

Creationists and Kooks

By Roger Schultz

Creationism: Intellectual Origins, Cultural Context, and Theoretical Diversity (Ph.D. dissertation, 1989, U.C.L.A.) & *Anti-Evolution: An Annotated Bibliography*, by Thomas McIver (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1988)

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In recent I.C.E. newsletters, Gary North warned of the dangers of geocentrism and conspiracy theorists. He was particularly concerned about Paul Hoggan, a holocaust revisionist who once worked with Rushdoony. Not wanting to be labeled guilty by association in a future doctoral dissertation, North tried to separate himself from the kooks on the Reconstructionist fringe. He is three years too late.

McIver's is a typical doctoral dissertation: a broad, often superficial treatment of the creationist movement. (Oddly enough, McIver's field is anthropology.) McIver touches on many topics, often accurately, but rarely covers anything thoroughly.

The dissertation has its share of mistakes. The first word in the dissertation is “premillennialism” (sic), and “premillennial”, “postmillennial”, and “millennium” are consistently misspelled. (It's great when a Harvard trained scholar intent on making Christians look silly makes stupid mistakes.) People are frequently mislabeled: Bernard Ramm, for instance, appears as a “conservative Christian”. The dissertation, though moderate in many ways, has a predictable, patronizing tone.

What is unique is McIver's emphasis on Christian Reconstructionists. He points to Rushdoony, North, and James Jordan, as well as Francis Schaeffer, D. James Kennedy, John Whitehead, and Pat Robertson. Apparently all conservative Christian activists are Reconstructionists. McIver perpetuates the standard recon-scare litany: they will take over the government, create a “strict theocracy”, go back to feudalism, etc. This seems to be a back-door way of terrifying people with the dangers of creationism.

James Kennedy is a special target, apparently because he is influential. McIver attacks him, using the flimsiest evidence and strangest arguments. One of the arguments goes this way: Kennedy was on the John Ankerberg Show; Ankerberg tried to expose Jimmy

Swaggart; Swaggart was defended by Benny Hinn; Benny Hinn was a gap theory creationist. This doesn't make any sense to me, either, but it is a reason why McIver views Kennedy with suspicion. McIver also tries to make his opponents look silly. He reminds us that one creationist was Aimee Semple McPherson, the charismatic founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, whose sexual frolics make Swaggart look chaste. Included with creationist leaders is cartoonist Jack Chick, whose *Big Daddy* comic book attacked evolution. McIver also introduces geocentrists, and makes sly comments about the “flat-earthers”.

Especially nutty are the conspiracists who, McIver implies, reveal a sinister side to creationism. Paul Hoggan, who dedicated a book to Rushdoony in the 1960s, recently published a book through the Institute for Historical Revision (IHR), an organization which challenges the Holocaust. (Rushdoony says he has had no contact with Hoggan in years, and Steve Schlissell has argued that there is no connection between Christian Reconstruction and anti-semitism.) Herman Otten, editor of the Lutheran *Christian News*, once gave a lecture at a IHR meeting, and also happens to be a creationist. While attending a Institute for Creation Research summer seminar, McIver met Ralph Epperson, author of *The Hidden Hand: An Introduction to a Conspiratorial View of History*, and also a creationist. The author of *The Negro and the World Crisis*, Charles Magne, once quoted Rushdoony favorably and McIver assumes that many creationists are racists. Best of all, McIver warns that creationist leader Henry Morris “condones genocidal acts described in the Old Testament, which, of course, he interprets literally”.

There you have it: Creationists are weird, and they have weird friends. This dissertation might signal a new liberal approach toward creationists. Traditionally seen by academicians as quirky but relatively harmless religious fuddie-duddies, creationists now emerge as dangerous fanatics bent on Nazi or Klan-style world domination.

After reading the dissertation, I was pleased to discover McIver's *Anti-Evolution: An Annotated Bibliography*, a work far superior to the dissertation. McIver, who has written numerous articles for the anti-creationist *Creation/Evolution*, has an obvious interest in the creationist debate. The bibliography lists creationist works, gives brief and generally fair descriptions, and is well-indexed and cross-referenced. It is an excellent resource book, which I highly recommend.

What is fascinating is the diversity of the anti-evolutionists. In addition to the normal crew of creationists, McIver lists creationists in history and in other countries. Also listed are Christians who are not famous for creationism but have weighed in on the issue at one time or another (e.g., Mary Pride, Herman Dooyeweerd, and Jews for Jesus). Also making the list are Gertrude Himmelfarb (wife of neo-conservative Irving Kristol), Wernher von Braun (the rocket scientist), Emmanuel Velikovsky (the controversial and revisionist Russian scientist/psychologist), and Ignatius Donnelly (the weird Minnesota populist). Non-Christians and weirdos also make the list of anti-evolutionists: Annie Besant (founder of Theosophy), Hare Krishnas, Swami Bhaktivedanta, Mohammad Ayub Khan Saidookhail, Erich von Daniken (the *Chariots of the Gods* guy), and Jeremy Rifkin

(the anti-beef guru).

Reading through the lists, one gets a sense of amazing diversity in the anti-evolution movement. People oppose Darwin for reasons tied to science, ethics, and various religious philosophies. Indeed, evolutionary theory is being challenged from all directions.¹

The question is, then, how will liberal academicians treat creationists in the future? As silly but harmless religious traditionalists? As sinister and crazed fascist kooks? Or as part of a general and growing dissatisfaction with Darwinianism? Even McIver, a new specialist in the field, sends mixed signals.

¹ See T.E. Wilder, "Paradigm Shift: The Rise of a New Biology", *Contra Mundum* 6 (Winter, 1993): 31-40.