



# Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution

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Focusing on the ground-breaking and often controversial science of Charles Darwin, the author seeks to bridge the gulf between science and religion on the subject of human evolution.

## Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution Details

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# **From Reader Review Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution for online ebook**

## **Martin says**

I have read many wonderful books on evolution and this is, by far, the poorest of the lot, for a multitude of reasons: 1) He does not explain evolution itself well. He takes shortcuts in explanations and doesn't expound on many concepts properly. He does not take the time, as it were, to ask his audience if they understand what he's saying. 2) He never does accomplish the aim of his book. He finds no common ground to speak of. The bridge he attempts to build never even gets off the ground. 3) He is positively antagonistic against creationists, and the praise from some of them is quite odd in this regard. 4) He never explains properly why he believes in God. He spends exactly two sentences trying to say why, but come on, two sentences is not good enough! 5) After completing the reading of the book, I revisited some points to clarify some things. Turns out, he contradicts himself on a great many points, most notably Free Will. He wants it both ways. He can't have it both ways. 6) He dismissed offhand certain positions, such as Deism, as ludicrous, with weak arguments that don't hold muster. 7) He is arrogant. In summary, despite the fact that I too believe in God and know in evolution, I find this book to be poorly written, and though I learned much about finer points such as the age of the earth, I did not learn much in the broader sense, having been completely crowded by his palpable anger. On the bright side, this makes me want to pick up Michael Shermer's "The Believing Brain," which addresses my issues with this book, namely that the author had preconceived notions that he retrofit to square everything way for himself nicely, which he doesn't successfully do at all for me.

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## **Laura (Book Scrounger) says**

While I may not agree with all of his views, I found Kenneth Miller's take on the science/religion dichotomy very interesting, and fairly thorough in his scientific explanations without being over my head (for the most part).

This book doesn't delve much into his experiences with his own personal faith, as most of his references to religion are fairly ecumenical. But this seemed fitting considering he was trying to take a rather "big picture" view.

I think the strongest part of the book for me was his treatment of materialistic atheism, and his assertion that even science doesn't make a very good case for a completely predictable, material universe. His discussion of quantum theory and our utter inability to predict the movements of the smallest particles was very interesting to me because that would ordinarily be way over my head. I've heard plenty of religious objections to a purely materialistic view, so one that involved science was neat too.

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## **Matthew says**

Published in 2007, Ken Miller's Finding Darwin's God is probably the most up to date thinking on the creation-evolution debate. I was terribly excited to find it -- it posed the exact question I'd asked: does belief

in evolution really threaten belief in God?

He runs through quickly and successfully demolishes -- in my opinion -- the arguments for Young Earth Creationism and for intelligent design. He also successfully summarises the variants of materialist atheism -- Dawkins, Dennett, Gould, etc. Excitingly, he then comes to what I think is the most acute contemporary materialist critique of the existence of God -- the idea that our ethical values themselves are the product of evolution. (An excellent book on this topic, from an atheist's POV, is Matt Ridley's *The Evolution of Virtue*). Miller traces the history of the idea, showing how it originated from Edward Wilson's extension of evolutionary theory from biology to sociology. In short, ethics like selflessness evolved because in the small group nature of early human society, such ethics were beneficial to the group's survival. This argument very neatly skewers CS Lewis' then powerful but now somewhat outdated argument that materialism cannot account for our strong internal sense of aesthetics, morality, etc.

Here, Miller's book disappointed me a little because he doesn't tackle this head on -- in the sense that he doesn't present any evidence that contradicts or disproves it directly. Rather, first, he presents the sociobiologists' main conclusion -- that materialism can now explain everything about the human condition, from its origins to the need for religious belief itself. If true, this would invalidate God.

Miller shows this conclusion gets ahead of itself. Using discoveries in quantum mechanics, he describes how at the molecular level, the position of elections is inherently unknowable and uncertain. We know with a degree of statistical probability that an election will locate itself in A or B, but we can never say beforehand whether it will be A or B. This is true also of genetic variation -- there is no definite outcome. If I read him rightly, by extension, homo sapiens was simply one of many possible species, and our ethics one of many possible value systems.

Thus, as scientists probe deeper into the nature of the material world, they discovered that what they seek -- complete understanding -- will never be at hand. Science can refine the ranges of the probabilities under different circumstances, but this knowledge is always probabilistic, never deterministic. This discovery means that while it is still an acceptable theory that random chance explains everything, this conclusion is not certain -- it allows for the existence of God.

Miller stops here, at a point where I think he has proven the defensibility of God, but not quite proven him yet. He states that he is a believer, and hints at the reason:

"To the non-believer, that world exists and operates entirely in the absence of God. The self-sufficiency of nature, exemplified most notably by evolution, implies an autonomy that requires neither explanation nor justification in divine terms. Scientifically, that self-sufficiency can be identified, tested, theorised and explored, but its meaning and the reason for its existence cannot be explained or even addressed by science. This -- and not any departure from the discipline of science -- is what distinguishes a believer from a non-believer. To a believer, the world makes sense, human actions have a certain value, and there is a moral order to the universe."

I think Miller stops here because this is ultimately a book about science and religion, and not a personal testimony. I think his point is to logically establish what are, and are not, the valid arguments against the materialists -- and his conclusion is that evolution is true, but this does not negate a role for God, which he cites as the deep psychological reason why many people instinctively reject evolution -- and thereby discredit themselves and their faith -- because of what they see as its implicit suggestion that God is a myth. Miller's main purpose for the book, I think, is to combat this assumption, and thus help to engender faith that is consistent with science, and stronger and more convincing for it.

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## Nate says

Ken Miller is a Christian and a biologist at Brown University, and one of the major anti-creationist debaters. I really liked this well-argued dismantling of intelligent design and other creationist arguments from a scientific perspective.

His theological reflections weren't as deep as I would have liked, but Conrad Hyers' *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* covers that angle.

Christians really need to be informed that A) evolution *is* very well-supported science, and B) it doesn't conflict with the Christian faith.

When it's painted as a black and white issue with two extremes: atheistic materialists on the one hand and biblical literalist crusaders on the other, many more people are led away from the faith than towards it.

Christians -- Don't be afraid to question what you've been taught!

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## Joel says

This is the rare book that attempts to bridge the divide between fundamentalist Christians and atheist evolutionary biologists. Miller has tendrils in both camps, being a Brown University biologist (and author of the textbook at issue in the Dover Evolution Trial) and a committed Roman Catholic. In the first half of the book Miller ably displays the flaws in Intelligent Design while sympathetically attempting to understand what might drive people to embrace it. In the second half he attacks the arrogance of scientists that so often drives people of faith away. The ideal ending of this work would be for Miller to present a deep and convincing reconciliation of traditional faith and evolution and he does try. Unfortunately this is probably the weakest and most sketchily rendered portion of the book, leaving readers with a slightly bittersweet taste as they close the book.

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## Jay says

Overall I thought this book was pretty interesting, and I was amused by how easily and thoroughly Miller dispatches all the intelligent design arguments. I wanted a little more from the last part of the book, in which Miller explains the compatibility of religion and science, and how science actually makes his faith stronger. I suppose what I really want is a conversation with him, so I can ask all the questions his book raised for me but didn't answer adequately.

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## Jared says

Evolution is a tricky subject. There are few topics like it—everyone has an iron opinion on an issue about which they know so very little. With thousands of papers and books written on the subject in the past 150

years, there is no shortage of information, just a shortage of courage. God-loving folks are genuinely scared of this “dangerous theory,” and for this reason avoid the literature. On the other hand, most of the literature “proving evolution” also defames religion and undermines faith. Thus we have yet another manifestation of the epic science versus religion battle.

Finding Darwin’s God is an attempt to bridge the gap—to make a treaty with each side, finding common ground. Miller, both an evolutionary biologist at Brown University and devout Christian, spends the first half of this book scientifically explaining Darwin’s theory of natural selection and the origin of species. He then goes through the leading modern rebuttals to Darwin’s theory, and counters them. Miller owns an ability to write to a nonscientific crowd maintaining his scientific legitimacy, which will make this complicated and nebulous topic straightforward and concrete. In essence, he proves evolution through citing the legitimate research conducted in the past fifty years, and explains the unscientific aspects of the counter-theories to Darwin’s own. In the second half of his book, he addresses the larger, more difficult and more interesting topic of science versus religion. The bottom line is that the seeming conflict is not founded, and there is no real conflict between the two. In other words, whether or not you believe in the theory of evolution should have no founded implications on your faith in religion. This position is right in the middle of the war-zone, and gets attacked from both sides. The believers feel a need to disprove evolution in order to prove that God exists, and the evolutionists try to prove God’s inexistence through evolution, both logics are faulty.

Miller’s book is a sigh of relief amid a mountain of slanted literature. He is technical and careful in his scientific analysis, but writes to the non-biologist—any interested reader can appreciate his writing. And his agenda (because all authors on the subject), happens to be my own, which is obviously why I like his work so much.

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## **MWT says**

The author, a scientist and a Christian, does an excellent job of explaining one way (his own) that there need not be any direct conflict between science and religion.

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## **David Quinn says**

3.5 stars.

The first half of the book is a strong defense of Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. Here, Miller speaks as the cell biologist he is and approaches the subject with authority against various anti-evolution beliefs. I didn't need to be won over, so I might not be very objective, but I found his arguments extremely persuasive. The first half was a little too science heavy for my liking but I suppose it was necessary to lay the groundwork to support the theory of evolution.

The second half of the book is where Miller slowly offers his thoughts on how belief in God and the theory of evolution are completely compatible. Miller the scientist speaks authoritatively while Miller the Catholic leaves room for atheism or agnosticism. He's not pushy, judgmental or dismissive of other's beliefs and it

comes across well. As is necessarily true in matters of faith he acknowledges that neither believers nor non believers can definitely prove or disprove the existence of God, he merely offers the reasons why he's a believer in God. Miller's lack of stridency is very refreshing for such a charged subject.

This isn't a book I would read again from front to back but I did flag a number of passages and would go back to read portions here and there.

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### **David S. T. says**

In the past 700 years science has had a way of humbling humans more and more, once we were the center of everything, created on day 6 in the image of God. First we learn that everything doesn't revolve around the Earth, instead we circle the sun. The sun isn't anything more than just one of billions of stars in the Milky Way, which itself is just one of billions of galaxies. The earth wasn't created in 1 day, its billions of years old and humans aren't the first dominant species but instead just the latest in a large series. We weren't even created in one day but instead we've evolved over billions of years from a multitude of species. In this book Miller sets out to present the evidence for evolution and then later to shows that you can still believe in God and evolution.

The first half of the book presents the evidence for evolution while at the same time taking on the arguments from young earth creationists, intelligent design and theistic evolution. This is the first book on evolution I've read so I don't know how it compares to others, but its pretty convincing (well I think, I already accepted it). I liked how Miller presented the other sides arguments and then showed how they are mistaken, but doing so in a civil manner. The second half of the book deals with naturalism and the view that evolution has removed the need for God. He goes on to argue why God and evolution can coexists. Truthfully, in my opinion it almost seemed at times like the God he presents is one that I picture with open theology much more than the common one presented in Milers Catholic background. In a way I think I can accept this view of God sometimes more than the one presented in Calvinism which is so sovereign that he even controls or predestines our belief in Jesus. With evolution and a less active God, harder things to accept like disease or things like bedbugs become more tolerable, although sometimes it did seem that Miller was taking a deist approach even though several times he spoke against it. Overall I loved this book and it got me interested in reading more on evolution and especially interested in reading about genomes and DNA.

From my perspective having an evangelical background, I think the biggest hurdle to getting evolution or even an old earth model accepted, is getting the evangelical community to start to accept that Genesis isn't a scientific account of the early creation of the earth and man. Miller briefly mentioned this and showed how even early church fathers like Augustine didn't take the literal 6 day approach, but this is still going to be a battle. From my point of view to accept that the earth wasn't created in 6 days is to at least have to partially start to question inerrancy. Sadly there are many people who would rather put their head in the sand than confront these pressing issues.

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### **Mohamed al-Jamri says**

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\*???? ???? Free will, determinism, quantum theory and statistical fluctuations: A physicist's take  
<https://www.edge.org/conversation/car...>

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## Randy says

Enlightening. World-view altering. I think it is a "MUST READ" for anyone interested in either science OR religion. I love both.

Enjoyable to read and fun to chew on. There is enough science, enough philosophy, enough logical reasoning, and enough religious thought to make one pause, think, and digest; however, it is not daunting or intimidating, just thought provoking.

I liked Jared Smith's 2/3/08 review: "Evolution is a tricky subject. There are few topics like it—everyone has an iron opinion on an issue about which they know so very little. With thousands of papers and books written on the subject in the past 150 years, there is no shortage of information, just a shortage of courage. God-loving folks are genuinely scared of this “dangerous theory,” and for this reason avoid the literature. On the other hand, most of the literature “proving evolution” also defames religion and undermines faith." This book is both "God-loving" and "proves evolution." How surprising!

I have intensely studied biology for 20 years. I have taken advanced courses in both evolution and molecular evolution. I understand the biology. But I am also a person who likes to avoid conflict, and I never bothered to make any firm decision about where I stood in the conflict. After reading this book, I now know where I stand. Heard of DNA? Do you believe that it is a double helix? (I teach Genetics. Trust me, it's a double helix.) I'm convinced that there is significantly more evidence that evolution occurred (and is still occurring) than there is that DNA is a double helix.

Many of you, including friends, who read this may say "Duh, those God-people sure are slow to accept the obvious." More of you, however, likely can identify with wondering whether creation stories are of necessity mutually exclusive, or how evolution fits (if at all) with the reality of God. Dr. Miller shows that evolution does fit with God, and does so in a way that grants us free will. He also concludes that most of the reasons that we have feared evolution only conflict with Puritanical views of a Watch-Maker God that we don't believe in anyways.

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## John Wiswell says

First and foremost, Ken Miller is an excellent science writer, expressing things plainly and concisely in a wholly accessible manner that other science writers should study. This is essential in dealing with things like irreducible complexity, which most people haven't even heard of, let alone understand. As an evolutionary scientist and Christian, he represents a sorely misunderstood middleground between Christian creationists and atheist Darwinists. His arguments against traditional intelligent design theory are thorough and convincing for the non-hardcore science reading public. This is a great book to check out if you're interested in some of the ways evolution probably works. His defense of his faith is weaker, which is somewhat understandable; it's harder to prove and does not deal exclusively with scientific method like his arguments for chance or natural selection. His conclusion of an omnipotent entity seems closer to Charles Darwin's own, one that is unknowable and that is not working entirely for human benefit. Had he expounded more on his (or the ramifications of Darwin's) beliefs, more scientists probably would have given the book credit.

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## Maddy says

I chose this deliberately after reading *The God Delusion*- Dawkins pretty clearly thinks that religion is incompatible with science, and I wanted to read the POV of someone who thinks the opposite.

I didn't get as much out of this book as I'd hoped- it seems to be more aimed at people who believe in God, but not evolution. (So clearly I am not the audience) Occasionally Miller will make dismissive reference to 'non-believers' and 'materialists', but he didn't really address their arguments in depth. I think this was intentional- he's not out to convert anyone, and admits that he can't provide scientific proof of God- he just wants to say that science doesn't \*disprove\* God. I wish, though, that he'd explained a little bit more about why he \*does\* believe in God, not just why it's \*possible\*.

I also wish he'd explored more of the implications of God, because I find that sort of thing interesting. Unfortunately, he dismisses a lot of things as ineffability. Why did God take so long to create people? It's a mystery! Who are we to say we know why God does what he does? Okay, fine, yes, but you \*do\* think you know some things! You seem convinced God loves you, for instance, and that seems to be a pretty big bit of mind-reading. I can't even always tell if other human beings even like me, and I understand them a lot better.

His theory seems to be that God created the universe and the laws in it in such a way that they would be hospitable to life. (This is known as the Strong Anthropic principle, by the way.) Okay. And that He (and Miller's God seems to be a He) knew that evolution on Earth (and possibly other planets) would eventually lead to life that was intelligent enough to... um. Love him, I guess? Worship him? I don't know, this is where religion in general fails to make sense to me, but I'll go with it. So at a certain point, when humans had evolved into something capable of understanding Him, he gave them a soul. So... what point was that, exactly? I mean, was there literally an Adam and Eve early homo sapiens? Did all their kids have souls but the others not have them? Were their kids marrying unsouled humans, or did all the humans that existed get souls at the same time? I mean, either way, you've got some homo sapiens that don't have souls until later in life, or you've got unsouled parents giving birth to children with souls, or... I don't know! (Also, does this mean that cats and dogs don't have souls? Because I will agree with Will Rogers, the Mahabharata and the Twilight Zone- if heaven doesn't have cats, I don't want to go there.) And when do Heaven and Hell (which,

again, Miller clearly believes in) come into being? And \*why\*?

To give Miller a bit of a break, he's not \*trying\* to say he knows the answer to these questions, but I just come back to wondering why he believes in what he \*does\* 'know' about God.

Reading between the lines, I think he believes- and assumes that his reader believes- that there are ways other than the scientific method that one can make discoveries about truth- because as he admits, you can't scientifically \*prove\* God. But he doesn't say what those other ways \*are\*, and I'm \*interested\* in that. I don't know if I'd be convinced, but I want to know how Miller- who has clearly thought about this a lot- thinks it works.

Coming from the other angle, I don't know if this would convince religious folks that evolution is true, and that it doesn't mean they can't believe in God. I hope it does- I want Dawkins to be wrong, I want science and religion to be able to co-exist- because science is awesome, and I want as many people to love it as possible.

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## **David says**

"Theistic evolutionists" get attacked from both sides. From "creationists" they are attacked for compromising with the theory of evolution. And from their atheist colleagues they are attacked for joining the religious in believing in God. Kenneth Miller spends this book articulating why he believes in both God and evolution.

The first half of the book focuses on the theory of evolution - it is true, best explaining all the evidence and showing how life originated. He attacks young earth creationists as well as intelligent design advocates. Basic point: the theory of evolution explains how we got here; deal with it.

When he turns to discussing God his basic point is that when scientists argue that evolution disproves God they are stepping out of the realm of science and making a claim beyond what the evidence shows. He talks a lot about quantum mechanics showing the basic randomness of the universe.

Of course, Miller goes into many more details and arguments. I found this book thought-provoking, somewhat liberating, and challenging. I would recommend it to anyone interested in the relation of science and faith.

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