

Mutilating Miller

A review of
Finding Darwin's God
by Kenneth R. Miller
Cliff Street Books, New
York, 2000

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Jonathan Sarfati

Kenneth Miller is an ardent evolutionist and anti-creationist. He has a long history of debating scientific creationists,¹ and is credited with being a crafty debater. One of his techniques is known as 'spread debating', i.e. reeling off a series of arguments (many of them straw men) in rapid succession that can't all be refuted in the time available, leaving the naïve in the audience with the impression that the creationist can't answer them all.

In this book, Miller identifies himself as a practising Roman Catholic, and tries vainly to find a reconciliation between God and organic evolution. However, Miller does concede that many of his students find it odd that he can simultaneously embrace organic evolution and God. Dare we suggest that his students are onto something! Especially with his long history of allying with avowed humanists, including Frederick Edwards, then President of the American Humanist Association, against Bible-believing Christians. A more recent example is teaming up with the atheist Eugenie Scott in a *Firing Line* debate on US television (PBS, December 1997), considering that Scott has won humanist awards precisely for her fanatical anti-creationist campaigning.

Embellishing the truth

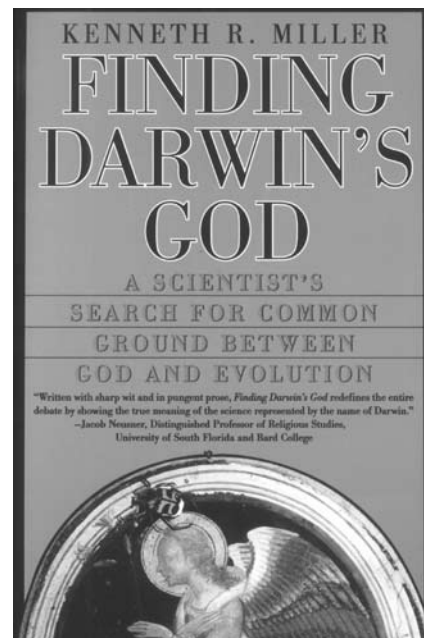
Before proceeding with this book, the reader is cautioned that some of its material is of questionable factual

accuracy. For instance, Henry M. Morris² points out that Miller has misrepresented the statements of creationists in general and of Morris in particular. If so, then this is nothing new. Miller appears to have a long history of, let's say this diplomatically, embellishing the truth.

For instance, commenting on one televised debate that even the evolutionary journals conceded was won by the creationist Duane Gish, Miller accused Gish of leaving an important word out of a quote, yet it later turned out that the word in question was not even there!³ Miller later apologized in print, but it shows Miller's carelessness in his attempts to character-assassinate creationists. Another example is having provided the evolutionary philosopher Philip Kitcher with a series of allegedly transitional fossils, who in turn challenged Gish in a debate to point out any gaps. Gish could not—but it turns out that this is not surprising because two of the intermediates were hypothetical, others had hypothetical parts added, they were not drawn to scale, and weren't even in stratigraphic sequence!³

Miller's book continues this spin-doctoring, with an illustration of the skeletal remains of an alleged land mammal/whale intermediate, *Ambulocetus natans* (p. 265). But it is misleading, bordering on deceitful, because the skeleton is drawn as a complete animal, with no indication of the fact that far fewer bones were actually found, including the all-important pelvic girdle. This means it's ludicrous for Miller to claim, 'the animal could move easily both on land and in water', because his fellow evolutionist Annalisa Berta pointed out:

'... since the pelvic girdle is not preserved, there is no direct evidence in *Ambulocetus* for a connection between the hind limbs and the axial skeleton. This hinders interpretations of locomotion in this animal, since many of the muscles that support and move the hindlimb



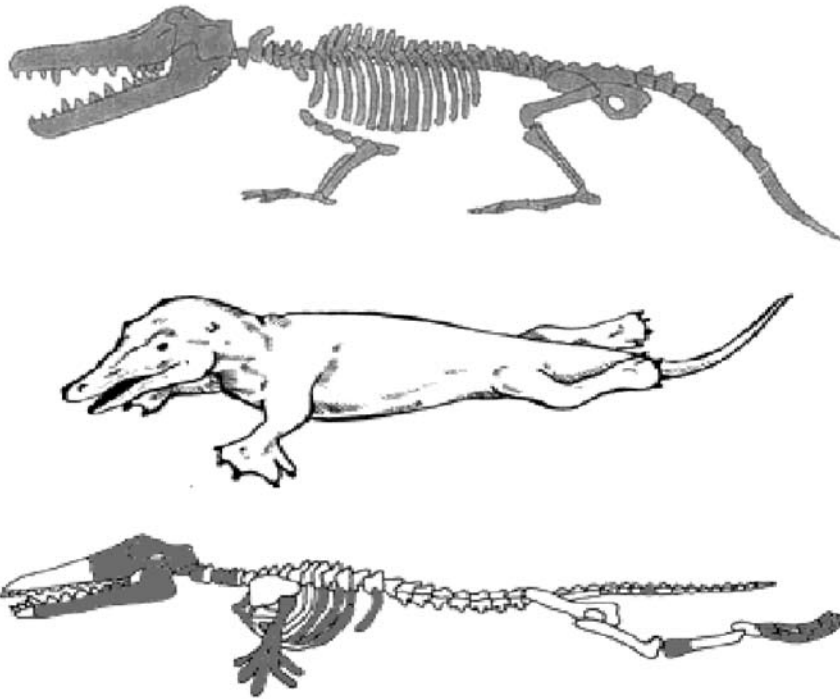
originate on the pelvis.⁴

This should make one a tad sceptical of Miller's many bold pro-evolutionary statements (e.g. 'the gaps are filling up'). One wonders why the theory of punctuated equilibrium was ever developed by some evolutionists if it was indeed true that the gaps were filling up, and it was only a matter of time before they were largely filled!

Straw men

Miller, as usual with evolutionary propagandists, equivocates about the meaning of 'evolution', i.e. calling any change 'evolution' and implying that it proves particles-to-people evolution and disproves special creation. Of course, creationists make it very clear that particles-to-people evolution requires changes that **increase genetic information content**. To date, not a single example of such a change has been observed, but such changes should be plentiful if evolution were true.⁵

Yet Miller cites examples of speciation, e.g. the Galápagos animals (p. 94) and ring species (pp. 47–48) as if this proves his case. But this merely bashes the straw-man of fixity of species, held today mainly by compromising evangelicals who accept long ages and a local Flood (and in Darwin's time,



Top: Ambulocetus skeleton, as drawn in Miller's book. **Middle:** Ambulocetus reconstruction, as drawn in Miller's book. **Bottom:** Actual bones found (shaded). Note that the pelvic girdle was not found and therefore little can be said of the locomotion mode of Ambulocetus.

held by believers in multiple catastrophism such as Cuvier). But creationists regard speciation as an important part of the Creation/Flood/migration model.⁶⁻⁸

Miller also claims that creationists deny beneficial mutations (p. 49), but creationists are careful to point out that some mutations can be beneficial even without any gain in information.⁹ He invokes penicillin and pesticide resistance and HIV variants, although creationists have long pointed out that in none of these cases has any information increase been demonstrated.^{10,11}

Another straw man is Miller's claim that creationists believe in a God 'who intentionally plants misleading clues beneath our feet and in the heavens themselves' (p. 80). Of course, when the likes of Miller reject God's propositional revelation in Scripture, they are misleading **themselves**. God is not deceiving them, as He had plainly told them in Scripture what happened in Earth's past. But empirical data are **not** propositional revelation, so they do **not** speak for themselves. Rather, long-agers (mis)interpret the data according to a uniformitarian framework

that rejects Creation and the Flood *a priori*,¹² instead of according to the correct framework of Biblical history. This is well illustrated in the 'Parable of the Candle'.¹³

Miller brings up an outdated creationist explanation for the 'distant starlight' problem, the 'light created in transit' theory. One would expect that a supposedly up-to-date anti-creationist book written in 2000 would have kept up with current creationist theories. But many creationists have also rejected the 'light created in transit' theory, and think that Russell Humphreys' cosmological model, invoking the well attested principle of general-relativistic gravitational time dilation, provides a plausible answer, and this was published in 1994!¹⁴

Miller's naivety in his discussion of isotopic dating in general, and the Rb-Sr isochron method in particular, is nothing short of astounding. He also pontificates on geology despite admitting that he's never taken a course in it (p. 65)! He at first does a good job describing the Rb-Sr isochron method, but then accepts the collinearity of points on the 'isochron' as a virtual

guarantee of the age obtained. Fact is, it has been known for decades that geochemical processes can produce Rb-Sr 'isochrons', with fair to excellent collinearity, that have nothing to do with the correct age of the rock being dated.¹⁵

Miller also thinks that he can refute the creationist young-Earth argument from the decay of the magnetic field by pointing to field reversals (p. 65). Again, Miller is inexcusably out-of-date, this time ignoring Humphreys' papers **dating from the mid-1980s** on geomagnetic field reversals which provided a mechanism, and **predicted** rapid reversals that were since found in rapidly-cooled lava flows.¹⁶

Miller's powerful faith— in materialism, not in God

It is hardly surprising that Miller gives the standard 'evolution is fact' litany. He points out that, time after time, in the history of science, supernatural explanations have given way to naturalistic ones. But it is not that simple. Despite all of the fantastic advances in science over the past few centuries, the central biologic mysteries have stood firm: virtually all phenomena related to the presumed evolutionary origin of living things have stubbornly failed to yield to naturalistic explanations! What does this tell us?

Apropos to this, Miller tacitly admits that such things as the origin of life have not been shown to be explicable by chemical evolution. He then argues that, in time, science will be able to. But science is supposed to be based on evidence, while this is a faith statement on Miller's part—faith in materialism, certainly not faith in God. It is like finding a watch on the beach and stubbornly maintaining that one need no watchmaker because, even though today we have no idea how sand and water spontaneously give rise to watches, surely one day a naturalistic explanation will be found for watches. After all, science always eventually triumphs with non-design explanations over design-based ones, doesn't

it? Miller's arguably wishful thinking about future successes of materialistic explanations also goes contrary to the methodology of science. When a theory fails to be substantiated by evidence, scientists do not forever try to find evidence favourable to the theory. They simply abandon the theory, and propose a new one. But this is obviously too much for the rationalists. They cannot (or, more accurately, will not) abandon their faith in the materialistic origin of life, no matter how devoid of evidence it is, because that would—horror of horrors—instead require serious consideration of an Intelligent Designer.

And, all the while protesting belief in God, Miller himself is very much opposed to God even as an Intelligent Designer. It makes one wonder about the genuineness of his Roman Catholicism, because an essential dogma of that faith, as defined by the First Vatican Council is 'the one true God our creator and lord can be known for certain through the creation by the natural light of human reason', which was based on Romans 1:20 ff. The atheistic philosopher Antony Flew was certainly not impressed by people like Miller who denied their own doctrines.¹⁷

Predictably, Miller tries to refute teleological explanations by trotting out the 'eye evolving in stages'. He claims that even slight increments of improved eyesight invariably offer a survival advantage to the organism. But where is the proof of this? Miller does not offer any. Consider the following: were a mutation to endow an organism with, say, 20/450 vision instead of 20/500 vision, would such a small improvement **actually** confer a selective advantage to its bearer? Would not luck be much more important in determining whether or not one ended up eaten by a predator than whether one had 20/450 vision instead of 20/500 vision? This point is well made by biophysicist Dr Lee Spetner, who points out that even a mutation with a selective advantage (*s*) has a good chance of being lost by genetic drift—the probability of survival is about $2s$, and *s* is usually $\ll 1$.¹⁸

And this says nothing about the requirement of **concerted** changes. For instance, if a mutation conferred a tiny improvement in the acuity of a primitive lens, what good would it do the organism if the primitive retina could not register the slightly-clearer image, and/or the primitive optic nerve was incapable of transmitting the slightly-improved image to the brain and/or the primitive visual cortex was incapable of interpreting the slightly-clearer image?¹⁹

Miller also cites the variety of eyes found in nature, and uses this to argue that eyes have evolved in stages. But this is a *non-sequitur*, as it tells us nothing about how any kind of eye has evolved. In fact, it only begs the question of **whether** they have evolved at all. Following Miller's spurious reasoning, one could go to a beach and, upon finding a variety of timepieces there (a modern watch, an ultra-sophisticated atomic clock, a 17th-century clock, and a sundial) arrange them in a sequence and triumphantly assert that one has just proved that timepieces have evolved from sand, culminating in the atomic clock. Never mind how even the simplest timepiece is supposed to have evolved spontaneously from sand.

To Miller, the incredible complexity of life does not require God because there are so many possible combinations of life's building blocks that natural selection had to produce **some** sort of complex living system. But this simply begs the question of whether **any** sort of complex living system could arise spontaneously, with or without natural selection.

Belittling scientific creationists—of course

Unlike other leading evolutionists (for example, Harvard's Stephen Jay Gould, who has labelled creationists 'yahoos'), Miller refrains from calling creationists derogatory names. He openly expresses disagreement with the standard anti-creationist line about creationists being either stupid, blinded by religious zeal, or cynical

opportunists. He also rejects the oft-claimed evolutionistic view that creationism has appeal because Americans are ignorant of, or unappreciative towards, science. Nevertheless, as is typical of books of this genre, Miller mis-characterizes scientific creationists. For instance, he charges them with seeking God in darkness. Actually, creationists seek God in both the light of Scripture, and in the light of empirical evidence, which is much more consistent with separate creation of living things than with a chain of evolutionary ancestry.

Miller falsely claims that creationists seek God in the gaps of knowledge, but creationists always say that evolution is discredited precisely because of what we **do** know, e.g. information theory. It's also notable that an author praised for his logic argues from his faulty premise about creationists and commits a beginner's mistake in logic as follows (p. 266):

'If a lack of scientific explanation is proof of God's existence, the counterlogic is impeccable: a successful scientific explanation is an argument **against** God.'

This is an example of the **fallacy of denying the antecedent**. Compare:

'If a suspect's absence from the city where a stabbing occurred is proof of his innocence of the stabbing, then the counterlogic is impeccable: proof that he was in the city is an argument **against** his innocence.'

We're just glad that the local police don't use Millerian 'logic' on us every time someone is stabbed in our area.

Miller also insinuates that those who believe in special creation are emotionally immature. We are told that special creation is, in effect, a 'security blanket' which some adults simply refuse to outgrow. But is not the identical charge made towards those who believe in God, as Miller professes to do? Furthermore, what Miller fails to recognize is that emotions work both ways. For the one who loves sin, it is actually emotionally

comforting to believe that evolution is fact and that there is no God to whom one will give account for the sins that one has committed throughout one's life. And certainly there are those who believe in special creation because they are convinced that special creation is factually correct, irrespective of their emotions.

As is nearly always the case with militant evolutionists, Miller equates his own rationalistic prejudices with the scientific method. In his embrace of rank philosophical materialism, Miller supposes that if an object (such as the sun) has a supernatural origin, it is therefore beyond scientific explanation. Here Miller is confusing origin with function. If we maintain, for instance, that automobiles are the products of intelligent design, it does not mean that we thereby assert that their function is beyond rational explanation: we only conclude that the **origin** of the automobiles is not scientifically reducible to the **function** of the car itself.

Miller's contrived dualisms

Miller creates an artificial either/or dichotomy: a constantly-intervening Creator or a totally behind-the-scenes Creator. In other words, according to his thinking, we either have a capricious God who works miracles all the time, making the concept of natural law impossible, or else we must suppose a God who never performs miraculous works at any time under any circumstance. This, to us, is as silly as those humanists who tell us that either we remove all traces of Christianity from public life, or else we will soon have a theocracy where members of minority religions are all slaughtered. Miller falsely supposes that evolutionary theory is necessary to make room for a God who allows freedom for the function of the things that He has created. But this is a complete *non-sequitur* in Miller's thinking—God, according to the Bible, does not work miracles all the time (or even most of the time), and has long since stopped creating new things. God's miraculous



St Augustine of Hippo (354–430) also struggled with the duration of Creation as stated in Genesis. Augustine believed that God created instantaneously, a position which is diametrically opposed to the long periods of time that are postulated by progressive creationists and theistic evolutionists of today.

behaviour does not nullify His non-miraculous behaviour, nor does His non-miraculous behaviour nullify His past miraculous behaviour. And He certainly allows His created beings a large degree of freedom, not the least of which is the freedom to sin and temporarily get away with it.

Miller's inconsistent thinking comes through in many other ways. Like a compromising evangelical, he misrepresents Augustine and Basil (p. 255), and states that the Days in Genesis were supposed to be understood as long periods of time. But Augustine thought that Creation was instantaneous, and so he erred in the diametrically opposite direction. He was a member of the Alexandrian school that fancifully allegorized almost all Scripture (which did not necessarily deny its historicity but tried to seek additional meanings), and was not a Hebrew scholar.²⁰

The misrepresentation of Basil is even worse, since his *Hexaëmeron* (=

'Six Days'), nine Lenten sermons on the Days of Creation, makes it very clear that he took Genesis literally.²¹ But if Genesis is simply a fairytale, then why seek any particular meaning of time in the word Day? After all, one does not try to evaluate the heights of the seven dwarfs which helped Snow White.

Miller also says that any believer who sees Scripture as the word of God should delight in the fact that Genesis correctly states that humans are made from the dust of the Earth. Earlier, he had relegated Genesis to an outdated myth, and now he delights in one small detail that, to him, is true. But why should a believer delight in the correctness of one small detail in the Book of Genesis if the bulk of it is factually inaccurate?

In common with many evolutionists, Miller indulges in the presumption that God was essentially compelled to give the 'mythical' Genesis account to the ancient Hebrews simply because they were insufficiently sophisticated to understand anything else—the typical chronological snobbery of bibliosceptics which can be paraphrased as: 'ancient people were stupid'. But, considering the fact that various ancient philosophies, notably those of the Greeks, were evolutionary, it is silly to suppose that the general outlines of evolutionary thinking could not be grasped by the ancient Hebrews if that is what God had intended to teach them! After all, there were plenty of Hebrew words that He could have used to teach long ages.^{22,23}

Of course, Jesus Christ affirmed the special creation of Adam and Eve according to Genesis 1 and 2 (Matthew 19:3–6), that they were male and female 'from the beginning of creation' rather than 15 billion years after the alleged big bang (Mark 10:6), and that Noah's Flood and Ark were historical realities (Luke 17:26–27). So although Miller professes to be a Christian, he is effectively accusing Christ of being simple-minded!

Miller tries to mute

moral issues

Miller rejects the notion that evolution has anything to do with such things as murder, war, adultery, etc., and points out that such things are found in the Old Testament, long before publication of the *Origin of Species*. Yes, but what Miller fails to appreciate is the fact that while such things as adultery have always existed, they were never affirmed as something positive, or possibly morally neutral, at least by learned people, until the development of modern evolutionary theory. Thus, for instance, we have modern evolutionists teaching us, in dead seriousness, that adultery can be something good because it provides a woman the opportunity to have the best genes for her offspring, thus enhancing the 'survival of the fittest'. Evolutionists have also commonly stated that sexual promiscuity is beneficial because it enhances the phenotypic genetic diversity within a population of living things. In fact, that is the main reason that they believe that the sexes exist in the first place! Anyway, they say, most animals are promiscuous, and we're just evolved animals ... Evolutionary rationalizations have also been given for such things as infanticide, etc. and a recent book made the horrifying claim that men rape for evolutionary reasons.^{24,25}

Miller completely misses the mark when he vainly tries to deflect criticism of the cruelty of evolution by citing 'Biblical cruelties' such as God's burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the slaughter of the firstborns in ancient Egypt (p. 246). Surely, as a self-identified Roman Catholic, Miller should know some Catholic theology and recognize the fact that God's punitive actions were never spontaneous, but always as a response to egregious human sin. And, when Miller tells us that the cruelties of nature are no big deal because 'everything has to die anyway', he forgets that death is the penalty for sin, and not something which is innate to nature. Considering the humanist-like pattern of Miller's

reasoning, one is forced to ask what kind of a theist does Miller suppose himself to be?

If God is supposed to be behind the evolutionary process, then He is the Author of the process of predation. On the other hand, once we realize that God created all things by fiat as 'very good', we can then understand much predation as a consequence of His partial withdrawal of His sustaining power from His creation as a consequence of human sin. Again, Miller completely fails to make this distinction.

Pigeonholing God into vague abstractions

Those who claim a reconciliation between God and evolution invariably engage in 'theobabble', which includes an intentionally fuzzy concept of God. That way, 'God' is relegated to an all-purpose amorphous being who can be freely manipulated in any way to become ostensibly compatible with evolutionary materialism. Recall the fable of the horse and tractor by the first author (JW),²⁶ wherein the farmer stubbornly insisted that, despite all appearances, his old horse was actually the one behind the actions of his newly-purchased tractor.

Miller rejects the notion that evolutionary theory tells us anything about ultimate meaning, as if one could create a watertight compartment between a theory and its implications. Furthermore, does not the evolutionary theory, with its reliance on accumulated accidents, tell us enough about its position on ultimate meaning? Or do we put our head in the sand and pretend that it doesn't?

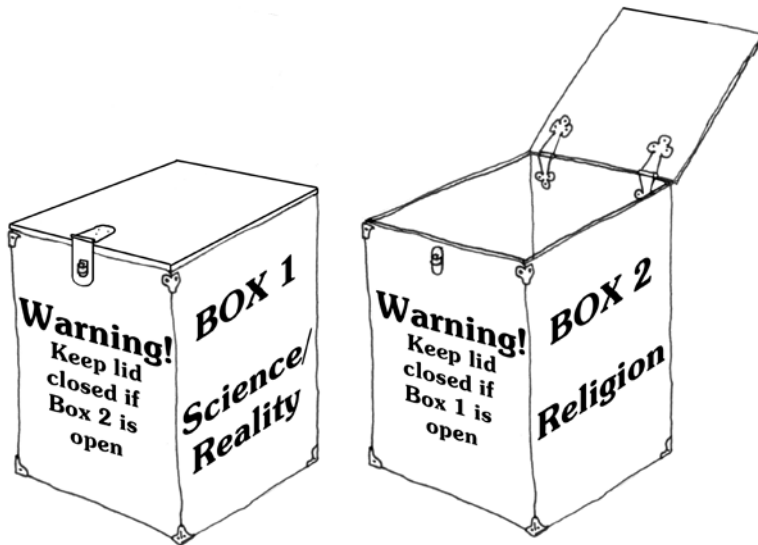
Rejecting supernaturalism and divine revelation, Miller tries to smuggle God into evolution by citing the role of God in everyday events. He gives, as example, a bullet being fired. Who, if anyone, gets killed by the bullet? Miller maintains that, regardless of the contingencies of the situation, a theist will invariably recognize that God is the final arbiter of what the bullet will do, and to whom. In like manner,

Miller supposes that God can likewise be included, within organic evolution, as a behind-the-scenes arbiter of which evolutionary events take place and which do not.

Apart from being un-Biblical, Miller's reasoning fails once closely examined. To begin with, how is the theist supposed to know that God is behind such things as the consequences of a rapidly-moving bullet? Miller might respond that it is his faith in God, but what he is engaging in is a 'leap in the dark', which is fatalism, and not true faith. In actuality, recognition of the truth of God's revelation (the Bible) is the only way that the theist can know, and have true faith in, the fact that God regulates such things as the courses of rapidly-moving bullets. God tells us in the Bible that He is sovereign over everything, and He demonstrates His sovereignty by performing miracles. In fact, He proves that it is He, and not the pagan deities, that is sovereign.

Now remember that Miller rejects both the Bible's authority as well as supernaturalism. As a result, it is a bit disingenuous of him to, out of the blue, invoke Divine sovereignty when he has completely rejected the basis for knowing anything about this sovereignty. In the absence of Divine revelation and Divine miracles, there is no rational basis for supposing that God is behind such things as who gets wounded or killed by a speeding bullet. One could just as easily suggest that the bullet in flight is ultimately governed by some pagan deity (which one?), by some impersonal cosmic principle (Fate? Karma?), or by nothing at all that is external to the material laws of physics (ballistics, etc.). The latter view, of course, is that of the atheist.

The *reductio ad absurdum* of Miller's position is this: since all of the above views are possible, then there is no rational reason for preferring God over the others. We thus see that Miller's reasoning is internally inconsistent and self-refuting. Consequently, evolutionary theory does not shed its atheistic nature merely by appeals to distorted notions of Divine



Compartmentalised thinking. In most cases where evolution is married to the Bible, the Christian faith is relegated a place where it does not relate to reality.

sovereignty.

Quite frankly, Miller appears to be two-faced throughout the book. On one hand, he excoriates those evolutionists who say that evolution is atheistic. He even puts much of the blame for the successes of creationism on such evolutionists. Creationism, we are told, is largely a backlash against those who have trumpeted the demise of God as a result of evolutionary theory. But, having said all this, Miller then espouses organic evolution in general, and materialistic rationalism in particular, in a manner which is virtually identical to those openly-atheistic evolutionists whom he has just criticized! Retreating into a world of private ‘religious meaning’ in no way absolves him from this behaviour.

Throughout most of the book, Miller appears to maintain a compartmentalized view of reality. That way, he can simultaneously maintain his Roman Catholic faith, which of course assumes the existence of an intervening God, and at the same time accept organic evolution which rejects an intervening God. A few times, however, Miller does try to break through his compartmentalized thinking by ‘finding’ God in such things as aesthetics and the human sense of wonder. But even this is a failure. To begin with, Miller is inconsistent in his thinking.

If we do not need God to explain such things as the origin of living things and the origin of the human body, then why do we suddenly need God to account for such things as aesthetics and wonder? In fact, such mental phenomena are treated as survival-enhancing phenomena by the evolution theory he espouses, and are certainly not recognized by evolutionary theory as products of God, any more than is the origin of the human body.

He also tries to find a role for God in quantum indeterminacy, yet another field in which he lacks the slightest standing. But various atheistic reviewers on the Amazon Internet book site have (rightly) castigated him for doing just what he (wrongly) chides creationists for doing.

Conclusion

Judging by its title, this book is supposed to focus on how God and evolution are supposed to be compatible. Yet, for all his adamant insistence that God can rationally coexist with evolution, Miller fails to show, in any kind of logically coherent manner, how God and evolution can coexist within the mind of the same person who is intellectually honest and informed about the properties of each. Furthermore, Miller glosses over the fact that evolutionary theory rejects God as a causative

agent in Earth’s history—not only in the direct and miraculous sense, but also in the providential sense. So his talk of ‘religious meaning’ carries very little weight.

Miller’s last paragraph is, ‘What kind of God do I believe in? ... I believe in Darwin’s God’. This is, theological language aside, completely indistinguishable from a nonexistent God. Especially as Darwin’s well documented anti-Christian motivation has baneful implications for any professing Christian claiming to believe in ‘Darwin’s God’!²⁷ Evolution is inherently atheistic, and it is time that we all face this fact.

It should be a lesson that many atheistic reviewers have sung the praises of Miller’s book, but we have yet to see any reconsider their atheism! So it seems that they love it for its supposedly effective rebuttal of creation, and probably think of Miller much as Lenin used to cultivate ‘useful idiots’ in the West—people who were too naïve to realise that they were undermining their own foundations. Conversely, as already noted with Antony Flew, many atheists have more respect for those who are consistent in their beliefs.

Personally, one can respect atheistic evolutionists more than one respects evolutionists such as Kenneth Miller, if only because at least the atheistic evolutionists are self-consistent in their reasoning, and forthright in recognizing and acknowledging the implications of what they profess.

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Shortly after Darwin

The new doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest' is urged by Herbert Spencer, Darwin, and many naturalists as an alternative more rational than that of 'design'. This at present is admitted by its advocates to be a bare hypothesis, demanding many postulates, and leaving many broken links; e.g. the 'first germs', the introduction of sensation, the beginnings of organs, intelligence, volition, moral obligation, necessary ideas, etc.

Johnson's New Universal Cyclopaedia
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His story starts in Genesis

The mentality of the whole Scripture ... is that creation is as historically real as the history of the Jews and our own present moment of time. Both the Old and the New Testaments deliberately root themselves back into the early chapters of Genesis, insisting that they are a record of historical events.

Francis A. Schaeffer
Genesis in Space and Time
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