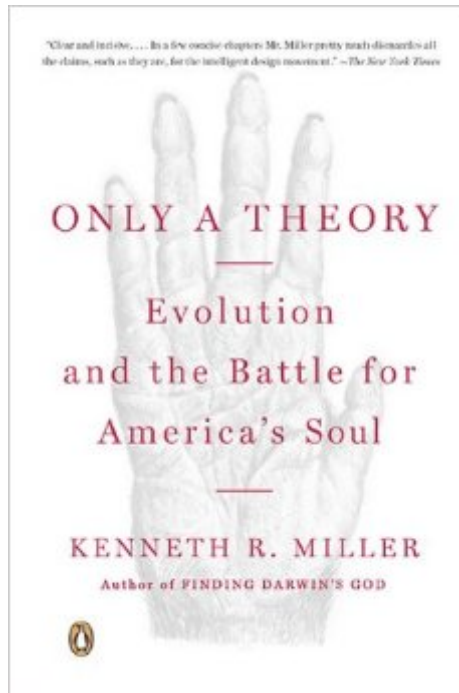


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Only A Theory: Evolution And The Battle For America's Soul



Synopsis

An inspiring book about the power and the passion of science Few have weighed in on the nation's contentious debate over evolution as effectively as Kenneth R. Miller. In *Only a Theory*, Miller-the highly regarded scientist who offered expert testimony at the 2005 trial over the teaching of evolution in Dover, Pennsylvania-eloquently shows how "Intelligent Design" collapses at the very moment one begins to take it seriously. Miller shows that the attack on evolution is a broader assault on the skepticism and reason that have fueled America's remarkable scientific advances, and offers an encouraging prescription for how we can save the nation's "scientific soul" to which we owe so much.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Only A Theory: Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul" is all we have come to expect from noted Brown University cell biologist Kenneth R. Miller in the course of his many public debates against creationists; a sterling blend of ample wit and elegant prose coupled with his passionate sincerity in defending genuine science's methodology and data from those intellectual Vandals seeking to replace it with their delusional notion of pseudoscientific mendacious intellectual pornography known as Intelligent Design. Here, in this succinctly-worded, quite magnificent, book, Miller has rendered an elegantly stated, magisterial refutation not only of Intelligent Design's pathetic pretense of being genuine science, but of its ongoing - and regrettably still successful - effort to claim America's "scientific soul" as he has defined it, and thus, to pose a dire threat to American scientific and technological supremacy. Fanatical skeptics like Discovery Institute

mendacious intellectual pornographers ("Fellows" and "Senior Fellows") Michael Behe, William Dembski, David Klinghoffer, Paul Nelson, and Jonathan Wells, among others, will scoff at Ken Miller's assertions, and accuse him of being "possessed" or "enslaved" by his "atheistic, liberal Darwinist" agenda. However, unlike them, Miller has consistently staked out views recognizing that science and religion must remain separated - despite his own devoutly held Roman Catholic religious convictions - and indeed, his cogent remarks are rather quite persuasive, and, happily, harbor the glimmerings of some hope despite their dire alarmist nature.

The market is crowded with books on the evolution/intelligent design "controversy," so much so that works in this area have become highly repetitious--read one, it seems, and one has read them all. This is a refreshing book in a couple of respects. First, Miller's rhetorical approach is to err on the side of taking the claims of intelligent design more seriously than they really deserve. As a result, the book does not come across as polemical, and this gives rise to the hope that an ID creation-sympathetic reader might actually read it and learn something truly useful about the flaws of ID creationism rather than getting insulted and putting it aside in disgust. Miller initially presents the claims of design without rebuttal and acknowledges how powerful these claims--if true--are. Only after having given these claims an initially friendly treatment does he then return to them and explain just why they are unsupported by evidence. Second, Miller argues fairly forcefully that acknowledging the facts of evolution does not compel one to reject religion, and he does so from the position of a person of faith--Miller being, himself, a Roman Catholic. He does not purport to be able to "prove" his religious faith in purely rational terms, but only to show that science does not exclude it. His arguments, being somewhat subjective in nature (e.g., the "fine-tuned universe" argument) are going to seem persuasive to some and not at all persuasive to others, but he does a splendid job of setting them out and putting the case well. The main thesis comes toward the end, and is reflected in the subtitle, "Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul."

Last year I left evangelicalism in favor of agnosticism. A major reason for my departure was twenty-four years of negative experiences within the Church. However, another important impetus was an exposure to deeper levels of science and rationality through the works of Hitchens, Dawkins, Stenger, and others. I had become tired of living with the tension between various conflicting ideas that Christianity requires of a believer, and these authors suggested a more rational alternative. One area of tension in particular was the dissonance between evolution and intelligent design (ID). "Only A Theory" addresses this battle, and it's one of the best and most tactful books

I've read on the subject. Indeed, it should act as the obsolescence notice that ID has needed for a long time. "Only A Theory" focuses on the American battlefield concerning evolution and ID. The two foes recently went head-to-head in Pennsylvania, where both camps were put on trial as a result of the Dover Board of Education's desire to add ID instruction in public school. After hearing testimony from both sides (including the author and ID proponent Michael Behe) and examining the evidence, the court ruled that ID was another name for religious creationism, and it was thrown out of the academic setting. Mr. Miller was encouraged by science's courtroom triumph, but given the strength and righteous indignation of the ID movement, he fears for the future of evolution and the scientific method. The title of this book reflects that concern, since one of ID's biggest catchphrases is that evolution is "only a theory," and therefore other competing "theories" like ID deserve equal hearing. The author has reason to be afraid.

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