

РОССИЙСКАЯ АКАДЕМИЯ НАУК
САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГСКИЙ ФИЛИАЛ
ИНСТИТУТА ИСТОРИИ ЕСТЕСТВОЗНАНИЯ И ТЕХНИКИ ИМЕНИ С.И. ВАВИЛОВА
САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГСКИЙ СОЮЗ УЧЁНЫХ
ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО «НЕСТОР-ИСТОРИЯ»

ИСТОРИКО-БИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

2018

Том 10

№ 3

Санкт-Петербург

РЕЦЕНЗИИ И АННОТАЦИИ

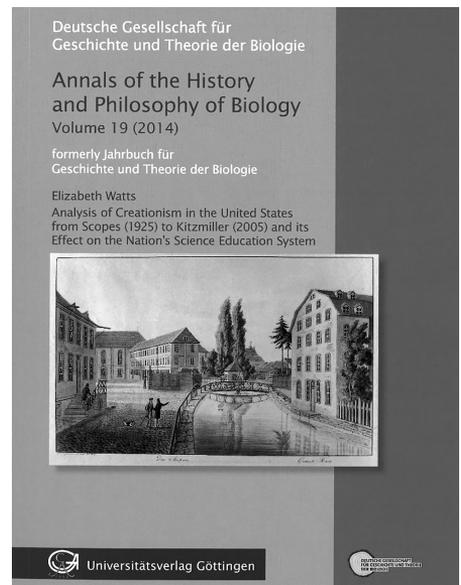
DOI 10.24411/2076-8176-2018-11971

Fundamentalism in the Classroom: a Look at Creationism's Continued Popularity and Influence in the United States

GEORGY S. LEVIT¹, UWE HOSSFELD²

¹Kassel University (Germany), ²Jena University (Germany)

Many biologists and historians of science, such as Stephen Jay Gould, have claimed that creationism is a homegrown phenomenon of North American sociocultural history. There are two major reasons for it. The first reason is the wide spread of evangelicalism. Due to the evangelical zeal that has been present in the United States since its beginning as a nation, biblical literalism became quite influential in the USA. It is not surprising that an organized creationist movement arose there in response to evolutionary theory that contradicts most central evangelical beliefs. The central importance of religion in America can be traced back to the earliest periods in American history as the Puritans brought with them the idea of establishing a “city on the hill”, where man lived according to God’s rules and they saw this movement to the America as the most significant action in human history since Christ’s crucifixion. The very structure of these communities and their independence from mainstream theologies create a breeding ground for the growth of creationism. While modern scientific creationism occurred in the US, it later spread to other countries, including Western Europe. American creationism is used as argumentative and strategic planning template for creationists and ID-champions around the globe. For this reason, creationism is a fundamental issue of science education in general and not only for the analysis of North American policy and education. The story of creationism in the United States and its educational repercussions is the focus of Watts’ “Analysis of Creationism from Scopes (1925) to Kitzmiller (2005) and its Effect on the Nation’s Science



Education System”¹, and the major objective of her book was to examine the growth of creationist movement in the US from a historical and judicial standpoint. It is an interdisciplinary study with a major focus on science education and science history.

Although the title states that the analysis is limited to the eighty years between the Scopes trial and the Kitzmiller trial, the breadth of the work is much larger. The book embraces eight chapters in addition to references and list of appendices. While a glance at the table of contents will cause many to doubt how such a variety of topics can be discussed with any amount of depth or detail, Watts has mastered this task, incorporating everything from Biblical history, legal analysis, educational policy, and American history into one book. Despite the myriad of various topics, there is a clear logic that leads readers along a smooth path from the introduction to the conclusion.

The first chapter is devoted to the nature of the conflict between science and religion in the USA and highlights, among others, the differences between mainstream Christianity, evangelicalism and fundamental Christianity. She discusses in depth how fundamental Christianity and evangelicalism became so popular in the United States and how the growth of the religious right has affected political policy, including educational policies. The second chapter explores the evolution of creationism into the “Intelligent Design” movement, as Watts describes: “The creationist movement has been so successful in the past because of their ability to evolve and adapt to changing environment. The newest form of creationism, Intelligent Design, directly continues trends found in Creation Science” (p. 105). Here Watts discusses with great clarity the differences between these various strains of creationism and the reasons for their appearance and fluctuating popularity within the US.

As the title states, there is a large focus on the legal aspects of creationism and education. The analysis of the legal cases is most impressive. Here Watts does a dynamic job in first offering a general overview of the American legal system to enable the reader (especially those unfamiliar with the topic) to more quickly discern how and why different court rulings had certain effects. One point that was unclear was why the title of the work refers to an analysis of cases between 1925 and 2005, when Watts does not in fact limit herself to discussing only these cases. Instead, she incorporates an additional chapter section that includes an extra analysis of the cases between 2005 and 2015. The analysis of the post-2005 cases includes the same amount of detailed research as the pre-2005 cases and thus Watts could have more appropriately entitled her thesis “An Analysis of Creationism from Scopes (1925) to Lane (2014) ...” The analysis of the legal cases illustrated clearly how the creationists strategically reacted of the legal rulings, making their religious claims ever subtler. While the Christian fundamentalists fought evolution-free classrooms in the 1920s, the creationists of today struggle to introduce their “alternative theories” into the curriculum.

In her look at how creationism has effected the nation’s science education system, Watts begins with a thorough overview of the American education system and the different levels of controls over educational policy, i. e. local, state and federal controls. She uses this overview to discuss how creationists have attempted to effect change at each of these levels from textbook stickers to state-wide bans on the teaching of evolution. As Watts points out, the American school system is not regulated by national laws but is instead largely dictated by state-level decisions, which means that public education in the United States varies greatly from state to state since the lack of a nationally centralized curriculum or education standards. Committees and boards of elected individuals make the decision about curriculum. Correspondingly, there are several possibilities for biblical literalists to try to manipulate the educational system, especially science education. Moreover, instead of only looking at how anti-evolution trends effect formal education environments, she also delves into the

¹Watts E. (2014) “Analysis of Creationism from Scopes (1925) to Kitzmiller (2005) and its Effect on the Nation’s Science Education System“, in: *Annals of the History and Philosophy of Biology*, vol. 19. ISBN: 978-3-86395-339-3 (335 pages, Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 29,00€).

realm of free-choice learning with an analysis of free-market literature, films and museums. These analyses offer shocking results that highlight the importance of such a broad examination.

To round out the thesis, Watts also includes a look at creationism in other countries. Her country of choice is Germany. The jump to Germany was at first unclear to me, but the discussion within the chapter explained why Germany offered a great contrast country due to its history of higher criticism and promotion of evolutionary theory as well as the intricate historical influences of Germany on the anti-evolution movement in the US. As Watts writes: "A look at Germany is also particularly interesting in the context of this thesis because as was discussed in earlier chapters, Germany was often the country that fundamentalists in the United States pointed to when looking for example of a country that had gone astray" (p. 264). What Watts means with "going astray" is Germany's early application of biblical criticism which is rooted in rationalism and naturalism. Despite the great differences between the US and Germany, Watts' work shows that creationist activity in Germany has resulted in the rise of evangelical schools and publication of "evolutionary-critical" textbooks early on. Currently, over hundred evangelical schools in Germany with total of 33,000 students abandoned evolutionary theory in their classes. The analysis of German creationism shows that its argumentative structure and strategies were exported from the US and found root in Europe. Nevertheless, the acceptance of evolution in Germany is still much higher than in the US, a fact that can be explained, among others, by the insensibility of traditional theologies to fundamentalist ideas.

In the conclusion and afterward Watts highlights her major finding, namely, the proof of American origin of creationism and its connection to Christian fundamentalism. The book discloses the very mechanism of creationist attempts to manipulate educational system. Furthermore, it shows the complexity of the US creationism and explains how and why American creationism evolved during the 20th century. This book is recommended for experts in the field, as Watts offers details that are not found in other works, and is also very suitable for individuals completely unfamiliar with the area as Watts provides all of the necessary background information required to understand the intricacies of the subject. Moreover, the book is written at a level that allows all readers to follow her line of inquiry and understand all of the conclusions made in her work. To sum up, Watts' thesis has a great deal of intrinsic interest and the author invested a considerable amount of time, energy and scholarly effort into the investigation of creationism and its impact on education in the US and abroad. It is a brilliantly written study of exceptional importance. Watts' thesis on the rise and development of creationism in the United States in the 20th and 21st century should be read by anyone who is interested in quality science education or whoever really wanted to understand the creationist phenomenon.

Фундаментализм на уроке: Опыт исследования популярности и влияния креационизма в США

ГЕОРГИЙ С. ЛЕВИТ¹, УВЕ ХОССФЕЛЬД²

¹Университет Касселя (Германия), ²Университет Йены (Германия)

В рецензии дан анализ книги Элизабет Воттс о современном креационизме в США, его истоках и влиянии на школьное образование. В книге раскрывается связь между креационизмом и христианским фундаментализмом и механизм попыток манипулировать американской системой образования. Кроме того, в книге проводятся параллели между американским и европейским креационизмом, на примере Германии.