

Book Reviews

the advances in astrophysics and atomic and nuclear physics. That said, this book may encourage the student or more general reader with an enquiring mind to look more deeply into fundamental physics—to move our understanding beyond the standard model toward a theory of everything, or perhaps causing a shift in thought as great as that which occurred with the formulation of general relativity.

However, I am left asking, “Who really is the audience for this book?” The general or high school-level reader really needs a prerequisite or a primer on modern physics, the standard model with its quarks, leptons, and the like. Such treatments can now be found on the web: for example, Dan Bloomberg, *An Elementary Primer on Elementary Particles and Their Interactions*, Leptonica (2014), <http://www.leptonica.com/particle-primer.html>. There is an opportunity for the book to be used as an introduction to aspects of the philosophy of physics or in a “spirit of physics” seminar/discussion class at freshman or higher level. Although this is a text with some unique thoughts, I fear that the more general readership will be somewhat limited.

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CREATIONISM IN EUROPE by Stefaan Blancke, Hans Henrik Hjermitsev, and Peter C. Kjærgaard, eds. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. 276 pages, including notes and index. Hardcover; \$39.95. ISBN: 9781421415628.

Creationism is often thought of as an American affectation. From influential nineteenth-century theologians such as Princeton Seminary professor Charles Hodge, to grand public spectacles such as the 1925 Scopes “Monkey” trial, to present-day organizations and institutions such as Answers in Genesis’s Creation Museum, there has been an almost continuous tradition in America of religious opposition to Darwin. The history of American creationism has been most ably told by Ronald L. Numbers, who in the Foreword to this present volume writes, “Until fairly recently the notion of a history of creationism in Europe would have struck many readers as preposterous” (p. vii). *Creationism in Europe*, edited by Stefaan Blancke, Hans Henrik Hjermitsev, and Peter Kjærgaard, shows the history to be both longer and more diverse than has been previously understood.

Most of the book’s chapters are devoted either to individual countries or to a few related ones. Each chapter then tells a national story about a state and its specific engagement with questions of evolution and religion. Taken individually, each of these chapters

offers a detailed account of the people and organizations that promoted antievolutionary thinking, the religious geography in which creationism spread, and the ways that creationist thought influenced the public life of a nation. Many of these chapters would, on their own, serve as excellent introductions to the science-religion landscape of a particular place. More importantly, in reading across several of these chapters, some common themes begin to emerge. In many cases, the narrative follows a common pattern: Homegrown varieties of creationism flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often defined along strict religious denominational lines; but, in most places, these were minority views or had largely faded away by WWII.

In the postwar era, American organizations such as the Institute for Creation Research, Answers in Genesis, and the Discovery Institute helped fuel a creationist resurgence that continues with varying degrees of success today. In addition to this general pattern, the history of creationism in many of these countries also evolved in synchrony with larger national political changes—such as the ending of communism in the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Poland in the 1990s; or the democratization of Spain, Portugal, and Greece in the 1970s. In these cases, the flourishing of creationism was also shaped by the liberalization of religious practice and expression.

Many of these central chapters, by focusing on specific national contexts, do not really address the question of creationism as a European phenomenon. At a time when the idea of Europe as a political, cultural, and economic entity is being openly debated in many of the countries featured in this book, the question is ever present: how much is the creationism described in these countries part of a common European story? As the title of the Introduction asks, is this a story about creationism in Europe, or about a European creationism? Blancke, Hjermitsev, and Kjærgaard opt for the former. Taking note of what they term the “North American Roots of Creationism,” and observing the general lack of a common creationist experience shared across these nations, the editors conclude, “one cannot talk about European creationism. Creationism in Europe is so many different things to different populations for different reasons” (p. 9).

The rejection of a coherent European narrative makes the selection of the countries represented in the volume all the more important. Of course, it is unreasonable to expect treatment of every European country, but the selection is at times uneven. Neither Italy nor Ireland is represented, and Northern Ireland is scarcely mentioned in the chapter on the UK.

A chapter on “Catholicism” focuses primarily on the doctrines of the Roman Church rather than on any majority Catholic countries, but this still overlaps in part with both the chapter on Spain and Portugal and on Poland. Numbers notes in the Foreword that “the most surprising pattern ... is the generally rising rate of creationist sentiment as one moves east, into the former communist (and officially atheistic) countries of the Eastern bloc” (p. xiv). Nonetheless, Western and Northern Europe are far more represented in the book than are other regions. Romania’s recent history of creationism is not given its own chapter, but it is mentioned in Kjærgaard’s chapter on “The Rise of Anti-Creationism” (p. 237).

Perhaps the focus on individual nations is especially telling at a time when the very idea of Europe is being questioned by factions from both ends of the political spectrum. If creationism is seen not just as a marker of religious identity, but also as something that has roots in nationalism or in resistance to a transnational and transreligious state control, then European creationism is perhaps more like its American cousin, which has flourished in an environment dominated by rhetoric about local control of education and states’ rights. The editors do not explain the rationale for their selection of countries, yet they begin with an event that is unequivocally European.

Resolution 1580, titled “The Dangers of Creationism in Education,” was passed by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly in 2007. In warning against such dangers, the resolution most notably expressed concern about “the possible ill-effects of the spread of creationist ideas within our education systems and about the consequences for our democracies. If we are not careful, creationism could become a threat to human rights.”¹ Perhaps one of the most striking things about that resolution is its representation of “present-day creationists, most of whom are of the Christian or Muslim faith.” This implies that Islamic creationism is coequally present in Europe as are Christian versions, despite lacking the long and complex history that is described in this book. Indeed, the proximate cause of the adoption of Resolution 1580 was the publication and mass dissemination of Turkish creationist Adnan Oktar’s (Harun Yahya) *Atlas of Creation*. This in itself suggests that if there is something coherently European about creationism in Europe, it is in the way that creationism’s condemnation, in the language of a threat to human rights, no less, follows swiftly upon the heels of the first organized version of Islamic creationism in Europe. The book’s chapter on Turkey focuses extensively on Oktar, making him not only the face of Turkish

creationism, but also, by proxy, of all Islamic creationism in Europe.

As Islamophobic policies in European nations exacerbate the plight of refugees from majority Muslim countries, and as Muslim populations already resident in many European nations are vilified in resurgent politics of nationalism, nativism, and racism, the elevation of Islamic creationism to a perceived threat to human rights in Europe, and the depiction of it as equally threatening in Europe as all Christian creationism put together, is an aspect of creationist experience that is not just unique to the countries of Western and Northern Europe, but is also distinctly European.

The “Europe” in this book is undertheorized, and in declaring that there is no essential “European creationism,” the editors abdicate the need to define a cultural vision of Europe that informs their undertaking. More explicit consideration of the idea of Europe may be of special concern to North American audiences who claim Europe or a historically imagined Christendom as part of their intellectual and cultural pedigree. Despite this, the multinational picture of creationism in Europe, taken altogether, yields something more than its constituent chapters do on their own.

Reference

¹<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-XrefViewPDF.asp?FileID=17592&lang=en>.

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NEWTON’S APPLE AND OTHER MYTHS ABOUT SCIENCE by Ronald L. Numbers and Kostas Kampourakis, eds. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. 287 pages. Hardcover; \$27.95. ISBN: 9780674967984.

In *Newton’s Apple and Other Myths about Science*, Ronald Numbers and Kostas Kampourakis have assembled a series of essays that attempt to debunk common misconceptions that are taught in science classrooms. This collection serves as a companion piece to *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion* (Harvard University Press, 2010), which was also edited by Numbers. While the earlier work focused specifically on faulty interpretations that directly impact the modern debate between science and religion, this volume seeks to improve science literacy and generate an understanding of the “nature of science” by answering questions such as: How is science done? What questions do scientists ask? and, What type of knowledge do they produce? While not its focus, *Newton’s Apple* does engage with