

Kenneth Miller's Foray into Theology:

Kenneth Miller wrote in *Debating Design: Cambridge University Press 2004*, "The struggles of the intelligent design movement are best understood as clamorous and disappointing double failures -- rejected by science because they do not fit the facts, and **having failed religion because they think too little of God.**"

As for intelligent design's rejection by science, Miller's claim needs to be adjusted as follows: "rejected by naturalistically constrained science because it does not fit dogmatically held Darwinian theory." As for intelligent design's rejection as bad theology, Miller would do well to review his own theology. In *Finding Darwin's God*, Miller (1999, 241) writes: "The indeterminate nature of quantum events would **allow a clever and subtle God** to influence events in ways that are profound, but **scientifically undetectable to us**. Those events could include the appearance of mutations, the activation of individual neurons in the brain, and even the survival of individual cells and organisms affected by the chance processes of radioactive decay." As far as Miller is concerned, this presumably is good theology. And as a self proclaimed "orthodox Catholic", Miller presumably accepts full-blown divine intervention in salvation history, even if he repudiates it in natural history. Indeed, what are we to make of Jesus, who walks on water, multiplies loaves and fishes, gets born of a virgin, and then resurrects after being crucified?

There's an obvious difficulty with Miller's theological criticism: **Why is it necessary to a good theology that a designing intelligence act in ways that are "scientifically undetectable to us."** It's certainly prudent, as a matter of **maintaining one's respectability** in Western intellectual high culture, to assert the scientific undetectability of design (those fundamentalists need to be kept at bay). But as a matter of good theology, which presumably means a theology that is at once logically coherent and faithful to the Christian tradition, **why should "scientific undetectability" be an issue at all? The detectability of something, after all, does not undercut its freedom of expression.** That, after all, is Miller's main concern, that intelligent design will somehow undercut the freedom of God and creation to be creative. But that intelligent design, by stressing scientific detectability, should undercut divine freedom doesn't follow at all. **What scientific detectability addresses is not the freedom of God or creation, but the completeness of material mechanisms and natural laws to characterize everything that happens in nature.** Now that completeness of material mechanisms is not part of "good" theology. In fact, when Friedrich Schleiermacher, the father of liberal theology, naturalized Christian theology in this way (cf. Schleiermacher's emphasis on "the system of nature" in his treatise *The Christian Faith*), it was as a concession to the monism of Spinoza on the one hand and the determinism of Newtonian physics on the other, both of which are themselves problematic.

The charge that ID is bad theology, just as the charge that it is bad science, is a convenient fiction. Miller calls himself both an "orthodox Catholic" and an "orthodox Darwinian." **If you are an orthodox Darwinian, then the best theology you can come up with is probably something like what Miller sketches in *Finding Darwin's God*.** But intelligent design is making clear that **there's no reason to be an orthodox Darwinian** and thus no reason to accept a theology built on Darwinian foundations. At any rate, good theology did not come of age with Darwin. Far from it. **Darwinism does just fine without any theology whatsoever.** When Richard Dawkins (1986, 6) writes that Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist, he's not far from the master, who thought that no knowledge about God of any sort was possible. **Miller's forced marriage of Darwinism and theology is an unhappy one.** In the name of good theology, intelligent design is only too happy to preside over their divorce.