

CIRCULATION YESTERDAY
 Total 37,091
 Local { City 11,462 } 25,409
 { Suburban. 13,947 }

The Topeka Daily

VOLUME XLIX—NO. 155.

TOPEKA, KANSAS, WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 1925.

'APE WAR' TO HIGH

JURY CONVICTS YOUNG TEACHER IN TEN MINUTES

John T. Scopes Fined \$100
 Following Conviction on
 Charge of Teaching Theo-
 ries of Evolution in Ten-
 nessee School.

SECOND SCENE AT KNOXVILLE

Defense Attorneys Already
 Working on Appeal to
 Supreme Court Which
 Must Be Prepared Within
 30-Day Time Limit.

Dayton, Tenn., July 21—
 (A. P.)—Defense attorneys to-
 night had begun the work of
 perfecting their appeal to the
 supreme court of Tennessee in
 the "evolution case." As soon
 as the verdict of guilty was re-
 turned today, a formal motion

CALM FOLLOWS STORM

Turbulent Court Session Opens and
 Closes With Prayer.

Dayton, Tenn., July 21.—(A. P.)—
 The Scopes evolution trial ended
 here today with a prayer—as it be-
 gan.

Between the invocation and the
 benediction lay the record of many
 stormy scenes; of sharp words and
 almost as many apologies.

Contending voices, which had
 been raised in protest and exaspera-
 tion, opposing actors in the legal
 drama, merged their tones into a
 grand ensemble and declared as the
 curtain fell:

"Truth is mighty and will pre-
 vail."

After the discord and conflict of
 eight trial days, harmony at length
 prevailed when the jury returned
 its verdict "for the state."

The announcement of the verdict
 loosed a flood of oratory, largely
 conciliatory in tone, a dozen speak-
 ers making their sentiments known.
 The relaxing of the nervous strain
 was clearly seen in the tide of gen-
 eral good feeling.

Even after the closing prayer, the
 court seemed loath to adjourn.
 When it became apparent that all
 who desired to speak had declared
 themselves, he ordered adjournment
 sine die.

The judge received friends and
 many strangers who had come from
 far places. His wife stood at his
 side and both were smiling happily.

Heaps of torn up telegrams, aban-
 doned law books, scattered pam-
 phlets on science and religion, alone
 remaining tonight to distinguish the
 deserted court room where opposing
 forces struggled to test the anti-
 evolution status of Tennessee.

ONLY FOUR WITNESSES

BRYAN EXAMINES CHICAGO LAWYER ON HIS BELIEFS

Denied Opportunity to Ques-
 tion Darrow on Witness
 Stand, Commoner Pre-
 pares a Questionnaire.

DOES NOT BELIEVE IN MIRACLES

Admitted Agnostic Replies
 He Still Is Diligently Seek-
 ing Evidence of Life Be-
 yond the Grave.

Dayton, Tenn., July 21.—(A. P.)
 —Forbidden to examine Clarence
 Darrow on the witness stand con-
 cerning the Chicago Lawyer's re-
 ligious views, William Jennings
 Bryan late today administered the
 examination thru the medium of a
 statement. Nine questions were pro-
 pounded and these were answered
 shortly afterward by the defense
 attorney.

The questions and Darrow's an-
 swers:

Bryan—Do you believe in the ex-
 istence of God as described in the
 Bible?

Darrow—I do not know of any

Says \$100 Fine Is Unjust



JOHN THOMAS SCOPES
 "I Have Been Convicted of Violating an Unjust Statute."

ANTI-EVOLUTION CRUSADE TO CALIFORNIA

Scientists and
 Biologists Cl
 tion of
 Dayton Tri

ALL COMMUNIST

State Board
 Refuses to
 Bar Text B
 tion From

San Francisco,
 (A. P.)—Scienti-
 sts of California
 today on the qu
 evolution in the
 this state.

The clash enl
 sion of the stat
 tion. The first
 Maynard Shipley
 Science League
 who appeared t
 the action of th
 In declaring that

More Than Just Monkey Business

Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains 30 (Summer 2007): 74-91



Kansas Newspapers Respond to the Scopes Trial, July 1925

by Julie A. Scott

Outside the open door to the Dayton, Tennessee, courtroom where a zealous William Jennings Bryan was delivering an impassioned speech to the jury, a well-dressed monkey, complete with top hat and bow tie, commented, "Maybe Darwin was wrong, but that guy argues exactly like my uncle Jim Panzy!"¹ Much like he was depicted in this editorial cartoon published

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1. "Inadmissible [sic] Evidence," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 21, 1925.

by the *Topeka Daily Capital*, Bryan became a popular object of nationwide editorial criticism for his role in the well-publicized 1925 Scopes trial. Such disparagement of Bryan, however, was only one of many trial-related issues discussed by the *Capital* and other newspapers across the United States. Articles, editorials, cartoons, and published letters to the editor commented on the proceedings of the trial, the theories of evolution and creation, public education, the struggle between fundamentalism and modernism, majoritarian democracy, and even the media circus that catapulted the small town of Dayton to national fame. Whether the attention received was positive or negative, the trial and the issues it raised became the talk of America for more than two weeks in July 1925.

Eighty-two years after the infamous “monkey trial,” disputes about evolution continue to stir heated debate and to spark intense controversy. Kansans in particular are no strangers to this ongoing religious and scientific battle. Since 1999, Kansas residents have received both ardent praise and bitter criticism for the State Board of Education’s revision of state science testing standards that removed the teaching of evolutionary theory from the required school curriculum. It comes as no surprise that the Scopes trial and its reputation, formed largely by the news media, resonates with Kansans today regardless of their political and religious convictions. Similar to the way in which Kansas’s recent evolution fight has become a popular topic for political commentators and national headlines, the Scopes trial generated an array of front-page news stories and editorial-page commentary for national and local newspapers.²

As the primary news medium in 1925, newspapers offered Americans daily descriptions and analyses of the trial’s proceedings. At the time, sociologist Howard W. Odum estimated that 2,310 daily newspapers and 13,267 weeklies reported on the trial and printed “words in the aggregate amounting to three thousand volumes of three hundred ordinary pages each.”³ Today, these papers provide historians

2. In February 2007 the Kansas Board of Education adopted new standards for science education in the state. Beginning in 2008 evolution will once again be taught as scientific theory supported by research.

3. Although the Chicago-based WGN provided live radio coverage of the trial, newspapers remained the principal medium of communicating



"Inadmissible [sic] Evidence," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 21, 1925

with the best and most representative accounts of reportage on and discussion of one of the most significant and widely publicized national news stories of the twentieth century. Much has been written about what was once called the “trial of the century,” and even the media coverage of the trial has received scholarly attention.⁴

the events of the trial nationwide. Unfortunately, no records for the WGN radio broadcast exist because the technology necessary for recording live radio transmissions had not yet been developed. Howard W. Odum, “Editorial Notes: The Duel to the Death,” *Social Forces* 4 (September 1925): 190; Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 202–203.

4. See, for example, Larson, *Summer for the Gods*; Ray Ginger, *Six Days or Forever?: Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* (New York: New American Library, 1960); Jerry R. Tompkins, ed., *D-Days at Dayton: Reflections on the Scopes Trial* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965); John Scopes and James Presley, *Center of the Storm: Memoirs of John T. Scopes*

Studies of trial-related news content in the nation's leading, mass-circulation newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, the *Baltimore Evening Sun*, and the *Chicago Tribune*, indicate that papers depicted the trial in a variety of ways: a summer's amusement; a small-town publicity stunt; a display of southern ignorance and intolerance; and among many other interpretations, a trial of fundamentalist belief. But historians agree that hostility toward Bryan emerges as the most common and primary theme in the major newspapers. According to historian Robert D. Linder, for example, reporters at the trial "went out of their way to cast Bryan in the role of an ignorant fanatic and bigot."⁵ In directing a concerted assault against Bryan's character and intelligence, however, the national newspapers provided only secondary attention to the trial's other concerns.

Scholars have written extensively on the national newspapers' treatments of the trial. Although these studies are not without significant merit, their overreliance on national papers to interpret the Scopes case displaces the nuance of the trial's press coverage in states such as Kansas. There has been little investigation of how newspapers with more localized news coverage and smaller audience bases responded to the events in Dayton. Therefore, this article moves away from the country's coasts and metropolitan centers to gauge the opinions of the news media in the nation's "heartland."⁶

Described in 1910 by historian Carl Becker as "America in microcosm," Kansas's idealistic spirit historically has lent the state a more visible position in American culture

(New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1967); L. Sprague de Camp, *The Great Monkey Trial* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1968); Ferenc M. Szasz, "The Scopes Trial in Perspective," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 30 (Summer 1971): 288–298.

5. Robert D. Linder, "Fifty Years After Scopes: Lessons to Learn, A Heritage to Reclaim," *Christianity Today* 19 (July 18, 1975): 8, 7–10; Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 155; Donald F. Brod, "The Scopes Trial: A Look at Press Coverage after Forty Years," *Journalism Quarterly* 42 (Spring 1965): 219–226; W. B. Ragsdale, "Three Weeks in Dayton," *American Heritage* 26 (June 1975): 38–41, 99–103; Edward Caudill, "The Roots of Bias: An Empiricist Press and Coverage of the Scopes Trial," *Journalism Monographs* 114 (1989): 1–20.

6. For further information about the responses of regional and state newspapers to the trial, see Carl E. Hatch, "New Jersey's Reaction to the Tennessee Evolution Trial," *New Jersey History* 90 (Winter 1972): 226–241; Ailine Deters, "Attitudes of Selected Newspapers Toward William J. Bryan During and Immediately Following the Scopes Trial" (master's thesis, Kansas State University, 1977); J. Woodfin Wilson, Jr., "Northwest Louisiana Newspaper Coverage of the Scopes Trial," *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal* 21 (Spring 1990): 43–48; Gregory C. Lisby and Linda L. Harris, "Georgia Reporters at the Scopes Trial: A Comparison of Newspaper Coverage," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75 (Winter 1991): 784–803.

than its Midwestern neighbors.⁷ Previously considered a model of Populist ideals and social reforms, by the mid-1920s, Kansas began to be identified—and vilified—by the national media as a rustic commonwealth of puritanical and intellectually-backward religious fundamentalists.⁸ Kansas's position in the nation as a representative rural state, in addition to its religious temperament, makes it a practical setting for this study. This article examines how four Kansas newspapers—the *Topeka Daily Capital*, the *Wichita Beacon*, the *Wichita Eagle*, and the *Emporia Gazette*—reported on the trial. While Kansas papers showed interest in a variety of trial-related subjects, including William Jennings Bryan himself, the discussion of issues related to the fundamentalist-modernist religious controversy appears as the most recurrent theme. Thus, their editorials, cartoons, published letters to the editor, and locally written articles reveal significant variations in Kansans' religious attitudes during the 1920s.

The selection of the Topeka-, Wichita-, and Emporia-based newspapers stems from each paper's unique and important relationship with the Kansas public. Taken together, they represented the pulse of the Kansas media in 1925 and thus are useful case studies for examining the trial within the Kansas context.⁹ As its name indicates, the *Topeka Daily Capital* was published in the center of Kansas governmental power. With its readership including state legislators and other officials as well as the general public, the *Capital* offers an important insight into how Kansans in positions of authority thought about (or were encouraged to think about) the issues of the trial. Published in the state's second largest city at the time, the *Wichita Beacon* and the *Wichita Eagle*, an evening and a morning paper respectively, reached a wide audience and provide key comparisons of how papers with the same target reader base responded to the trial. Unlike the *Beacon*, *Capital*, and *Eagle*, the *Emporia Gazette*, a hometown newspaper published in the Flint Hills

7. Carl L. Becker, "Kansas," *Essays in American History Dedicated to Frederick Jackson Turner* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1910), 111.

8. Kenneth S. Davis, *Kansas: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976), 180; Robert Smith Bader, *Hayseeds, Moralizers, and Methodists: The Twentieth-Century Image of Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 42; Craig Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854–2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 274.

9. This author notes the concentration of central and eastern Kansas newspapers in this study. A careful examination of selected western Kansas newspapers revealed that these papers provided little editorial discussion or local coverage of the case beyond the publication of wire-service articles related to the Scopes trial. This reality also supported the selection of the *Topeka Daily Capital* in contrast to the state capital's other influential daily publication, the *Topeka State Journal*.



*In the intellectual and theological battle between the modernists and the fundamentalists, each side's ardent dedication to their convictions fueled the intensity of the conflict. This argument against Modernism portrays a modernist preacher attacking all things dear to Fundamentalists. From Gerald B. Winrod, *Three Modern Evils* (Wichita, Kans.: Defender Publishers, 1934), 20.*

of central Kansas, carries within its articles and opinions a unique perspective on the events and meanings of the trial. The *Gazette* received national attention in 1896 when its twenty-eight-year-old editor and owner, William Allen White, asked, "What's the Matter With Kansas?" in a scathing editorial directed against Populism and, incidentally, Democrat presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan. Newspapers nationwide reprinted the editorial and made White the primary spokesman for the Midwest. Because of White's nationally-acclaimed reputation among newspaper editors, the *Gazette* is a practical and necessary addition to this study.¹⁰

From the earliest rumors of a Tennessee "monkey trial," these newspapers followed the developments of the Scopes case with great intensity and interest, giving front-page news space to the trial nearly every day during its eleven-day duration in July 1925. All four papers drew upon the trial's news coverage reported by the major wire services: the Associated Press (AP); the International News Service (INS); the United News Staff (UNS); and the Central Press Agency (CPA). Of these, they most often published articles from the AP, which sent more reporters to the trial and produced a larger number of articles each day than did the other news agencies.¹¹ Although the Kansas papers relied on secondary trial reports for most of their front-page news stories, they did not follow the national media's lead in reporting on and interpreting the trial as a public humiliation of Bryan. They developed their own opinions about the case's many issues and formed their editorial-page content around a variety of trial-related subjects. Whereas the national papers devoted considerable space to Bryan's involvement in the case, the Kansas papers concentrated on more substantive issues. They were not silent on the issue of Bryan, but in the Kansas newspapers, he often became a catalyst for discussion of the larger socio-religious debate developing within American Protestantism.

10. "What's the Matter With Kansas?," *Emporia Gazette*, August 15, 1896. White commented in his autobiography that Bryan blamed his 1896 defeat on this editorial. Interestingly, White admitted that he regretted the foolishness and impulsiveness he had displayed in scorning Bryan "as boy orator." William Allen White, *The Autobiography of William Allen White* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), 280-283, 285, 509; Sally Foreman Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 140.

11. It is unlikely that the newspapers singled out the AP reports according to some form of editorial bias. They also used the AP most frequently with regard to the selection of news stories on topics unrelated to the trial.

CIRCULATION YESTERDAY
Total 37,043
Local (City 11,391
Suburban 13,322) 25,324

The Topeka Daily Capital

Kansas Forecast
Mostly overcast Tuesday;
Wednesday probably showers; not
much change in temperature.

VOLUME XLIX—NO. 154. TOPEKA, KANSAS, TUESDAY, JULY 21, 1925. TWELVE PAGES

DARROW QUIZZES BRYAN

AGNOSTIC FACES FUNDAMENTALIST ON COURT LAWN

Champion of Historical Beliefs and "Unbeliever" Stage Forensic Fencing Exhibition Amid Cheers.

RARE TREAT FOR SPECTATORS

Verbal Swords of Opposing Figures Clash Amid Hand-clapping and Booming Mountain Fox Calls.

Dayton, Tenn., July 20.—(A. P.)—Admitted agnosticism met fundamentalism here today as Clarence Darrow, defense attorney in the Scopes evolution case, drew William Jennings Bryan, associate prosecution counsel, upon the witness stand.

Hundreds of men and women,

WHICH BIBLE? HE ASKS

Dayton, Tenn., July 20.—(A. P.)—Three Bibles were placed in the court record today as evidence of the defense in the Scopes evolution trial. Arthur Garfield Hays, New York attorney, had consistently held before the court that the word "Bible" in the Tennessee anti-evolution statute was vague and indefinite. His insistence that the state must prove "which Bible" has, however, been overruled by Judge Raulston.

In Judge Raulston's outdoor court, late today, Hays submitted for the record a copy of the King James Bible, a volume of the Vulgate, or Catholic Bible, and the Hebrew Bible in the original.

Hays asked the witness, "That when we do guess, we have a sense to guess right?"

"But do not do it often."

"You are prepared to say whether that fish was made specially to swallow a man or not?"

"No, the Bible does not say."

"Just An Ordinary Whale?"

"But you believe that He made them that He made such a fish and that it was big enough to swallow Jonah?"

"Yes, sir; let me add, one miracle is just as easy to believe as another."

A suggestion from Darrow that one was just as hard for him to be-

SCHOLARS WRITE THEIR OPINIONS IN 'MONKEY WAR'

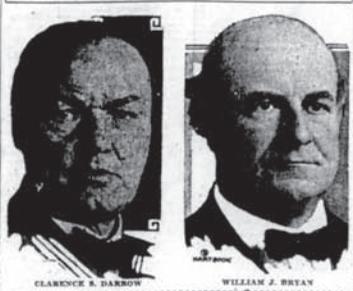
Nationally Known Scientists Pen Explanations of Theory of Evolution for Court Record.

SCIENCE AND BIBLE IN ACCORD

Students Find No Conflict Between Known Facts And Figurative Story in Scripture.

Dayton, Tenn., July 20.—(A. P.)—Explanations of the evolutionary theory and the bearing this theory may have on the Biblical account of creation, prepared by a group of nationally known scientists were placed in the records of the Scopes evolution trial here today by defense counsel.

Generals Test Tilting Talent



JUDGE RAULSTON CITES DARROW FOR CONTEMPT

But Chicago Lawyer Talks Court Out of It.

GERMAN REPLY EMITS HOPE FOR NEW TREATY

Not Dependent Upon Cologne Evacuation.

THOUSANDS TURN OUT AS SANTA FE SPECIAL COMES

Rain Fails to Keep Crowds Away From "Combination" Opportunity Train On Northwest Trip.

ARILENE DECLARES HOLIDAY

Stores Close While 2,500 Stand in Rain to Hear Vada Watson and Other Wheat Experts.

BY CLIP SERVATION

Minneapolis, Minn., July 20.—Heralded by a soaking rain early Monday morning, the Aggie-Wheat Girl-Santa Fe Opportunity special got away today to a good start on its 12-day tour thru the Kansas wheat belt. Good crowds greeted the demonstration

TOPEKA TODAY

TODAY'S EVENTS
Judge McClure expected to hand down decision in printer case with court terms.
City association, city building, 9:30 a. m.
Will be to be opened on new directory of Topeka industrial school, 10:30 a. m.
Concert by American Legion band, 11:30 a. m.
And other music, Chamber of Commerce, 1:30 p. m.
Catholic church, Chamber of Commerce, 2:30 p. m.
Postal employees, Chamber of Commerce, 3:30 p. m.
BASEBALL
Shawnee against Topeka, Association park, 1:30 p. m.
THEATERS
New Grand—"The Four Fishes."
Harvey—"Book of Thorns."
Orpheum—"The White Monkey."
Clay—"How Baxter Batted In."
Columbia—"The Great Dictator."
Crystal—"The Mystery of the Lost World."
Real—"The Execution of Peter King."
Herald—"The Execution of Peter King."
Herald—"The Execution of Peter King."
NEW YEAR AND TODAY
Kansas Hotel opened.
WEATHER
Hourly temperature yesterday (east of town normal, 2 degrees below):
7 A. M. 58
8 A. M. 58
9 A. M. 58
10 A. M. 58
11 A. M. 58
12 M. 58
1 P. M. 58
2 P. M. 58
3 P. M. 58
4 P. M. 58
5 P. M. 58
6 P. M. 58
7 P. M. 58
8 P. M. 58
9 P. M. 58
10 P. M. 58
11 P. M. 58
Mid. conditions, 5 p. m.
Windy and clear; light rain from Topeka, clearing to clear.
Capital highway—North muddy, south

TOPEKA MAY GET PLACE ON K. C.— TULSA AIR LINE

Plans of Company Would Give City Air Passenger And Mail Service on New Airways Route.

PLANES ALREADY IN OPERATION

President Bern Here Today To See Chamber of Commerce Regarding Municipal Landing Field.

Plans to give Topeka air passenger and air mail service are under way, E. G. Bern, president of the Kansas City Airways, informed the Capital over long distance telephone last night.

The company entered on its third week of operation between Kansas City and Wichita yesterday, and is contemplating extension of its line to Tulsa.

As the trial seemed to be nearing its conclusion, the long-awaited fireworks of the trial exploded during Darrow's unprecedented cross-examination of Bryan regarding fundamentalism's insistence on biblical inerrancy. The questioning lasted for two hours before the judge ended the testimony and struck it from the record on the grounds that it was not relevant to the matter at hand.

During the summer of 1925, the Scopes trial became a signal event in a growing controversy that pitted fundamentalists against modernists. According to historian George M. Marsden, the fundamentalists aggressively opposed the adaptation of Christian theology to modern thought and secular society. They believed in five essential doctrines or "fundamentals" of orthodox Christianity: the inerrancy of the Bible; the Virgin birth; Jesus Christ's substitutionary atonement on the cross; physical resurrection; and Christ's imminent return. Consequently, the fundamentalists alleged that biblical criticism, evolutionary theory, and the secularization of Christians' lives challenged the authority and legitimacy of their traditional faith. At the other end of the Christian theological spectrum, the modernists emphasized the need for Christians to demonstrate a more rational faith, as opposed to what they considered to be fundamentalism's outmoded literal interpretation of the Bible. Modernists hoped to reconcile traditional doctrine with modern scientific thought in order to preserve Christianity's staying power in an ever-changing world. Both sides' ardent dedication to their convictions fueled the intensity of the conflict. Indeed, as Marsden has noted, they believed that the "battle for the Bible was

a battle for civilization."¹² Between these two extremes, a third group, known as the moderates, championed efforts to bridge the divide that separated traditional and modern Protestant thought.

Out of this fundamentalist-modernist debate emerged the influential and controversial trial of Dayton biology teacher John Scopes for the violation of a Tennessee law banning the teaching of evolution in public schools.¹³ Disagree-

12. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3-6, 117, 164. Marsden's first edition, published in 1980, carried the subtitle, "The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925," and concluded the study of American fundamentalism with the 1925 Scopes trial. His second edition brings the history of fundamentalism to the present and offers some conclusions about how it reemerged as a political force in the late twentieth century after disappearing from mainstream American culture for more than fifty years.

13. Tennessee's anti-evolution measure (the Butler Act), signed into law on March 21, 1925, stated that "it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, normals and all other public schools of the state, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the state, to teach any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals." Quoted in Jeffrey P. Moran, *The Scopes Trial: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002), 74-75; see also "The Tennessee Anti-Evolution Act," in Tompkins, *D-Days at Dayton*, 3.

ments within American Christendom about evolutionary theory's description of human development, in contrast to the biblical view of divine creation, were now to be played out on a national stage.

Among the chief figures in the case—at least with respect to the amount of media coverage he received—stood Bryan, a thrice-defeated Democratic Party presidential candidate and former secretary of state under Woodrow Wilson.¹⁴ Bryan had become the leading spokesman for Christian fundamentalism in 1921 when he joined the fight on an issue he believed to be of significant religious and national concern: the teaching of evolutionary theory in America's public schools. Fearing that the exposure of the country's most impressionable young minds to evolutionary theory threatened to undermine the values of the Christian faith, Bryan led the effort to defend orthodox Christianity against the influences of secularism. His virulent opposition to evolutionary teaching culminated in Scopes's public trial.¹⁵

The trial began on Friday, July 10, 1925, with Bryan serving as an assistant prosecuting attorney in opposition to the chief counsel for the defense, Clarence Darrow, a noted trial lawyer and avowed agnostic. The national press hyped the fame and opposing viewpoints of the lawyers and promoted the trial as a battle between the Bible and evolution. On Monday, July 20, as the case seemed to be nearing its conclusion, the long-awaited fireworks of the trial exploded during Darrow's unprecedented cross-examination of Bryan regarding fundamentalism's insistence on biblical inerrancy.¹⁶ With Bryan on the witness stand,

14. Republican Party presidential candidate William McKinley defeated Bryan in 1896 and again in 1900. Eight years later, Bryan lost the presidential race to another Republican Party candidate, William Howard Taft. For more information on Bryan's political career, see Paolo E. Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, vol. 1, *Political Evangelist, 1860–1908* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964).

15. Coletta, *Political Evangelist*, 4–5; Paolo E. Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, vol. 3, *Political Puritan, 1915–1925* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 202–203; Robert W. Cherny, *A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 10; citations are to the University of Oklahoma Press edition. See also Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 38, 41–43; Brod, "The Scopes Trial," 224; Willard H. Smith, *The Social and Religious Thought of William Jennings Bryan* (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1975), 198, 210; Ragsdale, "Three Weeks in Dayton," 103; Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), xv. Although Bryan never considered himself a mainstream fundamentalist, his last great role in American history tied him to this passionate, but publicly ridiculed element of American Christianity. As a zealous Christian, Bryan assumed he was right and that the rationale for his beliefs was evident to everyone. This belief proved to be Bryan's most devastating flaw in the Scopes trial and in other aspects of his career.

16. Bryan agreed to the cross-examination believing that he would be provided the same opportunity to interrogate Darrow. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 4.

Darrow twisted and ridiculed Bryan's answers with a sarcastic flare that appeared to discredit the anti-evolutionists' lead defender. The following day, Judge John Raulston expunged Bryan's testimony from the court record because he considered it irrelevant to determining whether Scopes had taught evolution. However, in a rash of scathing editorials and humiliating cartoons, the secular press had already cast Bryan as an ignorant religious fanatic. The same day, the jury convicted Scopes after only ten minutes of deliberation and imposed the minimum fine of one hundred dollars.¹⁷ But the victory for fundamentalism extended only as far as the guilty verdict. The damage to Bryan and the fundamentalist cause inflicted by Darrow and the national media left the American public with a negative and distorted impression of Christian fundamentalism.¹⁸

Understood as a microcosm of a larger religious controversy, it is clear that the Scopes trial had less to do with the guilt or innocence of John Scopes and more to do with the fight over Christian accommodation to modern thought and scientific theory. To be sure, Kansas was not isolated from this brand of religious infighting. The religious and educational controversies that were given national attention by the notoriety of the Scopes trial had actually been brewing in some Kansas communities and colleges for several decades. Traditionally considered "a national leader in liberal Protestant ideals," Kansas had begun as early as the turn of the twentieth century to accept a more conservative view of religion.¹⁹

In 1901 the state's capital city became the center of an intense struggle over the recitation of Christian prayers in public schools. Although the Topeka school board concluded that state institutions should remain free from dominance by any sect, they simultaneously determined that "common religion—as exemplified in the Bible—was crucial to the mission of the public school."²⁰ The following

17. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 191–192, 203.

18. Bryan's death from apoplexy five days after the trial prevented him from redeeming his stained reputation, and the proximity of his death to his public humiliation at the trial linked the two events into a single moment for historical and collective memory. As the distorted image of fundamentalism persisted, the fundamentalists fell out of power and the public eye, losing their hold on Protestant Christianity. In their retreat from mainstream culture, however, the fundamentalists built their own religious subculture that eventually burgeoned into a successful and vibrant political force in the latter half of the twentieth century. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 199–205; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 231–236.

19. Gary R. Entz, "Religion in Kansas. Review Essay," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 28 (Summer 2005): 140.

20. Robert C. McWilliams, "Billard's Battle Over the Bible: Religion and the Public Schools in Turn-of-the-Century Topeka, Kansas" (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1987), 8–9.

year, the Southwestern Kansas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church dealt with the issue of modernist teaching in the Church. It charged Granville Lowther, a prominent Kansas minister, with preaching an evolutionary philosophy of Christ's atonement, which was contrary to the Church's creed, and it eventually barred him from the denomination's ministry. In 1909 Alton H. Thompson, a former president of the Kansas Academy of Science, presented a paper in which he argued for a reconciliation of evolutionary theory and the belief in a divine being. Theologically conservative Protestants, however, viewed this accord of science and religion as a theological compromise and opposed Thompson's ideas.²¹

From January to March 1925, Kansans confronted their own evolution conflict with regard to education. William Marion Goldsmith, a biology professor at Methodist-sponsored Southwestern College in Winfield, came under the scrutiny of school officials for his modernist approach to science education. Goldsmith taught that science in general, and the theory of evolution in particular, could be reconciled with the Christian faith. For the school's board of directors, the issue was less about whether Goldsmith was corrupting the minds of impressionable college students and more about whether the school could maintain its respectability and support from its constituency if Goldsmith continued his modernist teaching. In a surprising turn of events for the modernist professor, the student council intervened on Goldsmith's behalf and convinced the board to allow him to retain his position at the college.²²

It was events such as these that led historian Gary Entz to conclude that by the 1920s Kansans had "embraced fundamentalism."²³ Although there is merit to this view, it is equally important to note that Kansas's religious makeup was complex. Kansans had not uniformly accepted the fundamentalists' staunch opposition to evolution in the 1920s, having, rather, taken a primarily moderate position in the fundamentalist-modernist battle for the soul of

21. Ina Turner Gray and Phillip E. Chastain, "Granville Lowther: Heretic or Herald," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 1 (Autumn 1978): 180; Entz, "Religion in Kansas," 139; Alton Howard Thompson, "Fifty Years of Evolution" (Paper presented at the forty-second annual meeting of the Kansas Academy of Science, December 1909), in *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science, XXIII and XXIV* (Topeka, Kans.: State Printing Office, 1911), 154-168; John McCool, "Science Friction," *Kansas History Online*, http://kansashistoryonline.org/ksh/ArticlePage_Print.asp?artid=108.

22. Ina Turner Gray, "Monkey Trial—Kansas Style," *Methodist History* 14 (July 1976): 235-251; Entz, "Religion in Kansas," 140-141.

23. Entz, "Religion in Kansas," 140.



Emporia Gazette, July 15, 1925

American Christendom. Regardless of Kansans' individual religious leanings, the contentious debates over evolutionary teaching brought the issues of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy to the forefront of public discourse and concern. By July 1925 the news of the Scopes trial had many Kansans interested in the outcome of the case.

The coverage of the events surrounding the trial by the *Beacon*, *Capital*, *Eagle*, and *Gazette* reveals that they were more than simply curious about the news and excitement of the Tennessee case. For them, the trial magnified the liberal-conservative religious split within Protestant Christianity, showed the intensity of each side's convictions, and generated serious religious and political ramifications that extended beyond the borders of Tennessee.²⁴ Although the newspapers may not have mentioned the fundamentalist-modernist controversy directly by name, they were clearly interested in the same issues that the debate raised. All of the papers published national news articles regarding the trial, but what gives drama to the Kansas approach are the papers' local coverage and responses. While the Kansas papers were inclined to support the modernist position, they did not allow a spirit of partisanship to dominate their coverage. Each paper in its own way presented the public with a nuanced view of the trial's contentious religious component. Although this is less the case with the *Emporia Gazette*, its distinct approach perhaps can be explained by editor White's absence during the trial and the paper's disappointment that the circus-like environment of the trial obscured its broader significance.

Of the four Kansas newspapers, one would expect the *Gazette* to be the most vocal, given White's prior editorial coverage of the theological controversy. However, the paper provided little editorial commentary or local response to the trial during its two-week duration. That the trial did not receive extensive coverage is curious because in the three months prior to the trial, the paper was outspoken on the teaching of evolutionary theory in public schools and the larger religious debate between the fundamentalists and the modernists.

In fact, the *Gazette's* response to the Scopes case prior to the trial is even more revealing than its coverage during

24. At this time, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy was most evident within Protestant Christianity. Although the Roman Catholic Church opposed the theory of evolution and wished to preserve the authenticity of the Bible, it did not join Bryan's anti-evolution crusade. It had its own established system of parochial schools and colleges whose science and religious curricula were not dictated by public policy. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 262.

the courthouse arguments. White's spate of editorials on the subject attracted the attention of his readers and confirmed the intensity and ferocity of each side's position. In one editorial, he attempted to clarify that evolutionary theory did not deny the authority of divine creation or presume that man descended from monkeys. However, it was his final comment that drew criticism from local religious conservatives. White concluded, "All this nonsense about the teaching of evolution is cheap talk of uneducated men." In a letter published by the *Gazette*, J. A. Witmer, a Presbyterian minister from Cottonwood Falls, took issue with White's labeling of fundamentalists as "cheap" and "full of nonsense" because of their belief in "a theory that has been prevalent for ages, rather than in a theory less proven with less attention given to God." Below the printed letter, White responded: "The *Gazette* feels that it is indeed rather 'cheap' to object to the teaching of a theory which the best pedagogic brains in the land seem to require as a part of a liberal education." Although White's reply was clearly a modernist position, it echoed the theme of an earlier editorial in which he urged his readers to learn and to understand the theories of evolution. That the Scopes case provided a useful forum for educating the public about science and religion became a recurrent theme in the *Gazette's* coverage prior to and during the trial.²⁵

Prior to the trial, the *Gazette* suggested that readers "get a book on each side of the evolution story and read up." Not surprisingly, it recommended a book by evolution scientist Vernon L. Kellogg, a former Emporia resident and friend of White. The paper described Kellogg's book as "easy reading for intelligent people—and fair to a degree." In response to the coming Scopes trial, the *Gazette* also published "a few pertinent facts" on evolution written by United Press writer J. W. T. Mason. The selection included clarification that evolutionary theory was not contrary to the deity of Christ, the Ten Commandments, or the existence of God. The newspaper published

these little paragraphs in the belief that they tell more than many a sermon on evolution would tell, and that they may do more good than a dozen biased sermons of prejudiced and ill-informed ministers. Evolution is nothing to get excited about despite the advertising

25. "Evolution and Things," *Emporia Gazette*, March 26, 1925; "Evolution 'As Is,'" *Emporia Gazette*, April 29, 1925; J. A. Witmer, letter to the editor, *Emporia Gazette*, May 1, 1925.

it is getting at Dayton, and indeed intelligent readers may read the foregoing paragraphs and be able to go to sleep immediately afterwards. We hope they will.

Indeed, the last two sentences give important insight into how the *Gazette* perceived the trial. The editorial suggested that the trial, having been promoted and usurped by the media, had lost its opportunity to educate the public. As a result, the paper hoped that people would not be taken in by the trial's media hype.²⁶

To this end, and in response to the exchange between White and Witmer, the *Gazette* undertook a published letter debate between the fundamentalist minister and a modernist reader who identified himself as the "Freshman." The modernist defended evolution and the legitimacy of his Christian faith against criticisms from Witmer that evolutionists deny God's "handywork" in the divine creation. The Freshman argued, "I am no worse a Christian for my beliefs. I believe that evolution is the work of God. Certainly all this universe could not exist without some Supreme Intellect to guide it. . . . But I do not refer to the Bible for my science. . . . [W]hile science is not irreligious, the Bible is most certainly unscientific." That the *Gazette*, despite its partisan position, provided a forum for this conversation to occur indicates that it recognized the need for Christians to acknowledge and respect the value in each side's positions.²⁷

Although it did not often discuss the approaching Scopes trial specifically prior to July, the *Gazette* was clearly interested in the issues confronting Christianity. For example, White criticized Bryan for leading the effort to stifle the teaching of modern science in public schools. He charged Bryan with "choking of free speech" and menacing "the peace and prosperity of America." He further argued against fundamentalists' resistance to reason and intolerance of their opponents' views. In another editorial, White went so far as to equate fundamentalists with Benito Mussolini and Leon Trotsky as "prophets of a new force which would overthrow the seasoned judgments of mankind." These editorials relay the paper's concerns about the potential consequences

of the trial and the fundamentalists' influences in the politics of a free society.²⁸

Prior to the beginning of the trial, the *Gazette* published a dozen such editorials and eight letters to the editor regarding science and the Bible. During the trial, it printed only six editorials and one letter to the editor on the subject. Why then did the newspaper, which had previously shown such an interest in discussing evolution and the controversy between the fundamentalists and the modernists, suddenly reduce its coverage of these issues during the trial? Two possible explanations are plausible.

First, the staff of the *Gazette* faced the demanding challenge of reporting on one of the most notable trials in American history without the aid of its nationally respected editor-in-chief. White was in Hawaii covering the first meeting of the Institute of Pacific Relations, a forum created among Pacific coast nations to discuss problems of international concern. Although the newspaper had an experienced staff during the trial, White's absence may account for the *Gazette's* relative silence on the Scopes trial with regard to Bryan and the religious battle.²⁹ Had White been in Emporia, it is likely that, given his vocal response prior to the trial, there would have been more editorial content on the trial.

Second, the *Gazette* took the concerns raised by the Scopes trial seriously, as seen by its early interest in evolution. But it was dismayed by the frivolous treatment of the trial's serious issues by the sensationalist publicity given to the trial. The small-town newspaper expressed regret that the widespread national coverage of the trial disguised the real issues it raised—the theological battle between science and religion and the teaching of evolutionary theory in public schools. This frustration with the media's role in diminishing the legitimacy and significance of the trial appears as a recurrent theme in the *Gazette's* coverage and helps to explain why the paper's editorials tapered off. White, upon his return to Emporia shortly after the trial concluded, expressed his disgust that the once-noble profession of the newspaperman has been marred by the use of "sex, crime, and piffle" in newspaper headlines and editorials as a means to maximize profits. He chastised the public for demanding such "daily pabulum" and reminded them that "serious questions are puzzling the world. Great

26. Editorial, "Bad Days for Dull Care," *Emporia Gazette*, June 27, 1925; editorial, "Primer on Evolution," *Emporia Gazette*, July 1, 1925.

27. Freshman, letters to the editor, *Emporia Gazette*, May 4, 1925 and May 12, 1925; J. A. Witmer, letter to the editor, *Emporia Gazette*, May 12, 1925.

28. "The New Bryanism," *Emporia Gazette*, May 28, 1925; "Power and Ignorance," *Emporia Gazette*, June 6, 1925.

29. When White traveled, as he often did after 1920, he left a committee of his editors in control of the paper. Griffith, *Home Town News*, 163–164, 212–213.



Political cartoons from the Emporia Gazette, June-July, 1925

events are stirring in a dozen centers of news."³⁰ One can only wonder whether White's editorial was a response, in part, to the media's role in making a mockery of the real issues in the Scopes trial.

More than a month before the trial began, the *Gazette* published a selected editorial cartoon from its national syndicate depicting the trial's utility as a publicity-making endeavor. Titled, "The Fruit of the (Family) Tree," the cartoon illustrated "the evolution trial," portrayed by a monkey sitting in an apple tree, while a Dayton man stands below collecting the fruits of "fame," "publicity," and "notoriety." By the beginning of the trial, the cartoons reflected an even greater disgust with the media and public hype of the trial. One cartoon played off of Auguste Rodin's sculpture, "The Thinker," depicting a monkey sitting on a tree branch overlooking the raucous scene of photographers, journalists, sightseers, and Tennessee "hillbillies" converging on the Dayton courthouse to watch the trial. Another cartoon, titled "Monkey Business," showed a Dayton organ grinder turning his "Evolution Trial" street organ as his monkey collects an abundance of cash and coin proceeds. The cartoon that best describes the paper's exasperation with the trial portrayed an office scene where a reporter, aptly labeled, "The Rest of Us," covers his ears while he observes an organ grinder and monkey relaying the trial news outside. These cartoons reflect the paper's frustration with how the trial was covered in the media—a frustration that contributed to the *Gazette's* view that the trial had devolved into nothing more than a media circus.³¹

Although the *Gazette* continued to publish daily wire-service news reports throughout the duration of the trial, it printed few other editorial comments beyond these cartoons. Nevertheless, the material it did publish is telling. For example, one front-page editorial equated the trial to a volcano, "spewing up hatred, barbarism, fire, brimstone, medievalism, bigotry, sulphur, intolerance, and lava." In another editorial, White described Emporia's response to the evolution trial. He reported that according to the public librarian, books on evolution had maintained their normal

30. Editorial, "Cheap, Cheap, Cheap," *Emporia Gazette*, August 11, 1925.

31. Cartoons from the *Emporia Gazette* included: "The Fruit of the [Family] Tree," June 4, 1925; "The Thinker," July 10, 1925; "Monkey Business," July 14, 1925; and "The Daily Grind!," July 21, 1925. The *Gazette*, *Beacon*, and *Capital* drew upon nationally syndicated editorial cartoons during the 1920s. While these cartoons did not originate with each paper's individual editors, the editors' choices to publish these particular cartoons are indicative of each paper's trial sentiments.

circulation throughout July. Much to White's dismay, however, all six Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan* books owned by the library had been continuously checked out since the beginning of the trial and had the "biggest waiting list of any books in the library."³² For the *Gazette*, the trial had failed to produce the type of educational interest that the staff had in mind when it first recommended that readers learn about evolution. Instead, the paper had to settle for books about a man living among apes.

While the *Gazette* published little editorial content during the trial, its coverage in the months leading up to the hearing provides useful insight into its response. Its editorials, letters, and cartoons show the paper's optimism that the trial could educate both sides of the religious controversy. White's absence, along with the paper's opposition to sensational headlines and its desire to keep news reporting substantive, accounts for its subdued response. Although it may have published cartoons that viewed the trial as nothing more than a media circus and provided few editorials directly speaking to the Scopes case, the *Gazette* nevertheless recognized that the trial was rooted in a deeper theological controversy confronting American Christians.

Unlike the *Gazette*, the other three newspapers showed more sustained interest in the trial. They all represented the trial as a part of the fundamentalist-modernist debate, but they took different approaches to the way in which they viewed the trial in this context. Although the *Wichita Beacon*, an evening publication, was much smaller in terms of page output than its morning competitor, the *Wichita Eagle*, it published the most editorial content on the trial, with the majority of its editorials commenting on the trial's significance as an event within the context of the fundamentalist-modernist debate. Henry Justin Allen, a former Kansas governor and the *Beacon's* editor-in-chief, authored eighteen editorials on Scopes-related subjects. In addition to his own comments, Allen published seven supplementary remarks from his daily columnists, three editorial cartoons, and two letters to the editor from *Beacon* readers. Although the paper largely took the modernist stance that supported the teaching of evolution-

32. "The Crater," *Emporia Gazette*, July 22, 1925; "Evolution a la Jiggs!," *Emporia Gazette*, August 1, 1925. The fictional *Tarzan* series depicted the life of Tarzan, a jungle man who was raised by apes after his parents were killed by a savage king ape.

ary theory in public schools, its editorial page content attempted to bring the opposing religious sides together in order to educate the public, to bring resolution to the religious controversy, and to preserve the most essential elements of the Christian faith. In so doing, the *Beacon* embraced a moderate approach that urged the two sides to be tolerant of the other's theological and cultural beliefs.³³

For as much commentary as the *Wichita Beacon* published during the trial, it is peculiar that, unlike the *Emporia Gazette*, the paper's editorial staff offered little commentary on matters related to the case and the religious debate prior to the trial. In an editorial titled "Just a Law Suit," Allen asserted that the court likely would restrict the trial to the discussion of the "simple facts" in the case, despite Bryan and Darrow's efforts "to put on their joint debate over their two theories." Allen argued that, "It is somewhat doubtful if the Tennessee court will attempt to establish either the theories of evolution, or the literal interpretation of the Bible as one of the results of the Scopes trial."³⁴ Nevertheless, the two opposing sides in the case did try to establish their respective positions as authoritative on matters of science and religion, and Allen recognized that the trial signaled an emerging discussion of issues that were more significant for American Christianity than determining Scopes's guilt or innocence. This understanding by Allen set the tone for how the *Beacon* responded to the trial over the next several weeks.

In the *Beacon's* examination of the trial's religious context, Bryan became the individual around whom the debate could be understood and evaluated, rather than an object whom the newspaper could humiliate and vilify. For example, in a July 12 editorial Allen asserted that Bryan's comment that the Tennessee case is "'a fight to the death between evolution and the Bible'" took the matter "too seriously, by far." Allen contended that the Christian faith had always managed to respond to internal dissension in or-

33. Allen, a Republican, served as the Kansas governor from 1919 to 1923 and shared a friendship with some of Kansas's most noted editors and publishers, including White of the *Emporia Gazette* and Senator Arthur Capper of the *Topeka Daily Capital*. Allen, an ambitious son of a farmer who took up the barber's trade in order to save money for college, developed commendable speaking and writing skills while a student at Baker University, a Methodist college in Baldwin City, Kansas. After more than twenty years in the newspaper business, Allen purchased the *Wichita Beacon*, which was later housed in the "Beacon Building," Kansas's first skyscraper, and for which Allen had launched a promotion campaign to raise the construction funds. Homer E. Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1990), 152, 155.

34. "Just a Law Suit," *Wichita Beacon*, July 11, 1925.

der to reform and renew itself. He believed that the Scopes case offered an opportunity to establish more consideration for each side by allowing them to inform their opponents about their position. Five days later, Allen again critiqued Bryan, this time for his efforts to exclude the admission of scientific testimony. Allen maintained that Bryan's actions would encourage those individuals who had not yet taken a side in the religious debate to choose modernism.³⁵ Singling out Bryan merely became the stepping stone to the *Beacon's* discussion of a larger subject—the need for the trial to educate the public in order to allay the intensity of the religious controversy.

Beacon editorials also emphasized the instructive opportunities provided by the trial and addressed ways to resolve the conflict between those who harmonized science and religion and those who considered them to be contradictory. Judge Raulston came under criticism from Allen for excluding scientific testimony from the trial. Allen contended that "sometimes doctrine thrives on suppression, for it arouses public curiosity," and clothed in "martyrdom," the modernists' position on evolutionary theory could have a greater opportunity to educate the public than the fundamentalists' biblical literalism. In a similar vein of educational discourse, one columnist lamented that the jurors who were to decide the case were not permitted to listen to the general explanation of evolution given early in the trial. The columnist reasoned, "The pity of an entire country should go . . . to the 12 jurors at Dayton. Of the 106,418,284 persons in the United States . . . , 106,418,272. . . . [were able to] learn about the pleistocene [*sic*] age."³⁶

Although the *Beacon* published several articles that promoted the modernist position, its editorials often attempted to bring the two religious groups together to work out a solution for the benefit of Christianity. Allen's commentary in one editorial read much like a sermon, challenging Christians to "heal the scars and leave off the anti-Christian bitterness of spirit that has characterized both sides of the dispute. It is not edifying to see a Darrow flout the Bible, which is the bulwark of our Ameri-

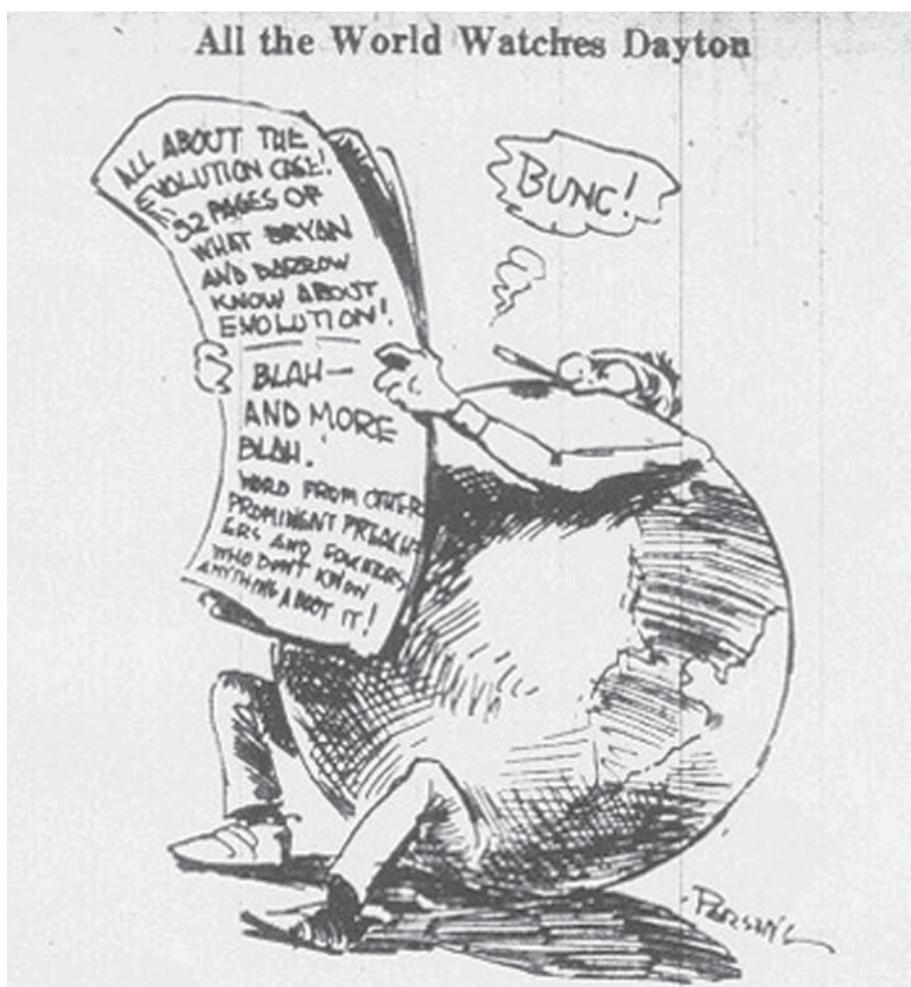
35. "The Bible Will Be Stronger," *Wichita Beacon*, July 12, 1925; "Will It Be Educative?," *Wichita Beacon*, July 17, 1925.

36. "The Strange Case of Dayton," *Wichita Beacon*, July 19, 1925; A. W. J., "The Beacon Light," *Wichita Beacon*, July 23, 1925. In a July 15, 1925, response to inquiries about A. W. J., the *Beacon* staff refused to disclose his identity.

can civilization. Neither is it edifying to see a Bryan shaking his fist and trembling with anger over his beliefs." Allen revived Christ's call to "love thy neighbor as thyself" as a way to reconcile the two sides.³⁷ This effort to preserve the core values of the faith became the *Beacon's* way of bringing the issue to a peaceable—and theologically moderate—resolution.

Like the *Beacon*, the *Topeka Daily Capital* examined the trial in terms of the fundamentalist-modernist debate and advocated that Christians should not be distracted by such theological quarrels, but that they should focus on the most essential tenets of the faith. One of many midwestern newspapers owned by United States senator and former Kansas governor Arthur Capper, the *Capital* was Capper's largest publication and the leading newspaper in Topeka. Because other demands on his time prevented him from devoting much attention to his publications after he was elected governor in 1914, Capper delegated the authority over his newspapers to trusted editors. According to one historian, Capper valued his editors' position and "strongly proclaimed an editorial conscience for all his journals." In the case of the *Capital*, Capper left the paper largely under the control of editorial writer and long-time *Capital* staff member Harold Taylor Chase. As the acting editor of the newspaper for forty years, Chase produced, on average, two columns of editorial matter each day. The news generated by the Scopes trial provided ample content for Chase's editorial page, and during July, he authored ten editorials on Scopes-related subjects in addition to publishing editorial commentary written by his daily columnists.³⁸

Within its editorial-page content, the *Capital* framed the trial in the context of the ongoing religious debates. Chase, who supported the



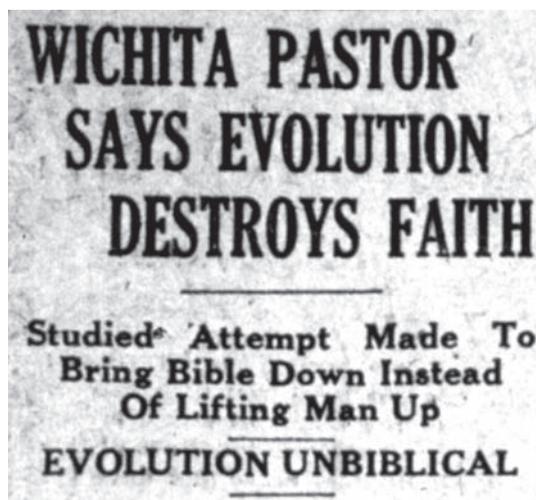
"All the World Watches Dayton," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 16, 1925

modernist position, speculated that the fundamentalist-modernist controversy was not likely to end any time soon. "In the meantime," he wrote, "Darrow and Bryan will continue to make monkey faces at each other, the scientists and hill-billies of Tennessee will carry on their warfare, and evolutionists and fundamentalists thruout [sic] the world will prolong their debates. Then when the courts finally decide the question the row will go on just as furiously as before." Like Allen, Chase lamented that the trial would ultimately resolve nothing because no one would be able to take it seriously after it received so much media hype. He feared that the "sensationalism, publicity-seeking and the burlesque features" of the trial would prevent "any educational good" to "come from the immense publicity given it." The *Capital*

37. "Isn't It About Time?," *Wichita Sunday Beacon*, July 26, 1925.

38. Homer E. Socolofsky, *Arthur Capper: Publisher, Politician, and Philanthropist* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1962), 53, 69, 108.

also used selected editorial cartoons from a nationally syndicated cartoonist to criticize the media's frivolous coverage of the case and to mock the superficial knowledge of each side's supposed experts. One such cartoon depicted the "world" reading newspaper headlines that announced, "All about the evolution case! 52 pages of what Bryan and Darrow know about evolution! Blah—and more Blah. Word from other prominent preachers and educators who don't know anything about it!" To which the world commented, "Bunc!"³⁹



Wichita Eagle, July 5, 1925

Bryan was not the primary focus of the *Capital's* trial coverage, but the paper included some less-than-favorable images and descriptions of him. Chase scoffed at Bryan's claims that evolutionism was a conspiracy against the Bible, asserting that Bryan "is always unearthing conspiracies." The editor insisted Bryan was the one putting religion "into peril." Similarly, the *Capital* mocked Bryan in the editorial cartoon referred to at the beginning of this article in which a monkey commented on Bryan's resemblance to a chimpanzee. It also reprinted an article from the *New York World* that condemned Bryan "as thoroly [sic] discredited a statesman and thinker as any man could be."⁴⁰ Indeed, the *Capital* was not timid in ridiculing Bryan and his role in the trial.

39. "The Scopes Verdict," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 22, 1925; "Dr. Sheldon on the Scopes Case," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 10, 1925; "All the World Watches Dayton," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 16, 1925.

40. "Seeing Things Again," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 24, 1925; "Inadmissible [sic] Evidence," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 21, 1925; cited in "The Bryan Danger," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 23, 1925.

The day before the trial began, the *Capital* published an editorial, "Is Christianity in Danger?," written by the Reverend Charles M. Sheldon, a frequent guest writer for the paper. Sheldon had originated the phrase "What Would Jesus Do?," with his 1896 best-seller *In His Steps*, and was perhaps the best-known advocate of the social gospel at the time. A frequent and popular speaker on the Chautauqua circuit, Sheldon was even paired with Bryan during one season. Not likely by accident, the *Capital* printed the editorial above the paper's fold in the center of the front page—a coveted position in newspaper publishing. In his review of the struggle between religious liberalism and conservatism, Sheldon concluded that disagreements over humankind's origins caused Christians to lose sight of Christianity's primary purpose for man: "love to God and one's neighbor." Although a self-labeled modernist himself, Sheldon hoped that Christians would put aside their theological differences for the advancement of Christendom. "What Christianity needs now-a-days is not defenders but followers," the Topeka minister insisted. "Not debaters, but disciples. Not the law, but the Gospel." Most significant, Sheldon's editorial set the tone for the *Capital's* overall response to the trial—the need for Christians to reconcile their differences and rededicate themselves to their primary mission to spread Christ's message of salvation.⁴¹

Throughout the trial, the *Capital's* editorial page reflected the influence of the Reverend Sheldon's opinion. When fundamentalist readers questioned Sheldon about his positions on evolution and whether he could be both a Christian and an evolutionist, the paper published Sheldon's response that although Christianity and evolution could be reconciled, differences of opinions on scientific matters should not divide the Christian faith. In an editorial, Chase commended Sheldon's ability to bring "common sense" to the matter of religious dissension and reaffirmed that the success of Christianity relied on individuals like Sheldon who were willing to look past conflict in order to get to the core of the Christian faith. In another editorial, Chase reminded readers, "The business of the church is not to teach science but to persuade men and women to a better manner of living." Like the *Wichita*

41. Timothy Miller, *Following In His Steps: A Biography of Charles M. Sheldon* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 33, 71, 215; Charles M. Sheldon, "Is Christianity in Danger?," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 9, 1925.

Beacon, the *Topeka Daily Capital* attempted to bring the opposing sides together on the common ground of Christianity's primary message.⁴²

The Topeka paper reported on the trial throughout most of the month, with its coverage of the case fading from the editorial page only after Bryan's death on July 26, 1925 (just five days after the trial's end). Although it was committed to its modernist position, the *Capital*, like the *Beacon*, tried to find some middle ground between its various readers and to identify the most common threads within both sides of the debate. This attempt at resolution is best seen by the paper's inclusion of Sheldon's editorial piece and response letter. That his editorial appeared on the front page further shows that the paper realized and exploited the editorial's potential for influence.

As in the *Beacon* and *Capital*, the *Wichita Eagle* supplied its readers with much editorial matter concerning the trial, publishing eight articles that reported on the local response to the case and fourteen editorials. Although Victor Murdock, the *Eagle's* editor-in-chief, was himself a modernist, he took a more moderate approach with the articles and editorials that he published. The *Eagle's* editorials recognized that fundamentalists and modernists did not understand or respect each other's opinions. In its first editorial on the trial, the *Eagle* expressed its hope that the Scopes case would enlighten the public about what the theory of evolution meant, both for its opponents and its supporters, noting that "all those folks who are certain they are evolutionists or anti-evolutionists might as well make sure of what they are for or against." Similarly, in another editorial, the newspaper examined the influence of referring to the case as the "monkey trial." Murdock asserted that this catch phrase gave the prosecution an advantage because it reduced a complex scientific theory to the single issue of humankind's ancestral heritage to monkeys. The editorial optimistically concluded, "popular interest has now been stirred in the matter of evolution so that many folks will be inclined to find out with some accuracy what it is all about." Although the *Eagle* recognized that the trial's issues had greater significance for Christians, it believed that the trial should be limited strictly to the legal matters of the case. In an editorial similar to one published by Henry Allen in the

Beacon, the *Eagle* stated that the case's sole function was to determine Scopes's guilt or innocence, not to clear up why "millions of men are both Christians and evolutionists."⁴³

Upon receiving the expected trial verdict, the *Wichita Eagle* published an editorial examining Bryan's overall motivation. The editor charged that Bryan had taken advantage of a case meant only to determine whether or not John Scopes had violated state law; Bryan sought nothing less than a victory for fundamentalism over



Wichita Eagle, July 5, 1925

modernism. He knew that even though the Bible was on trial in the court of public opinion, Scopes was on trial in Dayton, and that this "technicality . . . narrowed the issue and would record, for him, a winning against his opponents." The paper castigated Bryan for exploiting Scopes' admitted guilt in order to further the cause of fundamentalism and give it a national platform from which to speak.⁴⁴

Although the *Eagle's* editorials discussed the religious aspects of the trial, it was primarily the locally written articles that characterized it as a battle between the fundamentalists and the modernists. Of the four newspapers, the *Eagle*

42. Charles M. Sheldon, "Christianity and Evolution," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 14, 1925; editorial, "Dr. Sheldon on the Scopes Case," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 10, 1925; editorial, "Congress Keep Hands Off," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 27, 1925.

43. "The Terms," *Wichita Daily Eagle*, June 27, 1925; "Monkey Trial," *Wichita Daily Eagle*, July 21, 1925; "Professor Witnesses," *Wichita Daily Eagle*, July 13, 1925.

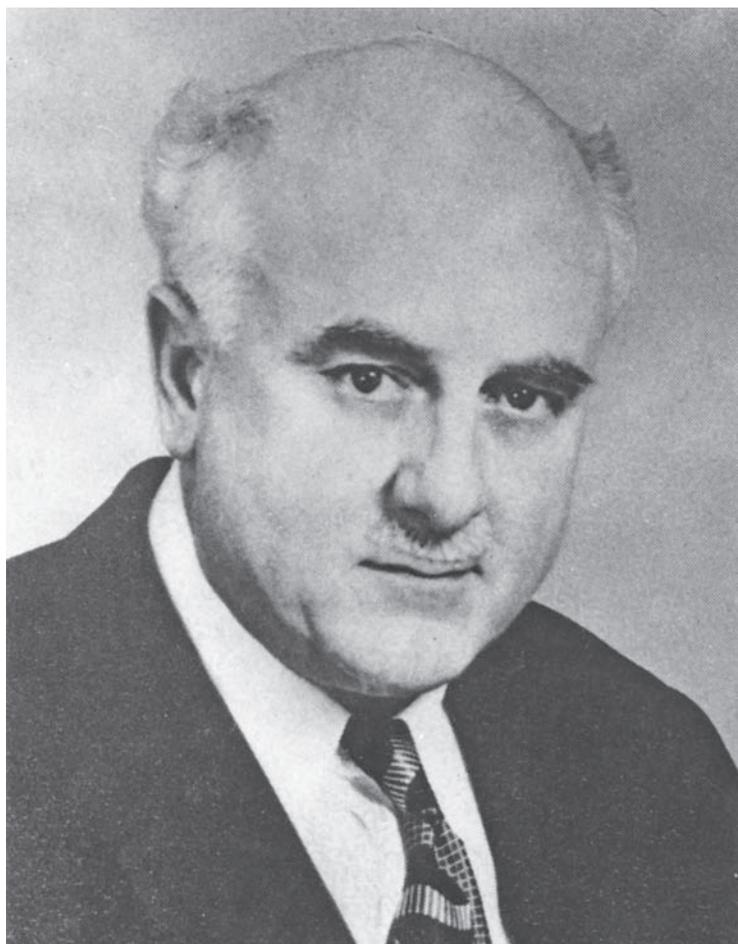
44. "A Bryan Winning," *Wichita Daily Eagle*, July 22, 1925.

produced the most articles describing the local response to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. Some articles reported on the modernists' defense against fundamentalist criticism, while others depicted the fundamentalists' concerns about modernism and evolution. A few days before the trial, the newspaper published an article on a Wichita pastor's opposition to evolution. The pastor considered evolutionary theory a "fallacious" doctrine on the "origin, development, and progress of man" that destroyed "the souls of men" and undermined "the foundation of Christian civilization." In the same issue, the *Eagle* printed a report on modernists' arguments against fundamentalism's claims of biblical inerrancy. "We are not afraid of Mr. [Rev. W. D.] Gray's hell," asserted a modernist Kansas minister in reaction to a St. John pastor's previously published comments. "The only hell we believe in is the one fundamentalists are making in this world today by their bigotry, intolerance and lack of charity." Nearly two weeks later, the *Eagle* reported that the Sunday sermons of four area pastors would be on the topic of evolution. "It is almost impossible . . . to stop on any downtown street corner or in any public place without hearing the matter [the Scopes trial] discussed," the newspaper observed. "Although it is very seldom anyone is heard making light of divine creation as told by the Bible, there are many supporters of the contention that evolution and the story as told by the Bible are not in conflict. On the other hand, there are found many who stand staunchly by the Bible and argue that evolution is a myth." Clearly, evolution, the Bible, and the Dayton case had become popular topics for public discourse, and the *Eagle* framed them within the context of the religious controversy.⁴⁵

Although the *Eagle* plainly supported the modernist position and was critical of both fundamentalism and Bryan in its editorials, it was far more evenhanded in its articles with regard to discussing Kansans' religious positions. As one of the largest newspapers in the state at the time, the *Eagle* had to take care in representing the views of its diverse audience by covering all sides of the issues, and its responses to the trial reflect the seriousness with which the paper took this obligation.

As the Scopes trial faded from the newspaper headlines and public consciousness, even the interest of some of Kansas's most vocal citizens and leaders waned. Certainly

45. "Wichita Pastor Says Evolution Destroys Faith," and "We Do Not Fear Mr. Gray's Hell Say Modernists," *Wichita Sunday Eagle*, July 5, 1925; "Evolution To Be Subject of Four Sermons Sunday," *Wichita Daily Eagle*, July 17, 1925.



Some Kansas fundamentalists, such as Wichita evangelist Gerald B. Winrod, continued to confront the perceived problems of modernism in churches and schools. In October 1925 Winrod founded "The Defenders of the Christian Faith," a statewide organization intended to combat "evolution in the schools and modernism in the pulpits."

some Kansas fundamentalists, such as Wichita evangelist Gerald B. Winrod, continued to confront the perceived problems of modernism in churches and schools. In October 1925 Winrod founded "The Defenders of the Christian Faith," a statewide organization intended to combat "evolution in the schools and modernism in the pulpits." Despite his popularity among Kansas fundamentalists, however, Winrod never garnered enough widespread political support to persuade the Kansas legislature to enact an anti-evolution law.⁴⁶ That evolution and modernism did not be-

46. By the mid-1930s, Winrod had traded his fundamentalism for fascism, and in 1942 his outspoken anti-Semitism brought him into federal court on charges of sedition; *Wichita Daily Eagle*, March 28, 1926, 5A; Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great*

come intensely divisive issues for most Kansans points to the conclusion that the state's religious makeup was likely more diverse than previous historiography indicates. Kansans engaged in serious, and at times, intense debates about the Scopes trial, but the case neither rallied the state's fundamentalists to aggressive political activism nor provoked the levels of hostility toward Bryan (and the fundamentalists he represented) as was demonstrated by much of the national news media.

Although the four Kansas newspapers primarily supported modernist approaches to reconciling science and religion, they cultivated debate between both sides by informing readers of local ministers' sermon topics, announcing the latest book titles dealing with science and religion, and publishing letters written by both modernists and fundamentalists. It is important to note that the Kansas newspapers did not send reporters to the trial. They judged the case from a distance, and that distance is evident in their editorials, which were less hostile

Depression to the Cold War (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 88–89; Leo P. Ribuffo, "Gerald B. Winrod: From Fundamentalist Preacher to 'Jayhawk Hitler,'" in *John Brown to Bob Dole: Movers and Shakers in Kansas History*, ed. Virgil W. Dean (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 228–240; James C. Juhnke, "Gerald B. Winrod and the Kansas Mennonites," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 43 (Fall 1969): 293–298; Entz, "Religion in Kansas," 141; William Allen White, *Forty Years on Main Street*, comp. Russell H. Fitzgibbon (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1937), 360.

to Bryan and the fundamentalists than were those in the national newspapers. Although they published editorial cartoons and lighthearted poems that mocked the trial, and at times were severely critical of Bryan, their treatments of the Dayton case showed keen interest in more substantive matters. By this means, they attempted to diffuse rather than to deepen the divide between the fundamentalists and the modernists. The trial brought significant political and religious concerns to the forefront of the public forum that were as important to Kansans as they were to other Americans, and the *Beacon*, *Capital*, *Eagle*, and *Gazette* ensured that Kansans understood the theological and cultural breadth of the trial's implications.

Indeed, the public legacies of the Scopes trial and the fundamentalist-modernist controversy still polarize Christian fundamentalists from their modernist foes. The debate rages on in the communities, churches, and schools of America's heartland. The 1925 newspapers presciently concluded that the battle would not be a "fight to the death" as Bryan predicted. More than eighty years later, new Bryans and Darrows "continue to make monkey faces at each other."⁴⁷ But for one fleeting moment among the Kansas newspapers, the dispute over evolution was more than just monkey business. [KH]

47. "The Bible Will Be Stronger," *Wichita Beacon*, July 12, 1925; "The Scopes Verdict," *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 22, 1925.