the leading families of the community who supported the communal institutions.⁴⁷

“Matchmaking” elite young scholars with the daughters of the wealthiest entrepreneurs over many generations produced superior offspring. Prohibiting the importation of non-Jewish concubines into Jewish communities ensured that all of the community's resources went only to the offspring of those carefully arranged unions. In this way, superior lines were preserved and lavishly nurtured. Jewish men were prevented from importing non-Jewish women from surrounding populations because these non-Jewish women had not been carefully bred for generations. Though a Jewish man's short-term biological interests were opposed, due to the religious restrictions, his community's long-term evolutionary interests were served.

Wilson then enters Judaism's world of group interactions. He's working his way through a minefield, and it is at this point we might imagine Wilson perched precariously on one leg directly above a mine. He admits that Judaism gives religious Jewish communities an advantage in any endeavor that requires coordinated action, but to avoid the mine, he must abandon science for apologetics. He says that “anti-Semitism” is fueled by the accusation that Jews collaborate to deprive non-Jews of their resources. He goes on to say that Jewish conspiracy theories reach outrageous proportions that include blatant falsehoods.

Though earlier in his view from the social sciences, he stated that the integration of ecology with other recent developments in the study of human behavior would allow functionalism to succeed as a research program in the future, here he doesn't consider the fact that niche theory in ecology predicts that a peripatetic group religiously committed to a reproductive strategy of quantity and quality birthing is necessarily expansionist and covetous of the elite niches of any host civilization with

which it interacts. A host's God-given and quite natural predilection for the survival of its genetic identity, and not the moral failure of its ethos, is the true source of "anti-Semitism."

Wilson is resurrecting the organismic concept of religious groups, but in this particular instance, his case is woefully understated. Though he has cited the evolutionary psychologist Kevin MacDonald four times, he gives no indication that MacDonald in three volumes has brilliantly elucidated the evolutionary strategy of Judaism. Unfortunately, just as the organismic concept of religious groups, functionalism, and Lansing's work on the temple system of Bali have all suffered from the demise of group selection; MacDonald's prodigious effort has not received the public accolades it so richly deserves. Suffice it to say that this American professor, in true American style, has leveled the playing field by providing equal opportunity strategizing for all. A former tribal possession is rendered comprehensible and accessible to all the peoples of the world. Do you remember Wilson's prediction? If human groups "can be rigorously shown to function as adaptive units, that will be a major scientific accomplishment...."⁴⁸

It has already been done.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Wilson says Christianity can be studied with the same analytical tools as Judaism. He rightly recognizes that the "central fact and interpretation of Christ's death makes altruism the defining feature of being Christian,"⁴⁹ solidifying Christian communities.

Christianity for the most part maintains the Levitical sexual prohibitions of Judaism. Consequently, part of the rise of Christianity, as Wilson suggests, can be attributed to reproductive success, pure and simple. He says Christianity stands alongside Calvinism, the water system of Bali, and Judaism as a functionally adaptive religion, but I am compelled to add: with a religiously disciplined cultural component and a biological component of quantity *and* quality birthing, Judaism stands head and shoulders above the rest as the most functionally adaptive religious system of all.

THE SECULAR UTILITY OF RELIGION

THE MODERN LITERATURE

"If religious groups function as adaptive units... Then members of religious groups should prosper more than isolated individuals or members of less adaptively organized groups."⁵⁰

Wilson, scanning the current literature, does indeed find that church groups provide a host of services for their practitioners and that the strictest religious groups, while imposing a greater financial burden on their practitioners, provide benefits that more than offset their costs. He finds, not surprisingly, that religious researchers themselves are not very good at defining those real tangible benefits religionists enjoy, but spend more time demonstrating the fuzzy intangibles that religious groups provide, such as the satisfaction to be enjoyed from impressive group rituals and communal prayer, items impossible to measure in an

adaptationist fashion. "In proximate terms the individual joins groups only because of the warm feeling of fellowship while in ultimate terms it joins groups only because survival is enhanced."⁵¹

So he yearns for religion to be studied the way evolutionary biologists study the rest of life: with their primary focus on the units that are adapted to survive and reproduce in their environments; but he chooses not to pick up the thread he's established on Judaism, the most functionally adaptive religious system of all, or introduce Zoroastrianism, another ethnic and religiously based reproductive strategy he doesn't mention.

FORGIVENESS AS A COMPLEX ADAPTATION

In Wilson's examination of forgiveness he provides some very simple "rules" of behavior successively discussed as Tit-for-Tat, Contribute Tit-for-Tat and Generous Tit-for-Tat. These fundamental interactions are illuminating and show how altruistic behavior might have developed increasing complexity for strategizing between groups.

One remark he makes caught my eye immediately. He says, "Most possible cultures are not adaptive, and we should hope for our own sakes that a process exists for winnowing among the many possibilities, leaving a subset that are at least somewhat well adapted to their environments."⁵² In that remark, I saw cultural relativism relegated to the trash heap where it belongs. For specific environments, some cultures *are* more adaptive than others.

I was perplexed by Wilson's statement that "It is entirely possible that the New Testament has predisposed Christians to hate Jews long, long after it ceased to be adaptive,"⁵³ but he is now safely past the minefield through which we found him working his way in his discussion of Judaism's group interactions. He says "Christianity and virtually all other religions fall short when judged by the loftiest standard of universal brotherhood,"⁵⁴ ignoring what I believe to be a crucial distinction between a religion and its religionists. Earlier he suggested without qualification that tribal Judaism had abandoned its warrior culture. Now we are to believe that universal Christianity has gained the warrior culture Judaism left behind.

UNIFYING SYSTEMS

As "religion is a central defining characteristic of civilizations,"⁵⁵ and the "key issues on the international agenda involve differences among civilizations,"⁵⁶ a coherent worldview must necessarily include an understanding of religion.

Darwin's Cathedral is therefore an important and timely book because it argues persuasively the practical efficacy of religious beliefs and practices. Wilson's historical examples demonstrate the adaptive nature of religion and provide an essential perspective on the role of religion in human affairs, well worth reading for any rationally bound religionist in danger of "losing the faith."

At the very beginning of the book, Wilson asks, "If society is an organism can we then think of morality and religion as biologically and culturally evolved adaptations that enable human groups to function as single units rather than mere collections of individuals?"

The answer I draw from *Darwin's Cathedral* is an unqualified, "Yes. We can."

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END NOTES

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