

# THE TWENTIES IN CONTEMPORARY COMMENTARY



Bryan College, Dayton, Tennessee

Scopes jury taking the oath, 1925

## — RELIGION AND SCIENCE —

No event encapsulates the modern battle over religion and science as does the Scopes “Monkey Trial” of 1925. Although John Scopes was convicted of teaching evolution in a dramatic twelve-day trial, the matter wasn’t settled, of course. The debate over evolution, and whether an irreconcilable divide exists between religion and science, has continued to this day. What follows is a sample of Twenties commentary on the debate itself and what it signified for the modern age.

The *Forum*, a magazine of social and political commentary, featured a monthly contest in which readers were invited to submit definitions on terms looming large in public discussion.

Editors of the *Forum*  
 “What is the Scientific Attitude?”  
 Definition contest, *The Forum*, May 1928

A battle of words has long been waged in a fruitless effort to discover whether the teachings of science conflict with the teachings of religion. Such discussions always leave the reader precisely where he started, for the simple reason that the laws of gravity or of electromagnetism can neither tell us why we should, nor why we should not, do unto our neighbor as we would be done by.

But even though this is granted, the cleric’s lamb may not yet lie down by the scientists’ lion cub.<sup>1</sup> There still remains something fundamental in their two natures which forbids it. And if scientist and priest really want to know how matters stand between them, let them put aside subtleties of rhetoric and examine their assumptions together. Then they will find that, although they are trying in certain respects to do exactly the same thing—namely to exercise some control over the forces of life—they do not and cannot agree, because they have totally and utterly irreconcilable attitudes toward life.

Briefly stated, the RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE assumes:

- That the world was created by some Superior Being who administers it on an artistic and business basis for His own glory and profit;
- That the course of events is dependent upon His will;
- That human beings and all created things live by His suffrance [permission] and may be cut off at any time by His displeasure;

- That His will, like that of every good businessman, may be moved by a bargain to postpone foreclosure of the mortgage to eternity and damnation;
- And, therefore, that such control as men may exercise over their lives consists in a complex etiquette of prayers, offerings, sacrifices, and observances in the proper attitude of humility—all designed to win the good will of the Supreme Being and lead to His immediate intercession in favor of the suppliant.

These assumptions are simple, direct, and logical, and they offer an explanation of life which has satisfied millions of men and still continues to satisfy multitudes. So long as they are accepted as true, the bulwarks of established religion remain impregnable. And even though they may be doubted or denied, that does not necessarily mean the religion will perish. It may mean that religious leaders will have the foresight to adopt a new set of assumptions which men can believe and upon which they will build a new code of ethics and behavior.

The SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE toward life is based on the following assumptions:

- That the universe is a self-sustaining unit in which no supernatural interference has yet been observed under controlled conditions;
- That when certain events are noted to occur in regular sequences, like the movements of the moon and the movement of the tides, it is probably that one is the cause of the other;
- That such recurring sequences of cause and effect point to a law controlling the relationship;
- That these laws may be formulated with approximate exactness;
- That such laws will continue to operate in the future, just as they have in the past.
- And therefore, that such control as men may exercise over their lives consists in knowing the laws of nature—the “law for man” as well as the “law for thing”—and thereby directing the natural forces which are governed by them.

With this background in mind, the reader is invited to weigh the following definitions, which have been awarded prizes. [Definitions at right]

<sup>2</sup> William Wilson, English physicist of the time.

## WHAT IS THE SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE?

Definition Contest, *The Forum*, May 1928

Recruiting readers' definitions for terms looming large in current discussion was a regular feature of the periodical *Forum*. In May 1928, five submitted definitions of the “scientific attitude” were selected by the editors. The *Forum's* introduction begins on page one of this commentary and continues at left.

**The Scientific Attitude** is that “there is a reason in all things” such that the explanation of events may be found in their antecedents, and from sufficient knowledge of antecedents the consequences deduced; though, as Wilson<sup>1</sup> says, “general statements” (laws) can be “postulated” which hold true only with a certain probability and with certain limits of accuracy. Wherefore scientific statements are never final. Anything may be doubted; but believing with Darwin that a scientific man should not be too incredulous, science doubts but to investigate and verify.

-Prof. Alfred C. Lane, Tufts College, Boston, Massachusetts

**The Scientific Attitude** is an attitude of faith in the reality of the data given man through the medium of his senses—in contrast to the religious attitude of faith in the reality of data not received through the senses. The Scientific Attitude has opened up the whole world of material welfare, and is just now on the verge of opening up a new world of moral and ethical welfare by inducing a new type of religious attitude.

-Dr. H. I. Gosline, pathologist, Sing Sing Prison, Ossining, New York

**The Scientific Attitude**—an intelligent and disciplined Missouriianism, superior to prejudice, distrustful of dogma, and relying on the systematic examination, observation, and comparison of material, behavior, or phenomena for the progressive establishment of governing principles.

-George H. Mather, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

**The Scientific Attitude**—selfless devotion to the truth, as in itself the highest of all values, yet inability to decide finally wherein truth lies; impartial skepticism toward all laws, yet unlimited belief in a world governed by law; reserved acceptance of hypotheses, with complete reliance upon them in practice; determination to build upon the battered foundation of yesterday's knowledge a monument of service to the human race, more enduring than the works of Ozymandias.

-Dr. Tracy Jackson Putnam, Brookline, Massachusetts

**The Scientific Attitude**—a willingness to recognize new conceptions provided they withstand unbiased scrutiny and regardless of their contradiction of old accepted ideas.

-Dorothy Calingaert, New York, New York

Editors of the *Forum*  
 "What Is Religion?" definition contest  
*The Forum*, November 1928

In attempting to arrive at the meaning of religion, we cannot afford to ignore the opinions of the philosophers. A few of the best definitions handed down by the world's greatest minds are the following:

IMMANUEL KANT — Religion consists in recognizing all our duties as Divine commands.

JOHANN FICHTE — Religion is conscious morality, a morality which in virtue of consciousness is mindful of its origin from God.

TOLSTOY — True religion is the establishment by man of such a relation to the Infinite Life around him that, while connecting his life with this Infinite and directing his conduct, it is also in agreement with his reason and with human knowledge.

AUGUSTE COMTE — Religion consists in regulating each one's individual nature.

JOHN STUART MILL — The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire.

CHARLES DARWIN — The feeling of religious devotion is a highly complex one, consisting of love, complete submission to an exalted and mysterious superior, a strong sense of dependence, fear, reverence, hope for the future, gratitude, and perhaps other elements.

MATTHEW ARNOLD — Morality touched by emotion. . . . Ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling.  
 [Ellipsis in *Forum*]

GEORGE SANTAYANA — Our religion is the poetry in which we believe.

JOSIAH ROYCE — Religion is the consciousness of our practical relation to an invisible spiritual order.

These definitions may be regarded as models of clear thinking and concise expression. As an exercise in criticism, the reader is invited to compare them with those that follow, which have been awarded prizes as the best definitions submitted by *Forum* readers. [See above.]

"Dr. Mathews Deplores the Idea of  
 Conflict of Science and Religion"  
*Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 1925

Immanuel church on the subject "The Contribution of Science to Religion."

"When the Bible was written there were no telescopes, and hence no knowledge of the planetary system beyond what appeared to the unaided eye. Now we know there is a galaxy of stars numbering 1,500,000,000, and then other galaxies still further off. If a man has no bigger world than was known 6,000 years ago he can be religious, but it is a terrible thing to say that one cannot be religious when by the aid of science he has come to see the infinities of space."

## WHAT IS RELIGION?

Definition Contest, *The Forum*, November 1928

Complementing its definition contest on the "scientific attitude" in May 1928, the *Forum* invited readers to submit definitions of "religion" for the November 1928 issue. Of these, the editors published four definitions, with the introduction at left.

**Religion** is the attitude of man toward a superior Being, the assumption of whose existence renders acceptable the facts or life or makes enduring the futility of existence.

-Randolph Reynolds, New Haven, Connecticut

**Religion** is the restraint, or inspiration, of human conduct caused by either fear of displeasing, or gratitude and desire to please, a higher Power or Powers; these impulses usually finding expression in a system of worship.

-R. T. Fullwood, Los Angeles, California

**Religion** is a theory offered to explain and interpret the universe, coupled with an ethical code of life by means of which we attempt to adjust ourselves in the best possible way to the conditions of life.

-Mrs. Donald Forsyth, Provo, Utah

**Religion** is a sort of egocentric conceit, in the interest of which man postulates a "supernatural" world, populated by certain of the risen dead, over which reigns a vainglorious sovereign whose alleged solicitude toward mundane economy is made the basis of the assumption that man occupies the supremely important place in the universe—a pretty theory in proof of which biological research has not been reassuring.

-Howard Elsmere Fuller, Loxley, Alabama

Rev. Frederick C. Grant  
"Religion and Science"  
*Chicago Tribune*, August 26, 1928

Rev. Grant was dean of the  
Western Theological Seminary  
(Episcopal) in Evanston, Illinois.

A true religion has nothing to fear from a true science, from a science willing to admit the limited and really abstract range of its investigations, and to recognize that for a full and complete account of existence, others facts, values, and hypotheses are necessary in addition to those with which science ordinarily deals. It is only the fear of new ideas, an intellectually lazy conservatism, or even a covert skepticism, that has terrorized religious minds when confronted with the scientific account of the world.

On the other hand, a true science has nothing to fear at the hands of a true religion. Many of the great names in modern scientific history, including the science of today, are those of religious men; and if you call the roll of the real leaders in Christian history, including the present, i.e., the true prophets, the creative minds, the men in whom the genius of the Christian religion is genuinely expressed, how many of them have been or are persecutors or antagonists of science? As Newman Smyth once remarked in a Yale laboratory, "How would [Charles] Butler, [St. Thomas] Aquinas, and Augustine [St. Augustine of Hippo] have reveled in modern scientific research!"

Alfred North Whitehead  
"Religion and Science"  
*The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1925

One of the giant minds of his age,  
English mathematician and philosopher  
Whitehead published *Science and the  
Modern World* in 1925.

It seems as though, during the last half-century, the results of science and the beliefs of religion had come into a position of frank disagreement from which there can be no escape, except by abandoning either the clear teaching of science or the clear teaching of religion. This conclusion has been urged by controversialists on either side. . . .

. . . When we consider what religion is for mankind, and what science is, it is no exaggeration to say that the future course of history depends upon the decision of this generation as to the relations between them. We have here the two strongest general forces (apart from the mere impulse of the various senses) which influence men, and they seem to be set one against the other—the force of our religious intuitions, and the force of our impulse to accurate observation and logical deduction. . . .

A clash of doctrines is not a disaster—it is an opportunity. . . .

The great point to be kept in mind is that normally an advance in science will show that statements of various religious beliefs require some sort of modification. It may be that they have to be expanded or explained, or, indeed, entirely restated. If the religion is a sound expression of truth, this modification will only exhibit more adequately the exact point which is of importance. This process is a gain. In so far, therefore, as any religion has any contact with physical facts, it is to be expected that the point of view of those facts must be continually modified as scientific knowledge advances. In this way the exact relevance of these facts for religious thought will grow more and more clear. The progress of science must result in the unceasing modification of religious thought, to the great advantage of religion.

**RELIGION SHAKES  
SCIENCE'S HAND!**

Not Antagonistic, View of  
40 Noted Americans.

*Chicago Tribune*, May 27, 1923

**EVOLUTION NO FOE  
TO FAITH, CURATOR  
HRDLICKA ASSERTS**

Religion Has Nothing to  
Fear From Truths in  
Biology, He Says.

**CRITICS ARE URGED  
TO NOTE EVIDENCE**

Declares Science Has No Defi-  
nition of Soul; It It Exists  
All Life Has It.

*The Washington Post*, November 15, 1924

**WILBUR. IN CHURCH,  
DEFENDS BIBLE AS  
AGAINST EVOLUTION**

Science "Cries Out" for  
Creator, He Declares  
in San Francisco.

**ACCEPTED AS MEANS,  
BUT NOT AS ORIGIN**

Technical Experts Sneer at  
Religion Covertly, Ignoring  
Study of It, He Says.

*The Washington Post*, July 13, 1925

Fr. Wilfrid Parsons, S. J.  
"Religion and Science"  
*America*, August 15, 1925

A Roman Catholic priest and political science professor, Father Parsons was editor of the Catholic weekly *America*.

A recent writer said: "The beauty and happiness of religion, perhaps, lie in the fact that religion has little to do with thinking." I have called that idea more destructive of Christianity than ever were the objections of [Aldous] Huxley and [Herbert] Spencer. Once you take religion out of the field of intellect and confine it entirely to mere subjective feeling, you may think you are reconciling reason and faith, but you are doing it by destroying faith entirely. Faith is just as much a matter of the intellect as reason is, and to the Catholic, at least, Christianity is as reasonably true as science is. This is necessary, for religion, to be a true religion, must be the service of God by the *whole man*—intellect, will, and emotions. The pursuit and knowledge of the eternal Truth is a part of religion just as love of God is a part, and they cannot be separated. . . .

The lesson of all this is that in the modern controversy the Catholic position remains unshaken, indeed it has hardly been examined. If it ever is examined, it will be seen why Catholics can move so freely between the two fixed points of the freedom of science and the immutability of revealed dogma, why Catholics can be so strangely unmoved by such phenomena as the Scopes trial, and why they are so ready to uphold and engage in the untrammelled research of a science that remains a science and does not wander off into the field of subjective conjecture and speculation.

"Squaring Faith with Science"  
*The Literary Digest*  
September 16, 1922

The weekly *Literary Digest* provided excerpts and summaries of news coverage and commentary from the nation's periodicals.

If evolution is true, all the anathemas of Mr. [William Jennings] Bryan cannot hurt it, and if Christianity is false, the sooner we know it the better, declares the *Farmville Herald* [Virginia], which, looking at it from an impartial point of view, suggests that the conflict is not between Christianity and evolution, but rather between orthodox Christians and Christian evolutionists. So, it recommends, let the discussion go on, for discussion, "like an electric storm on a sultry day, will clarify the situation, and then truth will come forth, not only vindicated, but strengthened and glorified. And the truth is what we want, for it shall win, and by it shall we be judged." But both sides to the dispute which has caused so much dissension in religious circles need to be cautioned against immoderation in argument, says this Virginia weekly, convinced, as it is, that "the common judgment of mankind can be depended upon, in the long run, to sift the false from the true." . . . So we are advised that:

"The evolutionist would help his side if he did not display so much cocksureness; his finality-of-word manner prejudices his cause. . . . The anti-evolutionist likewise should be advised that the defender of faith is ever in danger of becoming dogmatic. . . .

. . . So the battle is on, but we have no fear. The spirit of Faith cannot be put in bondage to any man. Faith is above and beyond science, but has never been found contrary to the established data of pure science."

**EVOLUTION DOGMA  
NOT SCIENCE FACT,  
SAYS DR. STRATON**

Famous Fundamentalist  
Launches "Supreme  
Kingdom" Movement  
With Lecture.

*The Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 10, 1926

**WARNS OF SCIENCE  
DISPLACING RELIGION**

The Rev. L. H. Bell Asserts Our  
Inventions Alone Cannot  
Instill Ideas.

**BOTH NEEDED IN THE WORLD**

But, He Adds, Christ's Spirit Is  
Necessary to Bring About  
Universal Brotherhood.

*The New York Times*, July 11, 1927

**FINDS EVOLUTION  
SUPPORTS RELIGION**

Rev. E. M. L. Gould Sees Study  
of Creation as Making for  
Understanding of Deity.

**DENIES SCIENCE IN BIBLE**

And Declares There Is No Conflict  
Between Knowledge and  
Scriptural Teaching.

*The New York Times*, June 11, 1928

**VIEWS MACHINE AGE  
AS AID TO RELIGION**

Dr. Fosdick Says Christianity  
Has Nothing to Fear From  
Advance of Science.

**HAILS COOPERATIVE SPIRIT**

Modern Industrialism Forces Indi-  
viduals to Work for the Good  
of All, He Declares.

*The New York Times*, October 14, 1929

Willa Cather  
*The Professor's House*  
Novel, 1925

In this scene, Godfrey St. Peter, a history professor in a small midwestern college, responds to a student's comment during a lecture.

"No, Miller, I don't myself think much of science as a phase of human development. It has given us a lot of ingenious toys; they take our attention away from the real problems, of course, and since the problems are insoluble, I suppose we ought to be grateful for distraction. But the fact is, the human mind, the individual mind, has always been made more interesting by dwelling on the old riddles, even if it makes nothing of them. Science hasn't given us any new amazements, except of the superficial kind we get from witnessing dexterity and sleight-of-hand. It hasn't given us any richer pleasures, as the Renaissance did, nor any new sins—not one! Indeed, it takes our old ones away. It's the laboratory, not the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. You'll agree there is not much thrill about a physiological sin. We were better off when even the prosaic matter of taking nourishment could have the magnificence of a sin. I don't think you help people by making their conduct of no importance—you impoverish them. As long as every man and woman who crowded into the cathedrals on Easter Sunday was a principal in a gorgeous drama with God, glittering angels on one side and the shadows of evil coming and going on the other, life was a rich thing. The king and the beggar had the same chance at miracles and great temptations and revelations. And that's what makes men happy, believing in the mystery and importance of their own individual lives. It makes us happy to surround our creature needs and bodily instincts with as much pomp and circumstance as possible. Art and religion (they are the same thing, in the end, of course) have given man the only happiness he has ever had.

Joseph Wood Krutch  
"The Modern Temper"  
*The Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1927

In this essay that defined the spirit of the age among the intelligentsia, Krutch mourned the loss of man's cultural roots, including religious awe, in the upheaval of science.

If, then, the world of poetry, mythology, and religion represents the world as a man would like to have it, while science represents the world as he gradually comes to discover it, we need only compare the two to realize how irreconcilable they appear. For the cozy bowl of the sky arched in a protecting curve above him he must exchange the cold immensities of space and, for the spiritual order which he has designed, the chaos of nature. . . .

Time was when the scientist, the poet, and the philosopher walked hand in hand. In the universe which the one perceived the other found himself comfortably at home. But the world of modern science is one in which the intellect alone can rejoice. The mind leaps, and leaps perhaps with a sort of elation, through the immensities of space, but the spirit, frightened and cold, longs to have once more above its head the inverted bowl beyond which may lie whatever paradise its desires may create. . . .

Thus man seems caught in a dilemma which his intellect has devised. Any deliberately managed return to a state of relative ignorance, however desirable it might be argued to be, is obviously out of the question. We cannot, as the naive proponents of the various religions, new and old, seem to assume, believe one thing and forget another merely because we happen to be convinced that it would be desirable to do so; . . .

## SCIENCE AND FAITH

Edgar A. Guest  
*The Washington Post*, Feb. 2, 1925

With argument we spent the night,  
He for his science and its fact,  
I for the faith which sheds a light  
The least among us to attract.

He must be sure beyond the doubt,  
Must hold the test tube in his hand,  
And from his reckonings cast out  
All that he fails to understand.

By reason only would he move,  
By judgment cold and fact severe,  
Discarding all he cannot prove,  
Accepting naught that isn't clear.

Said I: "We never can agree,  
And vainly here we now dispute;  
Your science tells you 'tis the tree  
Which bears the blossom and  
the fruit.

"You hack the roots, the tree will die,  
And that your reason can explain;  
But vainly will your science try  
To bring to life that tree again.

"But when I see an apple tree  
Full fruited in an orchard grow,  
My faith sees that divinity  
Which gave it life and shaped it so."

And thus we parted. "You," said I,  
"May have your science if you  
choose,  
But on my faith I must rely,  
For naught is left if that I lose."

## FOR AN EVOLUTIONIST AND HIS OPPONENT

Countee Cullen, *Color*, 1925

Showing that our ways agreed,  
Death is proof enough;  
Body seeks the primal clay,  
Soul transcends the slough.

# Are Religion and Science Irreconcilable?

THE FORUM ■ SEPTEMBER 1927 ■ EXCERPTS

The *Forum*, a magazine of social and political commentary, regularly invited point-counterpoint essays on contemporary issues. For this inquiry it invited two scholars, James H. Leuba of Bryn Mawr College and J. Arthur Thomson of the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

## YES: “The Confusion of Conflict”

JAMES HENRY LEUBA

Psychologist specializing in the psychology of religion

. . . Is the teaching of science in conflict with the belief—common to all the religions—in a God, or gods, in direct intellectual and affective communication with man, able to respond to man’s desires and, under certain conditions, willing to do so? . . .

. . . It is the expectation of the efficacy of prayer, as response of a divine personal Will, which raises the problem of a possible antagonism between the religious and the scientific conceptions of the universe. . . .

. . . [D]oes science accept the personal, causal explanation of physical and psychical [psychological] phenomena on which belief in the God of the religions is based? Insofar as the question refers to physical phenomena, it will be sufficient to remark that even though our official prayer books still include prayers for a change of the weather and for protection from accidents, the intervention of a divine personal Will in physical phenomena is now given up by nearly all those who have some definite knowledge of the physical sciences. It is only in explaining facts of the mental psychical order that a widespread difference of opinion remains among the educated. What are these facts? . . . They are the ordinary religious experiences productive of peace, of guidance, of strength and virtues. They include also the wonders of sudden conversion and of ecstatic trance in mystical worship. According to most believers, these phenomena prove the truth of theism. . . .

Have we then, by rejecting the belief in the God of the religions and the method arising from it, settled the problem of God? One would have to be simple-minded, indeed, to think so. The mysteries of life are only removed further. The sciences reveal the lawfulness of the universe, but none of them provides the answer to the amazing problem set by that discovery. . . .

May we not agree on these two propositions and so far dissipate the fog in which the discussion of the relation of “religion” to science has been conducted? First, that there is no acceptable reason *known to science* for believing in the God of the religions. And second, that this conclusion is merely a step forward and not a solution of the problem of God. The problem remains, but it is now lifted out of the narrow boundaries set up in a distant and ignorant past. A truer conception of God, spiritual and yet not in disagreement with science, must replace the traditional one.

## NO: “Render unto Caesar”

SIR JOHN ARTHUR THOMSON

Naturalist specializing in the relation of science and religion

Can we be both scientific and religious? To ask this question is much like asking, “Can we be both mathematical and musical?” In both cases the answer is “Yes—but not at the same moment, nor in the same sentence.” . . . Can we know the geology of a countryside and likewise enjoy the scenery? . . .

Science is a body of knowledge gained by pursuing certain methods of observation and experiment. . . . It is reliable so far as it goes, and it often approximates to reality, since we use it as a basis for predictions for certain kinds that come true, like the return of a comet. But it is an abstract kind of knowledge, pursued for particular purposes, and it deliberately adjusts the mesh of its net so that it catches only certain kinds of fish. We yield to none in our admiration for science, but we cannot regard it as the only right of way to reality. It yields accurate descriptions and empirical formulae, but we cannot regard these as more than a contribution to the truth.

What other knowledge is there? The answer to this question is crucial, for if there is no other kind of knowledge save that which science yields, then there is no room for religion, beyond a glow of admiration or a thrill of wonder. But our common sense conviction is that we do not know our countryside unless we appreciate its beauty, nor know our friend unless we hold him in affection. We are old-fashioned enough to believe in the role of feeling in our knowledge of nature. . . . Truth is an august word, not to be often used, and it means getting near reality; and our thesis is that while science is one of the pathways, it is not the only one. There is the pathway of feeling and the pathway of action. We venture to think that there is at least one other pathway towards truth, and that is by the straight [straight] and narrow gate of religion. Who has any right to seek to close this door? . . .

. . . Before the beauty that crowds the world, and all the wonders of immensity and order, power, and progress—which become ever greater as knowledge grows—we are led to a reverence and admiration which rises to religious worship. To many a one has come the supreme reward which used to be called the vision of God. What is there in science that should close our eyes to this? On the contrary, the more translucent the world becomes in the course of scientific analysis, the more it seems transfigurable in the light of religion.

A Joint Statement upon the  
Relations of Science and Religion  
*Science*, June 1, 1923<sup>2</sup>

Initiated by physicist and Nobel laureate Robert Millikan, this statement that religion and science “supplement rather than . . . oppose each other” was signed by over thirty eminent scientists, clergymen, businessmen, and government officials. It stirred widespread response from both sides of the debate, including John Crowe Ransom (next page).

Dr. R. A. Millikan, director of the Norman Bridge Laboratory of the California Institute of Technology, formulated and secured the signatures to the following statement:

## A JOINT STATEMENT UPON THE RELATIONS OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

We, the undersigned, deeply regret that in recent controversies there has been a tendency to present science and religion as irreconcilable and antagonistic domains of thought, for in fact they meet distinct human needs, and in the rounding out of human life they supplement rather than displace or oppose each other.

*The purpose of science is to develop, without prejudice or preconception of any kind, a knowledge of the facts, the laws and the processes of nature. The even more important task of religion, on the other hand, is to develop the consciences, the ideals, and the aspirations of mankind.* Each of these two activities represents a deep and vital function of the soul of man, and both are necessary for the life, the progress and the happiness of the human race. [Italics in original]

It is a sublime conception of God which is furnished by science, and one wholly consonant with the highest ideals of religion, when it represents Him as revealing Himself through countless ages in the development of the earth as an abode for man and in the age-long inbreathing of life into its constituent matter, culminating in man with his spiritual nature and all his Godlike powers.

### RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Bishop William Lawrence, Episcopalian, Boston, Massachusetts.  
Bishop William Thomas Manning, Episcopalian, Bishop's House,  
Cathedral Heights, New York City.  
Dr. Henry Van Dyke, Presbyterian, preacher and poet, Princeton, New Jersey.  
Dr. James I. Vance, Presbyterian, First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, Tenn.  
Pres. Clarence A. Barbour, Baptist, Rochester Theological Seminary,  
Rochester, New York.  
Pres. Ernest D. Burton, Baptist theologian, pres. of University of Chicago.  
Pres. Henry Churchill King, Congregationalist, Oberlin Theological  
Seminary, Oberlin, Ohio.  
Dr. Robert E. Brown, Congregationalist, First Congregational Church,  
Waterbury, Connecticut.  
Bishop Francis John McConnell, Methodist, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.  
Dr. Peter Ainslie, Disciple[s of Christ], Baltimore, Maryland.

### MEN OF AFFAIRS

Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce.  
James John Davis, Secretary of Labor.  
David F. Houston, ex-Secretary of the Treasury.  
Frank O. Lowden, Governor of Illinois.  
John Sharp Williams, ex-U.S. Senator, Mississippi.  
Rear Admiral William S. Sims, commander, U.S. Naval  
Forces in European waters during the World War.  
Harry Bates Thayer, president, American Telephone  
and Telegraph Company.  
Julius Kruttschnitt, chairman of the executive committee,  
Southern Pacific Railway.  
Frank Vanderlip, ex-pres., National City Bank of New York.  
Henry S. Pritchett, president of the Carnegie Corporation  
of New York.

### SCIENTISTS

Charles D. Walcott, retiring president of the National Academy of Sciences, president of the American  
Association for the Advancement of Science, and head of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington.  
Henry Fairfield Osborn, president of the American Museum of Natural History.  
Edwin Grant Conklin, head of the department of zoology, Princeton University.  
James Rowland Angell, president of Yale University.  
John Merle Coulter, head of the department of botany, University of Chicago.  
Michael I. Pupin, head of the department of electromechanics, Columbia University.  
William James Mayo, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, Rochester, Minnesota.  
George David Birkhoff, head of the department of mathematics, Harvard University.  
Arthur A. Noyes, director of the Gates Chemical Laboratory, California Institute of Technology.  
William Wallace Campbell, director of Lick Observatory and president-elect of the University of California.  
John J. Carty, vice-president in charge of research, American Telephone and Telegraph Company.  
Robert A. Millikan, director of Norman Bridge Laboratory of Physics.  
William Henry Welch, director of the School of Hygiene and Public Health, The Johns Hopkins University.  
John C. Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.  
Gano Dunn, chairman of the National Research Council, Washington, D.C.

<sup>3</sup> Statement is reproduced in its entirety; the list of signators is complete with some abbreviated titles and state names, etc..



John Crowe Ransom  
"The New God," in *God Without Thunder:  
An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy*, 1930

A classics scholar, poet, and skeptic about the direction of modern society, Ransom advocated a return to reverence for the Old Testament God—a god with thunder—to balance the moral relativity and secularism of the age. In this essay he specified his objections to the Joint Statement upon the Relations of Science and Religion (1923).

The first of the three articles is excellent, and worthy of anybody's endorsement. It is a pity that science and religion should fight! And it has not been the fault of science alone that they do. . . .

What is the solution proposed in the second article of the Washington Agreement [the Joint Statement]? It is not a solution at all; it is an evasion. The purpose of science as set forth there is to develop a knowledge of nature. But it is not intimated in the least that the purpose of religion is to develop upon this natural knowledge a practicable supernaturalism. Rather, the purpose of religion is said to be to develop "the conscience, the ideals, and the aspirations of mankind." These expressions are exquisitely vague, but I believe they mean to say that the purpose of religion is simply to attend to the morals of mankind. Science for knowledge, and religion for morality. . . . Religion is not a secular code of conduct but a form of worship. You cannot have a religion without a God. The "even more important task of religion," as I would have like to see it phrased in the second article, would have been: "To develop a suitable supernaturalism, a theology, or a system of myths, upon the scientific knowledge of nature as its base." But Mr. Millikan does not risk such a nonscientific concept as that. . . .

And now to see how the scientists represent their God: as one "revealing Himself through countless ages in the development of the earth as an abode for men, and in the age-long inbreathing of life into its constituent matter, culminating in man with his spiritual nature and all his Godlike powers." . . .

. . . What specific doctrines emerge from this obscure credo? It lacks a great deal of being precise; but I believe there are at least two doctrines implied here which are of all importance in the new religion.

The first of these is that God as the ruler of the universe governs it in such a manner as to make it accommodate itself to the welfare of man. The earth is for man's abode; and God "developed" it; this phrase suggests that his instrument was an evolutionary or scientific process. Thus God is a scientist; the universe is his workshop; but among his productions he has produced man, and all the other productions are for man's benefit.

The second doctrine would seem to be this: Man is Godlike himself. God is the great original scientist, but man is himself a little scientist. For he can understand God's scientific technique, and he can actually in considerable degree apply it in the human sphere, anticipating God, and hastening the course of his good works. . . .

. . . As the scientific preoccupation has grown in the Occident [Western world], there have developed, as we have seen, two scientific attitudes towards religion. One is the attitude of Mr. Millikan and others, who might be said to compose a "soft" variety of scientists, and who are willing to have a God of a sort—that is, provided he be divested of medieval or ancient or Oriental properties (including his thunder)<sup>4</sup> and become a good creature, not *very* supernatural, whom they can manage. The other attitude is that of the belligerent or "hard" scientists, who don't want any religious institution at all, and would persuade society to go without Gods entirely.

#### JOINT STATEMENT

[1] We, the undersigned, deeply regret that in recent controversies there has been a tendency to present science and religion as irreconcilable and antagonistic domains of thought, for in fact they meet distinct human needs, and in the rounding out of human life they supplement rather than displace or oppose each other.

[2] *The purpose of science is to develop, without prejudice or preconception of any kind, a knowledge of the facts, the laws and the processes of nature. The even more important task of religion, on the other hand, is to develop the consciences, the ideals, and the aspirations of mankind.* Each of these two activities represents a deep and vital function of the soul of man, and both are necessary for the life, the progress and the happiness of the human race. [Italics in original]

[3] It is a sublime conception of God which is furnished by science, and one wholly consonant with the highest ideals of religion, when it represents Him as revealing Himself through countless ages in the development of the earth as an abode for man and in the age-long inbreathing of life into its constituent matter, culminating in man with his spiritual nature and all his Godlike powers.

<sup>4</sup> "The 'old God,' Ransom elaborates, "distinguished himself from the new God in at least three important particulars. First, he was mysterious, and not fully understood; there was no great familiarity with him which might breed contempt. Second, he was worshiped with burnt offering and sacrifice. And third, he was the author of evil as well as of good." [p. 29] "The new God is limited as the author of good only, and our sense of evil has suffered an almost total amnesia. I cannot see how this can be counted a good thing." [p. 165]

William Jennings Bryan  
Closing statement prepared  
for the Scopes trial, 1925

The renowned prosecutor in the Scopes “Monkey Trial,” Bryan had prepared a lengthy closing argument reaffirming his conviction that teaching evolution would undermine the religious faith of the nation’s children. The jury never heard the statement, however, as both Bryan and defense attorney Clarence Darrow agreed to submit the case to the jury without final arguments. Five days after the jury found Scopes guilty, Bryan died of a heart attack; soon after, his wife released Bryan’s statement, excerpted here.

Religion is not hostile to learning; Christianity has been the greatest patron learning has ever had. But Christians know that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” now just as it has been in the past, and they therefore oppose the teaching of guesses that encourage godlessness among the students.

Neither does Tennessee undervalue the service rendered by science. The Christian men and women of Tennessee know how deeply mankind is indebted to science for benefits conferred by the discovery of the laws of nature and by the designing of machinery for the utilization of these laws. Give science a fact and it is not only invincible, but it is of incalculable service to man. If one is entitled to draw from society in proportion to the service that he renders to society, who is able to estimate the reward earned by those who have given to us the use of steam, the use of electricity, and enabled us to utilize the weight of water that flows down the mountainside? Who will estimate the value of the service rendered by those who invented the phonograph, the telephone, and the radio? Or, to come more closely to our home life, how shall we recompense those who gave us the sewing machine, the harvester, the threshing machine, the tractor, the automobile, and the method now employed in making artificial ice? The department for medicine also opens an unlimited field for invaluable service. Typhoid and yellow fever are not feared as they once were. . . .

Christianity welcomes truth from whatever source it comes and is not afraid that any real truth from any source can interfere with the divine truth that comes by inspiration from God Himself. It is not scientific truth to which Christians object, for true science is classified knowledge, and nothing therefore can be scientific unless it is true.

Evolution is not truth: it is merely an hypothesis—it is millions of guesses strung together. It had not been proven in the days of Darwin; he expressed astonishment that with two or three million species it had been impossible to trace any species to any other species. It had not been proven in the days of [Thomas Henry] Huxley, and it has not been proven up to today. . . .

It must be remembered that the law under consideration in this case does not prohibit the teaching of evolution up to the line that separates man from the lower forms of animal life. The law might well have gone farther than it does and prohibit the teaching of evolution in lower forms of life; the law is a very conservative statement of the people’s opposition to an anti-Biblical hypothesis. The defendant [John Scopes] was not content to teach what the law permitted; he, for reasons of his own, persisted in teaching that which was forbidden for reasons entirely satisfactory to the lawmakers. . . .

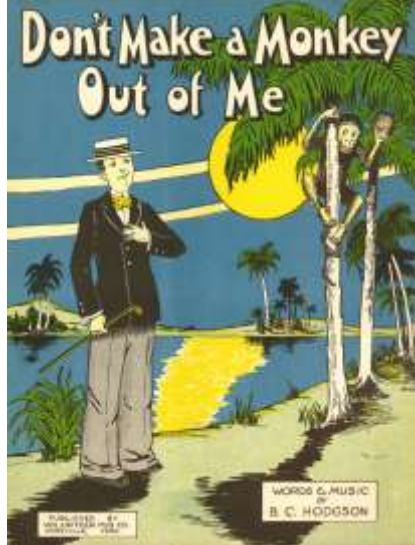
If anyone has been led to complain of the severity of the punishment that hangs over the defendant, let him compare this crime and its mild punishment with the crimes for which a greater punishment is prescribed. What is the taking of a few dollars from one in day or night in comparison with the crime of leading one away from God and away from Christ? . . .

Evolution is deadening the spiritual life of a multitude of students. Christians do not desire less education, but they desire that religion shall be entwined with learning so that our boys and girls will return from college with their hearts aflame with love of God and love of fellow men, and prepared to lead in the altruistic work that the world so sorely needs.

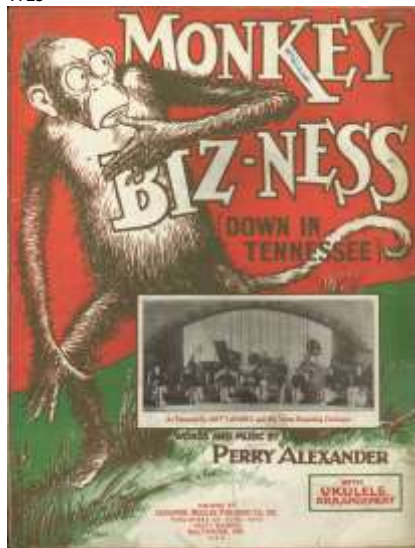
Bryan College, Dayton, Tennessee



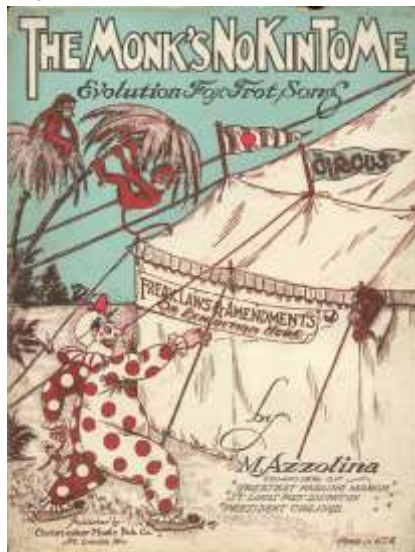
William Jennings Bryan during the Scopes trial, July 1925



1925



1925



1925

The controversy over evolution that climaxed with the 1925 Scopes "Monkey Trial" spawned humor from light-hearted wit to mean-spirited satire, the former of which is sampled here. How would anti-evolutionists have responded? What objection might evolution supporters have raised about the humor?

### ASKS TENNESSEE BAN ON THE METRIC SYSTEM

#### Convention at Lake Placid Adopts Resolution Poking Fun at Evolution Laws.

Special to The New York Times.

LAKE PLACID, July 11.—On the assumption that if the State of Tennessee can bring about a solution of the age-old problem of evolution it can also aid materially in the international use of the metric system, the Metric Association, in the closing hours of its Spring meeting at Lake Placid Club today,

### 'APE' HALTS MOCK TRIAL.

Rotary Club Burlesques Scopes Case — Judge Uses Monkey Wrench. Special to The New York Times.

ORANGE, N. J., July 16.—A mock evolution trial in which local men took the parts of principals in the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tenn., was staged here today at the weekly luncheon of the Rotary Club of the Oranges. The trial broke up in disorder when S. Fred Wright, Chief Boy Scout Executive of the Oranges, appeared dressed as an ape and leaped from table to table.

Peter A. Smith, Treasurer of A. P. Smith & Co., presided as Judge Raulston and used a monkey wrench as a gavel. Jacob P. Zinga, official of the Public Service Corporation, was Scopes; Richard Monahan, a bond salesman, was

The New York Times, July 12 & 17, 1925



Felix Doubles for Darwin, animated cartoon, 1924 [see Internet Moving Picture Archive]



### 700,000 Years of Progress

Cartoonist: Al Frueh

The New Yorker, July 25, 1925  
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