

Creationism in Europe

I find myself significantly at odds with Jerry Bergman's rather positive review of a recent multi-authored book on the status of creationism and intelligent design in Europe.¹ On the surface of it, I acknowledge that the book, titled *Creationism in Europe*, appears to be a well-structured, crisply written summary of an interesting subject. However, from my own knowledge of the European biblical creation scene, some of the authors have failed to do their research properly, relying extensively on secondary (even disreputable) sources.

Regrettably, I must disagree with Bergman's glowing assessment of the book: "a well-documented review" and "an excellent, fairly balanced review of the situation of Darwin Doubters in Europe". The following selected examples should suffice to illustrate my concern (quotations that follow are from the book itself rather than Bergman's review):

United Kingdom (chapter 3, pp. 50–64). "British creationism has ... had very little impact on public debate in the school system." On the contrary, the last decade and a half have seen a number of high-profile discussions arise concerning the 'threat of creationism' regarding children's education. Humanist and secular groups in the UK have lobbied the Department of Education to change policy and have largely succeeded in restricting the freedom of creationist speakers to visit schools, even upon invitation.² The author of this chapter has leaned heavily upon the BCSE for his information—the so-called *British Centre for Science Education*—a blog site which exhibits appalling scholarship by any standard.³ Even anti-creationist Richard Dawkins has ridiculed BCSE's founder, describing him as a liar and a 'self-promoting fool'.⁴ In the author's discussion concerning creationist organisations,

Creation Science Movement (formerly *Evolution Protest Movement*)⁵ is said to be connected to *Biblical Creation Ministries* (it is not), which is said to be the "second largest creationist organisation in Britain".⁶ Most other active groups, even small ones, are covered, but *Creation Ministries International* is nowhere mentioned in this chapter about UK creationism.⁷ For many years, CMI has had an especially active, country-wide (not to mention Europe-wide) speaking ministry and hosts one of the world's most prominent creationist websites (creation.com). CMI's *Darwin: the Voyage that Shook the World* documentary film, screened country-wide in 2009, stirred up sufficient controversy for the BBC to interview one of the film's evolutionist interviewees alongside a CMI representative. One must conclude that the author of this chapter (Joachim Allgaier) and the three editors of the book as a whole—the subject of Bergman's review—had very little (if any) knowledge of the UK creation scene and were wholly reliant upon secondary sources, failing to adequately research their subject matter.

Germany (chapter 6, pp. 105–124). In this chapter, Werner Gitt is discussed briefly on a single page; he is described as an 'engineer' and a co-author (with six other writers) of a 2009 book published by a Swiss society. There is no mention of his important work in Information Science. Gitt is among the most prolific German creationist authors (including translations into other languages) but this fact is also overlooked.

The Netherlands (chapter 4, pp. 65–84). Having, myself, spoken in this country on many occasions, I was disappointed in the apparently selective reporting and ignorance exhibited by the three writers of this chapter. The focus is on Intelligent Design (and also theistic evolution); there is no mention whatsoever of

'*Mediagroep in Genesis*' (MiG; previously known as *Workgroep in Genesis*), which began around 2004 and grew in prominence. They promoted a number of national speaking tours with CMI's Philip Bell and AiG's Terry Mortenson (with the national press sometimes showing interest) and have a successful website. Moreover, MiG encouraged publication of Dutch translations of a good number of books and DVDs.

Bergman writes that the book "is a well-documented review of the status of creationism in 10 European countries". However, it seems that his main source of information was the book itself rather than first-hand knowledge of the situation in Europe. He does mention that the authors are "all Darwinists or ex-creationists"; indeed, Ronald L. Numbers wrote the Foreword, a man whose apostasy from a former profession of faith hardly qualifies him as an impartial observer. Apparently, Numbers' own book on creationism was well-researched,⁸ but Sarfati wrote:

"... his prejudices are evident. The book majors heavily on personalities, with subtle (and some not-so-subtle) character assassinations, while the high scientific qualifications of many creationists are downplayed. He invariably gives the last word to the evolutionist, which often leaves an impression contrary to the facts as can be seen upon checking the sources."⁹

In my view, Numbers' endorsement of *Creationism in Europe* and the authors' own worldview obligations warrant much more caution. An 'important reference', as Bergman describes it? Not without independent corroboration from established creationists in those same 10 European nations.

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References

1. Bergman, J., Review of: *Creationism in Europe*, Blancke, S., Hjermitsev, H.H. and Kjærgaard, P.C. (Eds.), Johns Hopkins University Press, MD, 2014; *J. Creation* 29(3):33–36, 2015.
2. See, Statham, D. and Bell, P., Dawkins gloats over boost to evolutionary dogma in schools, creation.com/dawkins-bha-schools-creation, 21 January 2012; also, Statham, D., Evidence for Creation now banned from UK religious education classes, creation.com/creation-religious-education, 19 July 2012.
3. BCSE Revealed, Blog by David Anderson, last updated February 2008; www.bcse-revealed.info/bcse/bcse.rev/Main/HomePage.html, accessed 4 February 2016.
4. Anderson, D., Atheist spat: the New Atheists vs their bedfellows in the NCSE/BCSE, creation.com/bcse-and-ncse-in-atheist-spat, 24 May 2010.
5. Munday, E., The British Evolution Protest Movement: a brief history, *Creation* 8(2):41–42, 1986; creation.com/evolution-protest-movement.
6. In January 2016, it was announced that Biblical Creation Trust had been formed from the amalgamation of three UK creationist organisations: Biblical Creation Society, Biblical Creation Ministries and Genesis Agendum.
7. Though a different author of chapter 7, on Poland, does mention "almost fifty articles" translated into Polish on creation.com.
8. Numbers, R., *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism*, University of California Press, CA, 1992.
9. Sarfati, J., The Yellowstone petrified forests, *Creation* 21(2):18–21, 1999, reference 12.

» Jerry Bergman replies:

The goal of the book *Creationism in Europe* was to review the creation movements and those involved. Philip Bell's response to my review indicates that he thought the book should be a very different book, namely a review of the problem of discrimination against creationists. At the least Bell's response added to the book *Creationism in Europe*, although at times contradicted it. He found some errors, but in my experience of reading scores of anti-creation books, most are replete with errors and inaccuracies. I am very familiar with the often irrational antagonism against those who oppose the Darwinian worldview. I have, so far, written six books documenting the problem, namely *Slaughter of the Darwin Dissidents*, *Silencing the Darwin Dissidents*, *Censoring the Darwin Dissidents*, *Suppressing the Darwin Dissidents*, *Eminent Scientist Darwin Doubters*:

Nobel Laureates and other Eminent Scientists who have rejected Orthodox Darwinism, and *Four Times a Heretic*. Each of these books has over a thousand footnotes documenting the claims made in the book.

In my book review, I was comparing *Creationism in Europe* to those books written on the subject of creationism from a secular viewpoint, and, in general, I found *Creationism in Europe* to be far less inaccurate and vociferous, but much of the secular literature on creationism is often so antagonistic and inaccurate that this may not be saying much. The secular literature on creationism is so filled with *ad hominem* arguments and name calling that I have devoted an entire chapter to this topic in my *Silencing the Darwin Dissidents* book.

Common claims in many secular books imply that Darwin doubters, as a whole, are retrogressive, ignorant, loons, liars, and even child abusers. In contrast, *Creationism in Europe* contained a fair amount of positive material about the movement, as well as brief discussions about some of the creationist opposition. It could have contained more objective information about the opposition; but as I document in my book *Censoring the Darwin Dissidents*, if it was obviously pro-creation, it probably would not have been published by a mainline secular publisher. My review was on the contents of the *Creationism in Europe* book, and I assumed the authors were usually fairly accurate when this was not always the case.

I have six file cabinets documenting the situation in the United States, and only about one file drawer documenting the situation in Europe. Thus, I welcome Mr Bell's letter to help correct both my knowledge gaps and, more important, the research of the authors of the book at issue here. I encourage Mr Bell to complete the research required to document in detail the situation in Europe. I will be honoured to include a chapter or two by him in volume seven of the

series described above that carefully documents the situation in Europe.

My book *Slaughter of the Darwin Dissidents* was rejected by every publisher that I sent the manuscript to, both secular and Christian. The reason was either that they concluded that my claim was true—creationists were facing widespread discrimination, and that discrimination is appropriate because creationists are a threat to science; or that my claims were not valid—creationists are not facing discrimination but falsely claiming persecution that does not exist. As I was writing this I ran across the following comment in an email message in reaction to my work in this area: “Bergman is again touting his bogus claim that those who reject the modern science of Darwinism are discriminated against.”

When I finally found a publisher, the book sold close to 4,000 copies, and it is now out in a second edition. This is a respectable number, since most academic books typically sell close to only 1,000 copies. The over 40 reviews, including those on Amazon, were, almost without exception, very favourable. Several supporters purchased copies to donate to academic libraries, many of which refused to place the book on their shelves. Examples include Bowling Green State University and Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. Ironically, Bowling Green State University had on its shelves my first book covering this topic, namely, *The Criterion; Religious Discrimination in America*.¹

Even several Christian creation groups refused to carry my books on this topic, explaining that it was negative and they wanted to leave the impression that creation was a respectable scientific activity. (I need to add that CMI has consistently strongly supported my work.) Frankly, I was surprised that *Creationism in Europe* was published by a major secular academic publisher, and wonder how many times it was

rejected by potential publishers. Following its acceptance by Johns Hopkins University Press, I wonder how much editing by the publisher occurred. If it had included the material that Mr Bell cited, I doubt very much it would have been published.

In summary, Mr Bell’s response suggests that he had wanted Johns Hopkins University Press to publish a very different book than *Creationism in Europe*. It is like complaining that a book titled *The Role of Darwinian Eugenics in Nazi Germany* almost totally ignored the many military battles fought during the second World War. If Mr Bell was disappointed that *Creationism in Europe* was a very different book than he expected, I strongly encourage him to write that very different book. Furthermore, I will do what I can to ensure that this very different book is published and widely distributed. It is sorely needed, and no competition exists that I am aware of.

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References

1. Onesimus Publishing Co., Richfield, MN, 1984.