

H. L. Mencken

THE SCOPES TRIAL

Be it enacted—that it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, normals, and all other public schools in the state, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the state, to teach the 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.

This statute was passed by the legislature of the state of Tennessee on March 21, 1925. It was a climax in a struggle that had split American Protestants into two warring camps. On the one side were the fundamentalists—those who believed in the letter of the Bible and who refused to accept any teaching that conflicted with it. On the other side were the modernists (or liberals), who, like the medieval scholastics, tried to reconcile faith with reason. The Tennessee legislature, dominated by fundamentalists, decided to deliver a powerful blow to the body of the modernists.

A few strong-minded liberals in the small town of Dayton, Tennessee, decided to put the law to a test. They persuaded John Thomas Scopes, a teacher of biology at the local high school, to allow himself to be caught red-handed in the act of teaching evolution to his pupils. Thus began a drama that was soon ballyhooed by an irreverent press into a great national circus occupying the attention of the entire world through the summer days of 1925. William Jennings Bryan, the Great Commoner—famous orator, leader of the free-silver forces, thrice-defeated candidate for President of the United States, former Secretary of State, and zealous, indefatigable champion of the Bible—volunteered his services to the prosecution. Clarence

Darrow, agnostic and liberal—a pleader of unpopular causes, the criminal lawyer who only recently had saved Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold, wealthy young Chicago thrill slayers, from execution—accepted the appeal of the Civil Liberties Union to become chief counsel for Scopes. It was a natural—the battle of the century between Bryan, the unreconstructed fundamentalist, and Darrow, the hard-bitten friend of the underdog.

The hot spotlight of national publicity glared down on the sleepy little town of Dayton as the battle of the giants got under way. Gaunt Gothic Americans flocked to the scene from the surrounding mountains, eager to learn about this high-falutin' talk of monkeys and even more determined to defend their way of life against the outlanders. It was a kind of Tennessee Roman holiday, with all the world eavesdropping. Hot-dog and lemonade stands were set up in the streets. Book hawkers offered tracts on evolution at cut rates. Revivalists had a field day, posting such signs as this:

DO YOU WANT TO BE A SWEET ANGEL?
FORTY DAYS OF PRAYER.
ITEMIZE YOUR SINS.
COME CLEAN!

Bryan strode into Dayton as the shining knight in armor of the fundamentalists. Among the mass of gratuitous advice was this hint from Billy Sunday, the revivalist: "If man evolved from a monkey, why are there so many monkeys left? Why didn't they all evolve into humans?" Aimee Semple McPherson, the highly publicized evangelist of the gaudy Four-Square Gospel shrine in California, telegraphed "the lionhearted champion of the Bible":

CONSTANT PRAYER DURING WEEK ALL NIGHT PRAYER SATURDAY NIGHT STOP
SUNDAY AFTERNOON BIBLE PARADE MASS MEETING AND TRIAL WITH HANGING
AND BURIAL OF MONKEY TEACHERS TENNESSEE CAN COUNT ON US

An even more encouraging wire came from Smackover, Arkansas:

MY DEAR BROTHER BRYAN FIGHT THEM EVOLUTIONS UNTIL HELL FREEZES
OVER AND GIVE THEM A ROUND OF THE ICE GOD BLESS YOU IN YOUR TIME OF
TRIALS AND GIVE YOU WISDOM AND GRACE TO DO WHAT DEAR JESUS WILL
SMILE UPON

YOUR UNACQUAINTED BROTHER
HAPPY GORDON MEAD

Into the supercharged atmosphere of Dayton came a mercurial newspaperman from Baltimore, who found a happy hunting ground for his peculiar talents. From the end of World War I to the brisk days of the New Deal, Henry Louis Mencken turned the blasts of his highly personal

rhetoric on what he felt to be the stuffy spiritual, moral, and cultural institutions of the republic. Thoroughly enjoying the bizarre aspects of the American scene, he lashed out in all directions in a style composed of unequal parts of Boccaccio, Erasmus, Rabelais, and Mencken. He was fascinated by the stupidity of the common man and by the prevalence of mental vacuity in what he was fond of calling the "Bible Belt" or "Cow States." "The time-serving demagogues in public office," comments *Newsweek*, "the bigots in the pulpits, the editorial puritans, the pedagogical practitioners of timidity, gentility, and sanctimony in our institutions of learning, the bluenoses who imposed Prohibition upon the country, the prudes and Philistines and peasants who set themselves in vulgar opposition to culture—these felt the Mencken whip-lash." A whole generation of college students swore by or at the Wagnerian rhythm of Mencken's prose.

This was the reporter sent by the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, along with the *Sunpapers'* Essary, Kent, Hyde, and Duffy, to cover the Scopes trial in Tennessee. Nothing could have made Mencken happier. He took the opportunity to investigate the Holy Roller cult in the mountains behind Dayton, where the yearning mountaineers' souls needed nightly reconversion.

DEEP IN "THE COCA-COLA BELT"

The Sun, Baltimore, July 13, 1925
Dayton, Tennessee, July 13—There is a Unitarian clergyman here from New York, trying desperately to horn into the trial and execution of the infidel Scopes. He will fail. If Darrow ventured to put him on the stand the whole audience, led by the jury, would leap out of the courthouse windows and take to the hills. Darrow himself, indeed, is as much as they can bear. The whisper that he is an atheist has been stilled by the bucolic make-up and by the public report that he has the gift of prophecy and can reconcile Genesis and evolution. Even so, there is ample space about him when he navigates the streets. The other day a newspaperwoman was warned by her landlady to keep out of the courtroom when he was on his legs. All the local sorcerers predict that a bolt from heaven will fetch him in the end. The night he arrived there was a violent storm, the town water turned brown, and horned cattle in the lowlands were afloat for hours. A woman back in the mountains gave birth to a child with hair four inches long, curiously bobbed in scallops.

The Book of Revelation has all the authority, in these theological uplands, of military orders in time of war. The people turn to it for

light upon all their problems, spiritual and secular. If a text were found in it denouncing the antievolution law, then the antievolution law would become infamous overnight. But so far the exegetes who roar and snuffle in the town have found no such text. Instead they have found only blazing ratifications and reinforcements of Genesis. Darwin is the devil with seven tails and nine horns. Scopes, though he is disguised by flannel pantaloons and a Beta Theta Pi haircut, is the harlot of Babylon. Darrow is Beelzebub in person, and Malone is the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm.

I have hitherto hinted an Episcopalian down here in the Coca-Cola belt is regarded as an atheist. It sounds like one of the lies that journalists tell, but it is really an understatement of the facts. Even a Methodist, by Rhea County standards, is one a bit debauched by pride of intellect. It is the four Methodists on the jury who are expected to hold out for giving Scopes Christian burial after he is hanged. They all made it plain, when they were examined, that they were freethinking and independent men, and not to be run amuck by the superstitions of the lowly. One actually confessed that he seldom read the Bible, though he hastened to add that he was familiar with its principles. The fellow had on a boiled shirt and a polka-dot necktie. He sits somewhat apart. When Darrow withers to a cinder under the celestial blowpipe, this dubious Wesleyan, too, will lose a few hairs.

Even the Baptists no longer brew a medicine that is strong enough for the mountaineers. The sacrament of baptism by total immersion is over too quickly for them, and what follows offers nothing that they can get their teeth into. What they have is a continuous experience of the divine power, an endless series of evidence that the true believer is a marked man, ever under the eye of God. It is not enough to go to a revival once a year or twice a year; there must be a revival every night. And it is not enough to accept the truth as a mere statement of indisputable and awful fact; it must be embraced ecstatically and orgasmically, to the accompaniment of loud shouts, dreadful heavings and gurglings, and dancing with arms and legs.

This craving is satisfied brilliantly by the gaudy practices of the Holy Rollers, and so the mountaineers are gradually gravitating toward the Holy Roller communion, or, as they prefer to call it, the Church of God. Gradually, perhaps, is not the word. They are actually going in by whole villages and townships. At the last count of noses there were 20,000 Holy Rollers in these hills. The next census, I have no doubt,

will show many more. The cities of the lowlands, of course, still resist, and so do most of the county towns, including even Dayton, but once one steps off the state roads the howl of holiness is heard in the woods, and the yokels carry on an almost continuous orgy.

A foreigner in store clothes going out from Dayton must approach the sacred grove somewhat discreetly. It is not that the Holy Rollers, discovering him, would harm him; it is simply that they would shut down their boiling of the devil and flee into the forests. We left Dayton an hour after nightfall and parked our car in a wood a mile or so beyond the little hill village of Morgantown. Far off in a glade a flickering light was visible and out of the silence came a faint rumble of exhortation. We could scarcely distinguish the figure of the preacher; it was like looking down the tube of a dark field microscope. We got out of the car and sneaked along the edge of a mountain cornfield.

Presently we were near enough to see what was going on. From the great limb of a mighty oak hung a couple of crude torches of the sort that car inspectors thrust under Pullman cars when a train pulls in at night. In their light was a preacher, and for a while we could see no one else. He was an immensely tall and thin mountaineer in blue jeans, his collarless shirt open at the neck and his hair a tousled mop. As he preached he paced up and down under the smoking flambeaux and at each turn he thrust his arms into the air and yelled, "Glory to God!" We crept nearer in the shadow of the cornfield and began to hear more of his discourse. He was preaching on the day of judgment. The high kings of the earth, he roared, would all fall down and die; only the sanctified would stand up to receive the Lord God of Hosts. One of these kings he mentioned by name—the king of what he called Greece-y. The King of Greece-y, he said, was doomed to hell.

We went forward a few more yards and began to see the audience. It was seated on benches ranged round the preacher in a circle. Behind him sat a row of elders, men and women. In front were the younger folk. We kept on cautiously, and individuals rose out of the ghostly gloom. A young mother sat suckling her baby, rocking as the preacher paced up and down. Two scared little girls hugged each other, their pigtailed down their backs. An immensely huge mountain woman, in a gingham dress cut in one piece, rolled on her heels at every "Glory to God." On one side, but half visible, was what appeared to be a bed. We found out afterward that two babies were asleep upon it.

The preacher stopped at last and there arose out of the darkness a

woman with her hair pulled back into a little tight knot. She began so quietly that we couldn't hear what she said, but soon her voice rose resonantly and we could follow her. She was denouncing the reading of books. Some wandering book agent, it appeared, had come to her cabin and tried to sell her a specimen of his wares. She refused to touch it. Why, indeed, read a book? If what was in it was true, then everything in it was already in the Bible. If it was false, then reading it would imperil the soul. Her syllogism complete, she sat down.

There followed a hymn, led by a somewhat fat brother wearing silver-rimmed country spectacles. It droned on for a half a dozen stanzas, and then the first speaker resumed the floor. He argued that the gift of tongues was real and that education was a snare. Once his children could read the Bible, he said, they had enough. Beyond lay only infidelity and damnation. Sin stalked the cities. Dayton itself was a Sodom. Even Morgantown had begun to forget God. He sat down, and the female aurochs in gingham got up.

She began quietly, but was soon leaping and roaring, and it was hard to follow her. Under cover of the turmoil we sneaked a bit closer. A couple of other discourses followed, and there were two or three hymns. Suddenly a change of mood began to make itself felt. The last hymn ran longer than the others and dropped gradually into a monotonous, unintelligible chant. The leader beat time with his book. The faithful broke out with exultations. When the singing ended there was a brief palaver that we could not hear and two of the men moved a bench into the circle of light directly under the flambeaux. Then a half-grown girl emerged from the darkness and threw herself upon it. We noticed with astonishment that she had bobbed hair. "This sister," said the leader, "has asked for prayers." We moved a bit closer. We could now see faces plainly and hear every word.

What followed quickly reached such heights of barbaric grotesquerie that it was hard to believe it real. At a signal all the faithful crowded up to the bench and began to pray—not in unison, but each for himself. At another they all fell on their knees, their arms over the penitent. The leader knelt, facing us, his head alternately thrown back dramatically or buried in his hands. Words spouted from his lips like bullets from a machine gun—appeals to God to pull the penitent back out of hell, defiance of the powers and principalities of the air, a vast impassioned jargon of apocalyptic text. Suddenly he rose to his feet, threw back his head, and began to speak in tongues—blub-blub-blub, gurgling-

gurglegurgle. His voice rose to a higher register. The climax was a shrill, inarticulate squawk, like that of a man throttled. He fell headlong across the pyramid of supplicants.

A comic scene? Somehow, no. The poor half-wits were too horribly in earnest. It was like peeping through a knothole at the writhings of a people in pain. From the squirming and jabbering mass a young woman gradually detached herself—a woman not uncomely, with a pathetic homemade cap on her head. Her head jerked back, the veins of her neck swelled, and her fists went to her throat as if she were fighting for breath. She bent backward until she was like a half of a hoop. Then she suddenly snapped forward. We caught a flash of the whites of her eyes. Presently her whole body began to be convulsed—great convulsions that began at the shoulders and ended at the hips. She would leap to her feet, thrust her arms in air, and then hurl herself upon the heap. Her praying flattened out into a mere delirious caterwauling, like that of a tomcat on a petting party.

I describe the thing as a strict behaviorist. The lady's subjective sensations I leave to infidel pathologists. Whatever they were they were obviously contagious, for soon another damsel joined her, and then another and then a fourth. The last one had an extraordinarily bad attack. She began with mild enough jerks of the head, but in a moment she was bounding all over the place, exactly like a chicken with its head cut off. Every time her head came up a stream of yells and barking would issue out of it. Once she collided with a dark, undersized brother, hitherto silent and stolid. Contact with her set him off as if he had been kicked by a mule. He leaped into the air, threw back his head, and began to gargle as if with a mouthful of BB shot. Then he loosened one tremendous stentorian sentence in the tongues and collapsed.

By this time the performers were quite oblivious to the profane universe. We left our hiding and came up to the little circle of light. We slipped into the vacant seats on one of the rickety benches. The heap of mourners was directly before us. They bounced into us as they cavorted. The smell that they radiated, sweating there in that obscene heap, half suffocated us. Not all of them, of course, did the thing in the grand manner. Some merely moaned and rolled their eyes. The female ox in gingham flung her great hulk on the ground and jabbered an unintelligible prayer. One of the men, in the intervals between fits, put on his spectacles and read his Bible.

Beside me on the bench sat the young mother and her baby. She suckled it through the whole orgy, obviously fascinated by what was going on, but never venturing to take any hand in it. On the bed just outside the light two other babies slept peacefully. In the shadows, suddenly appearing and as suddenly going away, were vague figures, whether of believers or of scoffers I do not know. They seemed to come and go in couples. Now and then a couple at the ringside would step back and then vanish into the black night. After a while some came back. There was whispering outside the circle of vision. A couple of Fords lurched up in the wood road, cutting holes in the darkness with their lights. Once someone out of sight loosed a bray of laughter.

All this went on for an hour or so. The original penitent, by this time, was buried three deep beneath the heap. One caught a glimpse, now and then, of her yellow bobbed hair, but then she would vanish again. How she breathed down there I don't know; it was hard enough ten feet away, with a strong five-cent cigar to help. When the praying brothers would rise up for a bout with the tongues their faces were streaming with perspiration. The fat harriidan in gingham sweated like a long-shoreman. Her hair got loose and fell down over her face. She fanned herself with her skirt. A powerful mortal she was, equal in her day to obstetrics and a week's washing on the same morning, but this was worse than a week's washing. Finally, she fell in a heap, breathing in great, convulsive gasps.

We tired of it after a while and groped our way back to our automobile. When we got to Dayton, after eleven o'clock—an immensely late hour for these parts—the whole town was still gathered on the courthouse lawn, hanging upon the disputes of theologians. The Bible champion of the world had a crowd. The Seventh Day Adventist missionaries had a crowd. A volunteer from faraway Portland, Oregon, made up exactly like Andy Gump, had another and larger crowd. Dayton was enjoying itself. All the usual rules were suspended and the curfew bell was locked up. The prophet Bryan, exhausted by his day's work for Revelations, was snoring in his bed up the road, but enough volunteers were still on watch to keep the battlements manned.

Such is human existence among the fundamentalists, where children are brought up on Genesis and sin is unknown. If I have made the tale too long, then blame the spirit of garrulity that is in the local air. Even newspaper reporters, down here, get some echo of the call. Divine inspiration is as common as the hookworm. I have done my best to show

you what the great heritage of mankind comes to in regions where the Bible is the beginning and end of wisdom, and the mountbank Bryan, parading the streets in his seersucker coat, is pointed out to sucklings as the greatest man since Abraham.

Three days later William O. McGeehan, the sports writer, who covered the Scopes trial for the *New York Herald Tribune*, reported that in the midst of his booming peroration by Dudley Field Malone, "Mr. H. L. Mencken fell off his chair with a crash that startled the courtroom."

"It is a judgment," said one of the sisters. "The walls are falling in, and Mr. Mencken is the first to go, and he won't go to glory, either."

The great scene of the trial came on the seventh day, when Bryan and Darrow locked horns in a savage encounter under extraordinary circumstances. Immediately preceding the cross-examination, Darrow insisted that a sign ten feet long with huge letters read YOUR BIBLE! be removed from in front of the jury. A prosecution attorney objected, saying "It is time for us to tear up all the Bibles, throw them into the fire, and let the country go to hell." A court officer rapped for order: "People, this is no circus. There are no monkeys up here. This is a lawsuit. Let us have order." Bryan made an unctuous little speech: "If having that up there during the trial makes our brother to offend, I would take it down during the trial."

The crowd was so great in the afternoon that Judge Raulston had removed the court to the lawn. There under the maple trees hundreds of spectators formed fundamentalist and modernist cheering sections. The weather was oppressively hot and humid. All the participants stripped to their shirt sleeves—Bryan in a pongee shirt, Darrow with lavender suspenders, and Judge Raulston with judicial galluses.

Bryan started out calmly and confidently, but he was soon stung to anger by the relentless, barbed questioning of Darrow. Finally, in a burst of fury he and Darrow both came to their feet and shook fists at one another. Although publicly humiliated, Bryan refused to acknowledge defeat.

Here is *The New York Times'* report of the main event—the intellectual battle of the century between William Jennings Bryan, the plumed knight of the fundamentalists, and Clarence Darrow, the agnostic with lavender galluses.

MONKEY BUSINESS IN TENNESSEE

The New York Times, July 21, 1925
At last it has happened. After days of ineffective argument and legal

quibbling, with speeches that merely skirted the edges of the matter which everyone wanted discussed in this Scopes antievolution trial, William Jennings Bryan, fundamentalist, and Clarence Darrow, agnostic and pleader of unpopular causes, locked horns today under the most remarkable circumstances ever known to American court procedure.

It was on the courthouse lawn, where Judge Raulston had moved so that more persons could hear, with the Tennessee crowds whooping for their angry champion, who shook his fist in the quizzical, satiric face of Mr. Darrow, that Mr. Bryan was put on the stand by the defense to prove that the Bible need not be taken literally.

With an airplane whizzing overhead, Mr. Darrow asked Mr. Bryan about Jonah and the whale, Joshua and the sun, where Cain got his wife, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel, until the youthful Attorney General Stewart, desperately trying to bring the performance within legal bounds, asked, "What is the meaning of all this harangue?"

"To show up fundamentalism," shouted Mr. Darrow, lifting his voice in one of the few moments of anger he showed, "to prevent bigots and ignoramus from controlling the educational system of the United States."

Mr. Bryan sprang to his feet, his face purple, and shook his fist in the lowering, gnarled face of Mr. Darrow, while he cried:

"To protect the word of God from the greatest atheist and agnostic in the United States."

A roar of applause broke from the crowd under the trees and Mr. Darrow, looking down at them, called out sarcastically:

"Why don't you folks cheer?"

At the end of a day so crowded with unexpected happenings all Dayton tonight is holding its head, overcome by the drama of the unprecedented trial.

Mr. Darrow was cited in contempt as soon as court opened this morning for his defiance of the judge on Friday, and ordered to show cause why he should not be punished.

In the afternoon he apologized to Judge Raulston, who in a talk that was almost a prayer, his voice shaken with emotion, brought Mr. Darrow to the "mourner's bench," forgave him, and told him to go back home and learn in his heart the words of the man who said, "Come unto Me and receive eternal life."

All morning the crowds packed into the courtroom to hear what everybody assumed would be the final argument of the case, until in

the afternoon the building was jammed. Judge Raulston did not wish to shut anybody out, and in order that all might hear he moved to a platform built against the wall of the courthouse, under the maple trees, where a week ago Mr. Bryan delivered a sermon. On the benches in front nearly everyone could get a seat, and hundreds stood, forming themselves into opposing modernist and fundamentalist cheering sections, although liberals present were in a small minority.

It was a striking scene. Judge Raulston sat at a little table in the center, with the state attorneys at his left and the defense at his right, while about them were a few newspapermen and fortunate persons who managed to squeeze by the guard. In front was a sea of upturned faces, waiting for what they presumed would be an ordinary argument, faces which became eager when Mr. Darrow announced that he would call Mr. Bryan as a witness for the defense.

And then for nearly two hours, while those below broke into laughter or applause or cried out encouragement to Mr. Bryan, Mr. Darrow goaded his opponent. In a blue shirt and suspenders he leaned against the edge of his table, Bible in hand, and asked Mr. Bryan if he really believed that the serpent had always crawled on its belly because it tempted Eve, and if he believed that Eve was made from Adam's rib.

Mr. Bryan started off as sweetly as a cooing dove. He wanted to confound this agnostic Darrow, he told the court; he wanted to testify to his faith in the revealed word of God and show that scientists did not know what they were talking about.

He overruled the objection of Attorney General "Tom" Stewart, who saw his lawsuit vanishing in the battle smoke of debate, but as Mr. Darrow prodded him with all the power of his logical mind, the admissions wrung from Mr. Bryan roused him to anger, and in a burst of fury he denounced Mr. Darrow as having only the purpose of casting slurs on the Bible.

"I have merely the purpose of showing up your fool ideas that no intelligent Christian believes in," shouted Mr. Darrow, stung to anger, and the judge, in the midst of confusion as both antagonists rose to their feet and shook their fists at each other, adjourned the court.

Mr. Darrow drew from Bryan that he knew little of comparative religion, very little of geology, nothing of physiology, and hardly anything that would interest a man seeking light on the vast questions of evolution and religion on which he has written for years. He took refuge again and again in his faith in the written word of the Bible. If what sci-

ence he had learned did not agree with that he did not believe it and did not want to know.

"I have all the information I need to live by and die by," he declared vehemently.

But his insistence upon the literal acceptance of the Bible was weakened somewhat, for he admitted when questioned about Joshua making the sun stand still that it was one of those things that "anybody can put the sun stand still that it was one of those things that 'anybody can put his own construction upon,'" and explained that although there was no doubt that the earth moved around the sun the Bible was "inspired by the Almighty, and He may have used language that could be understood at that time."

The problem of what was meant by "days" in the Genesis account of creation was also one on which Mr. Bryan said things pleasing to Mr. Darrow, for he admitted that "days" probably meant "periods," and that creation might have lasted for millions of years.

All those under the trees were completely absorbed in the conflict between the two men, each representing a point of view as to religion so diametrically opposed. It was as if all the voices of these two great divisions of religious thought, rationalism and faith, were debating in the persons of Mr. Darrow and Mr. Bryan. It was a burning vital issue to those people of Rhea County who were present, and to the little group of liberals who clustered in front.

Jonah and the whale should be taken literally, said Mr. Bryan, for he believed "in a God who can make a whale and can make a man, and make both do what He pleases."

"You don't know whether it was the ordinary mine-run of fish, or made for that purpose?" asked Mr. Darrow with quiet sarcasm.

"You may guess," replied Mr. Bryan, calmly, fanning himself with a palm-leaf fan, "an evolutionist guess."

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

"The Bible doesn't say, so I'm not prepared to say," replied Mr. Bryan, and that was his attitude on nearly every question raised. It was a miracle, and one miracle was just as easy to believe as another, said Mr. Bryan.

"A miracle is a thing performed beyond what man performs," he said. "When you get beyond what man can do, you get within the realm of miracles, and it is just as easy to believe in the miracle of Jonah as any other miracle in the Bible."

The attorneys for the state were chuckling over the way Mr. Bryan was acquitting himself by this time, but they did not look so pleased as the afternoon wore on.

Joshua and the sun was another miracle that Mr. Darrow wanted to know about. How did it happen that the sun stood still, when the earth moves around the sun?

It was the language of the day, Mr. Bryan said, and if anything stopped it must have been the earth.

"Now, Mr. Bryan, have you ever pondered what would have happened to the earth if it had stood still?"

"No," replied Mr. Bryan. "The God I believe in could have taken care of that, Mr. Darrow."

"Don't you know it would have been converted into a molten mass of matter?"

"You testify to that when you get on the stand," retorted Mr. Bryan. "I will give you a chance," he said, for he had announced that he would call all the defense counsel if they called him, much to the delight of everyone present.

Then they got onto the flood, and attempted to fix the date of it by the Bible, and against the opposition of Mr. Stewart, Mr. Bryan told the court to let Mr. Darrow have all the latitude he wanted.

"I am going to have some latitude when he gets through," he said grimly.

"You can have latitude and longitude," said Mr. Darrow.

"These gentlemen have not had much chance," said Mr. Bryan, rising to his feet from the witness chair. "They did not come here to try this case. They came here to try revealed religion. I am here to defend it, and they can ask me any questions they please."

The applause from the yard brought a snort of disgust from Mr. Darrow, and in reproach for what Mr. Bryan called his insults, he raised his fist and shouted at him:

"You insult every man of science and learning in the world because he does not believe in your fool religion."

Judge Raulston calmed them both, and Mr. Stewart again stepped forward to protest.

"I have a public duty to perform under my oath," said the earnest young attorney general, who, with his case, had been crowded into the background. "I ask the court to stop it."

"How long ago was the flood, Mr. Bryan?" asked Mr. Darrow, and

the debate was on again. They figured it up with the help of Bishop Usher's chronology, as being 2348 B.C. Mr. Bryan thought the fish might have lived, but everything else was destroyed.

"Don't you know there are any number of civilizations that are traced back to more than five thousand years?" asked Darrow.

"I know we have people who trace things back according to the number of ciphers they have," replied Bryan; "but I am not satisfied they are accurate. I am satisfied by no evidence that I have found, that would justify me in accepting the opinions of these men against what I believe to be the inspired word of God."

There was a civilization before the flood, said Mr. Bryan, but when he was asked if he knew a scientific man in the world who believed that all the animals and all the races now inhabiting the world had come here since the flood, he took refuge in saying that he was more interested in what Christians were doing now than in what happened in the past.

"You have never had any interest in the age of the various races and people and civilizations and animals that exist upon the earth today, is that right?" asked Mr. Darrow.

"I have never felt a great deal of interest in the effort that has been made to dispute the Bible by the speculation of men, or the investigations of men," replied Mr. Bryan.

The mild manner in which the "evangelical leader of the prosecution," as Mr. Malone has called him, seated himself in his chair, was vanishing rapidly. His face flushed under Mr. Darrow's searching words, and he writhed in an effort to keep himself from making heated replies. His eyes glared at his lounging opponent, who stood opposite him, glowering under his bulging brow, speculatively tapping his arm with his spectacles. No greater contrast in men could be imagined. The traps of logic fell from Mr. Darrow's lips as innocently as the words of a child, and so long as Mr. Bryan could parry them he smiled back, but when one stumped him he took refuge in his faith and either refused to answer directly or said in effect:

"The Bible states it; it must be so."

"Have you ever investigated to find out how long man has been on the earth?" asked Darrow.

"I have never found it necessary," said Mr. Bryan.

Mr. Bryan's complete lack of interest in many of the things closely connected with such religious questions as he has been supporting for

many years was strikingly shown again and again by Mr. Darrow. He had never made a study of the ancient civilizations of China, or Egypt, he did not know that they couldn't go back beyond the time of creation as given in the Bible.

Mr. Bryan was of the opinion that he had heard of records of archeologists which describe the flood, but he did not know that there were many old religions with traditions of the flood. The origins of religion had not interested him much, either.

"The Christian religion has satisfied me," he said, "and I have never felt it necessary to look up some competitive religions."

The word competitive interested Mr. Darrow, and Bryan finally qualified it by saying he meant "religious unbelievers" in the Christian religion. The religions of Confucius and Buddha he did not regard as competitive, because he thought them inferior, and he insisted on telling Mr. Darrow what he thought of both. He did not know, however, how old the religions of Confucius, Buddha, or Zoroaster were.

"I think it much more important to know the differences between them than to know their age."

Mr. Darrow asked him if he knew how many men were on earth at various times, and when told he was the first man Mr. Bryan had ever met who was interested in it, he asked:

"Mr. Bryan, am I the first man you ever heard of who has been interested in the age of human societies and primitive man?"

He asked Mr. Bryan if he did not know there were thousands of books in the libraries on the subjects he had been asking about, and Mr. Bryan said he did not, but would take his word for it. He said he hadn't read much on primitive man, and when Mr. Darrow asked him if he had ever in his life tried to find out about the civilizations of the earth, how long they had existed, he replied:

"No, sir, I have been so well satisfied with the Christian religion that I have spent no time trying to find arguments against it."

"You don't care how old the earth is, how old man is, and how long the animals have been here?"

"I am not so much interested in that," said Mr. Bryan.

And then he drew from Mr. Bryan the admission that he had never studied anything on the subject he had written about.

"You have never made an investigation to find out?" he was asked. "No, sir, I have never," Mr. Bryan answered.

Mr. Bryan said that Buddhism was a religion of agnosticism, because

he had seen in Rangoon that the Buddhists were to send a delegation to the agnostics' congress to be held in Rome.

After more colloquy about the Tower of Babel and some more objections from Mr. Stewart, General Ben McKenzie said the defense would no more file Colonel Bryan's testimony as part of the record for the Appellate Court than they would file a rattlesnake.

Mr. Darrow, Dudley Field Malone, and Arthur Garfield Hays burst

out as one man:

"We will file it, we will file it."

"File it from Dan to Beersheba," Mr. Bryan said in his deep rumble.

On the morning of July 21, Judge Raulston mercifully put an end to the unequal struggle. It was clear that Bryan, now old and flabby, could not possibly win a clear-cut victory over the wily Darrow. Unable to get any scientific evidence before the jury, Scopes' lawyers saw that their only hope lay in taking the fight up to the Tennessee Supreme Court. Scopes was quickly found guilty and fined one hundred dollars, which the Baltimore *Sunpapers* paid.

Bryan was closer to death than he had realized. During the trial, H. L. Mencken had reported that "there was a vague, unpleasant manginess about Bryan's appearance . . . the hair was gone behind his ears, in the obscene manner of the late Samuel Gompers." It was a shrewd observation. The Great Commoner died a week after the trial.

A brilliant post-mortem story on Bryan was sent in to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* by Paul Y. Anderson, which had this lead:

"In a rambling old white house on the outskirts of Dayton, where the maples rustle placidly and the fragrance of the harvest lingers on the air, rests today the majestic clay which was William Jennings Bryan.

"Little groups of men lie in the grass under the maples and converse in subdued tones. At intervals people tiptoe into the house, stay a minute and emerge. A cricket sings among the petunias in the side yard. A rocking chair creaks momentarily on the long front porch."

In Dayton, Ohio, a fiery cross was burned "in memory of William Jennings Bryan, the greatest Klansman of our time." It was an undeserved slur.

—NOTES BY LOUIS SNYDER AND
RICHARD MORRIS