

Reviews

Creationism in Europe. Edited by Stefaan Blancke, Hans Henrik Hjermitsev, and Peter C. Kjærgaard. Foreword by Ronald L. Numbers. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. 276 pp. US \$39.95.

Scientific creationism and its associates such as “Intelligent Design” seem to be an American phenomenon. However, in a globalizing world, not only Hollywood movies are exported, but so too is creationism as a shibboleth for a particular variety of Christianity. Adherents consider creationist varieties of Christianity genuinely biblical or evangelical, though it is a modern phenomenon, with its roots in controversies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and not in the early phase of Christianity.

The book reviewed here presents creationism in Europe. Chapters deal with France, Spain and Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Low Countries (Belgium and the Netherlands), Scandinavia (in particular Denmark, Sweden, and Norway), Germany, Poland, Greece, Russia and its neighbors, and Turkey. The need for a chapter on Catholicism underlines that mostly it is a Protestant phenomenon. “Intelligent Design” is deemed worthy of a separate chapter, while the final chapter, by Peter Kjærgaard, deals with the rise of anticreationism in Europe. Nicolas Rupke, historian of science, contributes an “Afterword: Reclaiming Science for Creationism.” The Foreword is written by Ronald Numbers, the American scholar of creationism. The “Introduction: Creationism in Europe or European Creationism?” raises an important question, namely whether there is a distinct European form of creationism. If contrasted with the United States, the European scene is different. If considered more closely, the variety of voices in Europe is overwhelming—as the chapters document, the title could have been *Creationisms in Europe*.

I found this volume a valuable, very well-documented survey of the field. Personally, I would have enjoyed more consideration of “why” questions. Why is it different in Europe, compared to the United States? What makes for all those intra-European differences? The main frame here remains the question whether one accepts or rejects evolution, but there may well be other issues involved. Such an analysis would probably need to bring in issues of sociology of religion and secularization, but also an analysis of the consequences of safety nets in welfare states, the variety in models of neutrality of the state, and much else. The diversity in local contexts deserves closer scrutiny. With this book, I take the liberty to signal some publications in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* in recent years, on religion and science in Europe (Blancke 2010; Evers 2015; Kjærgaard 2016; Southgate 2016); the first and the third one are by editors of this helpful volume.

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Black Lives and Sacred Humanity: Toward an African American Religious Naturalism. By Carol Wayne White. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016. 164 Pages. US \$25.00 (Softcover).

"Religious naturalism" by and large seems to be an American movement of liberal, "white" scholars, and scientists. With her plea for an *African American* religious naturalism, Carol Wayne White adds something important: sensitivity towards issues of race and social inequality. In principle, naturalism should have no difficulty in accommodating such concerns, as it is universalist in orientation (all humans belong to a single category, in a naturalistic view), but its universalist discourse may well mask real differences—whether between Western and non-Western settings, or other sources of unequal circumstances and opportunities. She speaks of "sacred humanity," which phrase expresses a universal value, a notion which in her first chapter "emerges from a synthesis of African American religious intellectual thought and critical theory" (5). The second chapter relates the understanding of humanity to modern science, to understand humans as "nature made aware of itself" (6). In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, she puts in the spotlight some African American religious thinkers who valued science and may be taken as examples for a religious naturalist orientation: Anna Julia Cooper (1858–1964), W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), and James Baldwin (1924–1987). The concluding chapter presents her plea "Toward an African American Religious Naturalism."

The plea is important. I also found it challenging. Religious naturalism seems to appropriate the universality of science for a universalist religious position. By drawing on science, religious naturalism intentionally seeks to avoid the bias that comes with particular religious, cultural, and ethnic traditions. But humans live their lives always as particular, situated humans; we do not merely speak language, but always a particular language. By situating her proposal for religious naturalism in the context of African American lives and sensibilities, those who might consider themselves not as the primary audience might at least take home the message that religious naturalism should accommodate genuine pluralism, in order to be sensitive to important features of human lives and situations.

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