



Only a Theory: Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul

Kenneth R. Miller. Viking, \$25.95 (256p) ISBN 978-0-670-01883-3

Thoroughly enjoyable and informative, this new book by Miller (*Finding Darwin's God*), a Brown University biologist and leading proponent of evolution, dismantles the scientific basis of intelligent design piece by piece. He does this by taking seriously the

claims of intelligent design (though with tongue often in cheek), such as irreducible complexity, and looking at the biological facts and the dubious conclusions ID concepts would lead to. He turns to the peer-reviewed scientific literature to demonstrate that the two biological phenomena ID proponents say could not have evolved—blood-clotting proteins and bacterial flagella—are now well-enough understood to fully rebut intelligent design. Looking at the underlying philosophical issues, Miller explains that ID's proponents want to replace modern science with "theistic science"... that would use the Divine not as ultimate cause, but as scientific explanation." Miller effectively explores the devastating consequences such a change would have on both science and society. In a measured, well-reasoned book, Miller explains why evolution does not deny us our humanity or our unique place in the universe. Illus. *Colbert Report* appearance on June 16. (June 16)

Interview: The Case Against Intelligent Design

by Sarah F. Gold -- Publishers Weekly, 4/28/2008

Brown University biologist Kenneth Miller is a leading opponent of intelligent design. In *Only a Theory* (Reviews, Apr. 14), he explains why.

How would you quickly sum up the central flaw in intelligent design?

No evidence. Was that quick enough? When you look at the arguments that are raised for ID, no one says: here's the fingerprint of the designer or here we can see design taking place. Rather, the argument is, we see a feature of a biological system that evolution couldn't have produced. Therefore something else must have made it. Now that's equivalent to saying, let's suppose, you think the moon is made of granite and I think it's made of green cheese. And

we get soil samples back from the moon, and you know what? They're not made of granite. So I say, great, that's evidence for the green cheese theory. Well, it's not. It's an entirely negative argument.

How did you become involved in the debate over intelligent design?

In 1981, a group of students came to me and said, "We"—meaning the Campus Crusade for Christ—"have invited a scientific creationist to campus. Why don't you debate him on evolution?" I put them off, but listened to an audio tape of a lecture to know where this guy was coming from. And the more I listened, the more upset I got, on two grounds. The first was the scientific misrepresentation and distortions. And the second was that these guys would dare to say, "We speak for religion." When we finally had our debate, quite frankly, I whopped the guy. In his own in-house newsletter, he said that this guy Miller at Brown was the most effective evolutionist debater he had ever encountered.

Why do you say that intelligent design is a greater threat to science than creationism was?

First, intelligent design is less easily identified as religious in nature. And second, it promotes a kind of relativistic interpretation of science. Phillip Johnson, the father of intelligent design, has said science is simply a collection of stories told by the dominant hierarchy in order to reinforce its position and privileges. The reason that's dangerous is it undermines the reason why most people choose to go into science, and it undermines the reason why ordinary people are interested in science—honest curiosity about the natural world.

Is resolving this debate a matter of education?

There is no question that we don't do as good a job as we should of scientific education in this country. But it's also partly the way members of the scientific community present themselves to the public. All too often they say, we don't want to get involved in squabbles in the political arena or the pop arena. And I think that is self-defeating, because science in a democracy like ours depends on popular support and popular understanding.

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