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Only a Theory: Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul by Ken Miller, Viking, 2008

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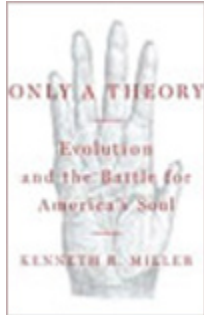
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Recommended Readings



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

by Ken Miller, Viking, 2008

Reviewed by Michael Zimmerman

In a thoroughly engaging and informative style, Brown University biologist Ken Miller takes on the concept of intelligent design and explains why it has not a shred of scientific merit to its credit. He does this in as respectful a manner as possible by taking the claims of intelligent design seriously and pursuing each to its logical scientific conclusion. He shows the intellectual vacuity of irreducible complexity and turns to the peer-reviewed scientific literature to demonstrate that the two biological phenomena most often cited in support of this concept (blood clotting proteins and bacterial flagella) are now so well enough understood that continued referencing makes no sense.

Miller also successfully moves beyond the details of intelligent design and discusses the broader context and intent of the intelligent design movement. Although his efforts here aren't new, he effectively explains that the goal of the movement isn't only the destruction of evolution. Rather, proponents want to replace modern science with "'theistic science,' a new kind of science that would use the Divine not as ultimate cause, but as scientific explanation." Miller explores the devastating consequences that such a change would have on science in particular and society in general.

Finally, Miller ably addresses the fear that many who oppose evolution share; evolution, in their minds, takes the "meaning" out of life. And, as he says, although this isn't a scientific question, "In some ways, it's the only question about Darwin's work that really matters."

This is a thoughtful book about an important topic.

- Michael Zimmerman is Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and professor of Biology at Butler University