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Michael Lienesch. *In the Beginning: Fundamentalism, the Scopes Trial, and the Making of the Antievolution Movement.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. x + 352 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-3096-3.

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Anti-evolution and the Long History of Conservative Educational Activism

In 1994, Alan Brinkley bemoaned the fact that "twentieth-century American conservatism has been something of an orphan in historical scholarship."[1] Leo Ribuffo protested, at the same time, that historians had, in fact, given a great deal of attention to the U.S. conservative tradition.[2] More importantly, since the time of Brinkley's article, U.S. historians have published a flood of monographic studies of that tradition.[3] Yet in spite of such energetic interest in the history of conservatism among U.S. historians, there has been a curious lack of such attention by educational historians. To be sure, there have been notable exceptions, including Charles Israel's *Before Scopes* (2004) and Milton Gaither's *Homeschool: An American History* (2008), to name just two.

There is no doubt that educational historians have created a vast historiography on the history of "progressive" and "reform" movements in education. In these histories, however, even the most sophisticated educational historians have allowed conservatism in educational history to remain a largely unmapped territory, a mysterious block on the forward momentum of progressive reform. In his influential study of the successes and failures of progressive education, for instance, Arthur Zilversmit concludes that most Americans held a "strange, emotional attachment to traditional schooling patterns."[4] Similarly, David Tyack and Larry Cuban argue that the traditional "grammar of schooling" has remained fundamentally constant not due to "conscious conservatism" but rather as a result of "unexamined institutional habits and widespread cultural beliefs about what constitutes a 'real school.'"[5] Perhaps, as a result, those education scholars interested in the nature of educational conservatism have not felt much need to explore the historical roots of that conservatism. For instance, Ira Shor feels no need to reach back beyond 1969 in his analysis of the "conservative restoration" in education, politics, and culture.[6] In the same vein, although Michael Apple insists that we must, as historians, "think historically" about the rise of conservative strength in education, he does not examine that history beyond the 1960s.[7] When educational historians fail to make a cogent case for the importance of understanding the longer history of conservative educational activism, it hardly seems fair to blame fellow scholars for ignoring that history.

Michael Lienesch's book, *In the Beginning*, helps education scholars of all specializations understand the importance of looking at the longer history of conservatism in education policy. Lienesch examines the reasons for the strength and durability of the anti-evolution movement in U.S. schools. Instead of dismissing anti-evolution activism as merely a vague and generic product of what Zilversmit calls "emotional attachment," or Tyack and Cuban label "habits … and beliefs," Lienesch uses social movement theory to analyze the ways energetic, self-conscious, and influential anti-evolution educational activism has endured across generations.[8] This analysis is likely to be essential for all educational historians with interest in the ways reform movements succeed and fail. Even better, Lienesch writes in a consistently readable and engaging style peppered with illuminating anecdotes and fascinating asides. Though he incorporates a great deal of social science jargon, he still manages to tell a page-turning story of mobilization and eventual disintegration.

Lienesch plumbs the literature on identity construction, for instance, to help explain the way the new cultural identity of fundamentalism managed to establish itself in the 1920s. As did other social movements, fundamentalists struggled to establish boundaries around the meanings of their movement. Lienesch notes that such boundary construction establishes definitions that tend to be "pliable and porous." Even for groups whose members insist on their own rigid self-definition, like early fundamentalists, boundaries "must be consciously con-

structed, and they can change" (p. 17).

Lienesch applies the work of social scientists such as Erving Goffman, William Gamson, Robert Benford, and David Snow to delineate the ways fundamentalists in the 1920s sought to "frame" the issue of evolution as the central concern of their movement. These frames, in Lienesch's interpretation, serve as "interpretive schemes that simplify and make sense of the world by locating and labeling events or experiences" (p. 60). For social movements, frames serve three purposes: they diagnose a social problem, propose solutions, and provide reasons and motivation for reform.

For fundamentalists in the 1920s, according to Lienesch, evolution provided a frame for fundamentalist social and political mobilization. Among his many insightful applications of social science theory to the fundamentalist and anti-evolution movements, Lienesch uses the work of political scientist Sidney Tarrow to help analyze the reasons why anti-evolution movements failed in some states and succeeded in others. Tarrow suggests four dimensions to such success. Activists need access to power; they require helpful alignments among elites; they must find allies among the elites; and they require splits among those elites. When these conditions are in place, movements such as anti-evolution can score big successes. In the case of the anti-evolution movement in the 1920s, this scheme helps explain why fundamentalists and their allies scored success with anti-evolution state laws in states such as Mississippi, Florida, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Tennessee and why they failed in seemingly likely states such as Minnesota and North Carolina.

Tarrow's contribution, in Lienesch's interpretation, also sheds light on the later career of the anti-evolution movement in the 1920s. As did other social movements, the anti-evolution movement experienced four stages in a "cycle of contention," from mobilization to demobilization (p. 172). As Lienesch describes, the anti-evolution movement experienced the acceleration and diffusion of conflict across the social system; the creation of new frames and repertoires of protest; the development of new organizations, leading to competition with old ones; and the intensification of interaction between activists in the movement and authorities of the state.

Historians have argued for decades about the fate of the fundamentalist and anti-evolution movements after the Scopes trial of 1925. Early historians such as Stewart Cole believed that the fundamentalist movement quickly disintegrated after the trial. More recently, George Marsden, Ronald Numbers, and Joel Carpenter have noted that fundamentalism merely retreated to build institutional infrastructure during the 1930s and 1940s, to emerge once again on the main stage of American cultural life in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.[9]

Lienesch's use of social science literature helps put this experience into context. It demonstrates that the experience of the anti-evolution movement and Protestant fundamentalism was not unique. As did other social movements, both anti-evolutionists and fundamentalists survived in cultural hard times by building separate institutions, by developing issues of concern to large numbers of Americans, by establishing connections between various activists, and by finding "new strategies and goals that allow them to respond to changes in the political and social climate" (p. 199).

Therefore, *In the Beginning* makes an enormous contribution to historians' understanding of the above movements by putting them in a helpful context, as social movements. In doing so, however, Lienesch is forced at times to shoehorn fundamentalism into a constricted understanding of the nature of social movements. For instance, in his effort to locate the source of identity formation among early fundamentalists, Lienesch puts too much emphasis on the influence of *The Fundamentals* (1910-15). To be sure, this twelve-volume collection of essays had an enormous effect on the start of the fundamentalist movement. But fundamentalists in the 1920s and beyond rarely referred to those essays. Early fundamentalists did not use the volumes as their source of a new fundamentalist identity. Even the writers and editors of *The Fundamentals* usually represented an earlier generation of scholars, pastors, and theologians, different from those who became the leaders of the fundamentalist movement in the 1920s. In this case, it seems Lienesch looks too hard for an example from the fundamentalist movement to fit the theory of all social movements.

Similarly, with his social science perspective, Lienesch cannot help but impose some definitions on the movement that are too neat. For instance, he concludes that William Jennings Bryan was not a fundamentalist. Indeed, the relationship of Bryan and fundamentalism was a complicated one. Bryan often insisted he was not a fundamentalist, but other fundamentalists and their enemies all insisted he was. In at least one public statement, however, Bryan implied that he was, indeed, a fundamentalist.[10] To make the situation even more complicated, Bryan happily assumed leadership of the fundamentalist movement. Was he or wasn't he? It is too simple to assert his identity one way or the other. Similarly, Lienesch asserts that fundamentalists

considered Catholics "beyond the pale and not even ... potential collaborators" (p. 52). This flies in the face of Bryan's earnest outreach to prominent Catholic anti-evolutionists such as Alfred McCann. Beyond Bryan, many 1920s fundamentalists eagerly read the work of Catholic writers such as McCann and Barry O'Toole. Many of those same 1920s fundamentalists, however, still condemned Catholicism as the church of the Antichrist, even as they recommended O'Toole's books.

These are the kinds of muddled meanings that historians relish. Social scientists, on the other hand, even the most historically sensitive ones, look for wider patterns. In doing so, they sometimes deemphasize the inherent contradictions in every historical actor and in every social movement. In spite of these minor quibbles, Lienesch manages to use social movement theory to craft an insightful study of the anti-evolution movement and the career of fundamentalism in the 1920s and since. Especially for educational historians, this thoughtful analysis of the durable success of the anti-evolution movement serves as a powerful corrective to the field's deafening silence on the subject of conservative educational activism in the twentieth century.

Notes

[1]. Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of Conservatism," *American Historical Review* 99 (1994), 409.

[2]. Leo P. Ribuffo, "Why Is There So Much Conservatism in the United States and Why Do So Few Historians Know Anything about It?" *American Historical Review* 99 (1994), 438-49.

[3]. The literature on conservatism is growing fast. Some leading scholarly work includes Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism, A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Eugene Genovese, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Robert A. Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Glen Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers' Movement and World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Edward Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Allan J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008); Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Ronald L. Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Kimberly Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Ronald Reagan* (New York: Norton, 2009); Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time of Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[4]. Arthur Zilversmit, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 169.

[5]. David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 85, 88.

[6]. Ira Shor, *Culture Wars: School and Society in the Conservative Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[7]. Michael Apple, *Educating the "Right" Way: Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 125.

[8]. Zilversmit 169; and Tyack and Cuban 85, 88.

[9]. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, expanded ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Carpenter.

[10]. William Jennings Bryan, "Letter to the Editor," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1925. In this letter, Bryan noted, "people often ask me why I can be a progressive in politics and a fundamentalist in religion."

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