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November 4, 2018: The God Construct

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Title: The God Construct

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11/4/2018—In 2007, as part of the New Atheist wave, Philip Kitcher wrote a book entitled *Living with Darwin*. Kitcher was making the point that the loving, all powerful God of the People of the Book, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, was not consistent with the awfulness of evolution. Evolution is violent and cruel, killing endlessly and in grotesque ways. A God worthy of worship would not work in this way. I did not think about this too much. It was the sort of reason I did not believe in God, but it was hard for me to think that people of faith would be much troubled. Now, 11 years later, I see that people do take Kitcher's challenge seriously indeed. The recent issue of *Zygon* magazine is devoted to the thinking of Christopher Southgate's *Evolutionary Theodicy*. According to Denis Edwards, Southgate's response to Kitcher has three aspects: First, evolution is the only way that a creative universe could go forward—like the Vatican Astronomer I once heard say that God could create any way He chose, but if he wanted to create life with carbon, He had to wait for stars to explode; second, God as co-suffering—God is with all creatures at all times; third, “pelican heaven”—the chick pushed out of nest participates in God's eschatological fulfillment. The reader can make of this what she will. It's not for me. But I am not the audience. For me, the word God must describe the world we know. But the world we know is in many ways miraculous and mysterious and that is about all that we can say. I mean that there are possibilities for truth and justice and beauty that should not happen, but do. I have experienced miraculous interventions in my life, twice in fact. These were saving experiences. So, I know they happen. The universe has a loving aspect. But prayer won't get you rain. A God who could resurrect Jesus from the dead could create without pain. So, I cannot accept the God who resurrects from the dead in a literal sense. Yet resurrection does happen. Every spring, in fact. Hallowed Secularism is the search for where all this leads. Paraphrasing David Ray Griffin, *Enchantment Without Supernaturalism*. Or, as I wrote in the book, if you believe in magic, come along with me.