

THE SCOPES TRIAL:  
A REFLECTION

Barry Hankins  
Baylor University, Waco, TX

Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould (1941–2002)—once America’s leading promoter and popularizer of evolution—wrote in 1983: “John Scopes was persecuted, Darrow rose to Scopes’s defense and smite the antediluvian Bryan, and the antievolution movement then dwindled or ground to at least a temporary halt. All three parts of this story are false.”<sup>1</sup> Gould was describing the 1960 film, *Inherit the Wind*, not the Scopes trial itself. That film did more than anything to forge the popular view of the trial in the American imagination. Understood this way, Scopes became America’s version of the Galileo story. This is a fitting comparison, given that Galileo’s trial, like Scopes’s, is routinely construed as a clear example of the warfare model for understanding the relationship between religion and science. Put another way, the war between religion and science was bookended by Galileo in the seventeenth century and Scopes in the twentieth. After Scopes, as this interpretation goes, religion was relegated to the private sphere and no longer had a place in scientific discussions. Both Galileo and Scopes became heroes of science standing against the hostile forces of religion. In some quarters to this day, the Scopes trial stands as a symbol of the warfare between science and religion. But there are better ways to see it.

In this reflection essay, I hope to probe four questions: (1) How has the Scopes trial shaped the warfare model for understanding the relationship between religion and science? (2) How has the Scopes trial shaped our understanding of fundamentalism? (3) How has the Scopes trial shaped the historiography of fundamen-

1. Gould, *Hen’s Teeth and Horse’s Toes*, 270.

talism and evangelicalism? and (4) How has the Scopes perception or definition of fundamentalism and evangelicalism been challenged and changed in the twenty-first century, especially in the Trump era? My argument is that the Scopes trial has sometimes been a symbol, often of things that are not actually true. And, at the same time, the trial has caused some other things that are true at the level of perception.

With regard to the warfare model for understanding religion and science, our first question, the Scopes trial symbolizes something that is powerful but historically inadequate to the point of being almost wholly false. The warfare model, as we now know, did not start with Galileo, and it was not started by religious figures. Rather, it was invented in the late nineteenth century by Andrew Dickson White and John William Draper, two secular scholars who hoped to push religion out of the business of science. White published an essay in 1869 titled, “The Battlefields of Science.” By 1896, the essay had evolved into a two-volume work called *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, and the warfare model was born. White’s work joined John William Draper’s book, *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*, first published in 1874. In 1986, three years after Gould’s famous quote about *Inherit the Wind*, University of Wisconsin historians of science David Lindberg and Ronald Numbers dismantled the warfare model promoted by White and Draper. “Although it is not difficult to find instances of conflict and controversy in the annals of Christianity and science,” they wrote in a seminal *Church History* article, “recent scholarship has shown the warfare metaphor to be neither useful nor tenable in describing the relationship between science and religion.”<sup>2</sup>

Lindberg and Numbers highlighted how scientific debates from Galileo’s time onward did not break down with religious figures on one side and scientists on the other. Rather, there were religious figures and scientists on both sides of nearly all the important issues, including evolution. The evangelical Sunday School

2. Lindberg and Numbers, “Beyond War and Peace,” 340. Along with their own work, the recent scholarship they cite is Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*.

teacher and Harvard botanist Asa Gray, for example, did as much as anyone to insist that Darwin's views get a fair hearing in the American academy, arguing that religion and science were not mutually exclusive. Meanwhile, the much more liberal and secular Louis Agassiz, also at Harvard, led the scientific resistance to Darwinism, believing in a separate creation for each race of humans, a view that was laden with racism and white supremacy.

Conservative Christian thinkers were likewise divided between those who rejected Darwinism outright and those who believed a Christian view of creation could be harmonized with evolution. Princeton Seminary's Charles Hodge famously wrote an 1874 essay titled *What is Darwinism?* His answer was that Darwinism was atheism, but he made clear that it was Darwin's view of natural selection that crowded out any chance that God might have engineered the evolutionary process, and he held open the possibility of there being a Christian view of evolution.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Hodge insisted, as had Galileo and St. Augustine long before, that while science should be done in light of scripture, scripture should be read in light of science.

Benjamin B. Warfield, who held the Charles Hodge Chair at Princeton from 1887 to 1921, was even more open to a Christian view of evolution, in spite of his firm defense of biblical inerrancy. "The upshot of the whole matter," he wrote in his lecture notes, "is that there is no necessary antagonism of Christianity to evolution, provided that we do not hold to too extreme a form of evolution. . . . But if we condition the theory by allowing the constant oversight of God in the whole process . . . we may hold to the modified theory of evolution and be Christians in the ordinary orthodox sense."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Warfield believed that John Calvin, the sixteenth-century theologian who essentially systematized the type of Christianity Hodge and Warfield believed and taught, also held an essentially evolutionary view of creation. "Calvin's doctrine of creation is," he wrote, "if we have understood it aright, for all except the souls of men, an evolutionary one."<sup>5</sup> Evangelicals

3. Hodge, *What is Darwinism?*

4. Warfield, *Evolution, Scripture, and Science*, 130–31.

5. Warfield, *Evolution, Scripture, and Science*, 308.

like Hodge and Warfield were numerous enough that British historian David Livingstone was able to write an entire 1987 book titled, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*.<sup>6</sup>

The belief that antievolution was an essential doctrine of evangelical Protestantism had been around since Darwin's *Origin of Species*, to be sure. But antievolution was a contested issue among conservative Protestants, as several articles in *The Fundamentals* showed. These pamphlets were published between 1910 and 1915 and have been called the *tour de force* of early fundamentalist theology. They contained two articles explicitly dealing with evolution. One opposed the theory, while another, written by theologian James Orr, favored a Christian view of evolution like Warfield's.<sup>7</sup> Other articles exhibited at least implicit acceptance of some form of theistic evolution. Scopes trial historian Edward Larson points out that Orr's favorable view of evolution was inherent in all four of the articles he wrote for the series. He had long been on record as a theistic evolutionist. "Assume God—as many devout evolutionists do—to be immanent in the evolution process, and His intelligence and purpose to be expressed in it," Orr wrote in his 1904 book *God's Image of Man*, "then evolution, so far from conflicting with theism, may become a new and heightened form of the theistic argument."<sup>8</sup> In *The Fundamentals* series, he followed Hodge in pinning the problem on Darwinism, not evolution. "Much of the difficulty on this subject," he wrote, "has arisen from the unwarrantable confusion or identification of evolution with Darwinism."<sup>9</sup> He had the luxury here of writing before the Neo-Darwinian synthesis was complete—in other words, at a time when some scientists themselves questioned the efficacy of natural selection as the sole engine of evolution.

But White, Draper, and the rest of the scientific community would have none of this harmonization. As science professionalized and the modern research university came into existence, sci-

6. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*.

7. See Orr, "Science and Christian Faith"; and Beach, "The Decadence of Darwinism." Edited versions of both articles can be found in Hankins, ed., *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, 71–84.

8. Quoted in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 20.

9. Orr, "Science and Christian Faith," 77.

entists along with historians and philosophers of science, believed it necessary to rout religion from the field—to separate science from religion so the former could advance unimpeded by metaphysical questions, essentially what Auguste Comte called positivism. And a funny thing happened on the way to 1925: conservative Christians came to agree, not with Hodge, Warfield, and Orr but with White and Draper. By the time of the Scopes trial, both the secular world and the most visible fundamentalist leaders believed science and religion were at war with one another. As Bryan himself put it in the speech he hoped to give at the trial, “Evolution is at war with religion because religion is supernatural.”<sup>10</sup> Conservative Protestants who continued to reconcile evolution with Christian theology had trouble finding a place to stand, especially if they resided in America as opposed to the United Kingdom. “By 1940,” historian Christopher Rios has written, “profitable dialogue between science and religion seemed all but a distant memory.” Not until that decade would evangelical theologians and scientists who were not antievolutionists begin to form a movement aimed at reconciling science and religion, or at least developing dialogue. In his book *After the Monkey Trial: Evangelical Scientists and a New Creationism*, Rios lays out the history of the American Scientific Affiliation in the US and in Britain the Research Scientists’ Christian Fellowship, two organizations that attempted to steer evangelical Christianity toward dialogue and harmony between religion and science. Both organizations formed in the 1940s and struggled to break through the warfare model their fellow evangelical brothers and sisters believed in.<sup>11</sup>

William Jennings Bryan’s career illustrates in microcosm the evangelical trajectory toward the warfare model. At the turn of the century, he believed evolution was erroneous but that it should and could be tolerated. “I do not carry the doctrine of evolution as

10. Bryan, “Closing Statement of William Jennings Bryan at the Trial of John Scopes,” 94. Judge Raulston disallowed this speech during the trial, so Bryan gave it several times in the Dayton area during the week between the trial and his death.

11. See Rios, *After the Monkey Trial*.

truth as some do,” he said, “[but] I do not mean to find fault with you if you want to accept the theory.” Ever the orator, he followed with a sarcastic jab: “All I mean to say is that while you may trace your ancestry back to the monkey if you find pleasure or pride in doing so, you shall not connect me with your family tree without more evidence than has yet been provided.”<sup>12</sup> By 1920, as he began to emerge as America’s leading antievolutionist, he had a much more developed antievolution argument.

Evolution became the symbol of an atheistic, antichristian, antiscientific, and antimoral turn in science. Essentially, he and others in the fundamentalist movement argued that Darwinism was not science at all. Their logic was based on early modern Baconianism, where sound science hinged on observation and careful categorization and classification of what was observed—in other words, empirical science. Darwinism, by contrast, was all theory, “millions of guesses strung together,” as Bryan and many others liked to say.<sup>13</sup> Then, taking the antievolutionist argument deeper, Bryan and others claimed that by eliminating the need for God, evolution removed the basis of morality. It was a form of Nietzschean nihilism. The fact that Clarence Darrow, Scopes’s defense attorney, had referred to Nietzsche when he defended Leopold and Loeb in the infamous thrill-kill murder the year before the Scopes trial only strengthened Bryan’s argument. Darrow argued that the two teenage killers were not totally responsible for their heinous crime because they had learned Nietzschean philosophy at the University of Chicago. They had been taught there was no such thing as morality and had been conditioned by society to internalize that view. “Is any blame attached because somebody took Nietzsche’s philosophy seriously and fashioned his life upon it?” Darrow exclaimed during his twelve-hour summation. “It is hardly fair to hang a 19-year-old boy for the philosophy that was taught him at the university.”<sup>14</sup>

12. Quoted in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 20.

13. Bryan, “Closing Statement of William Jennings Bryan at the Trial of John Scopes,” 86.

14. McKernan, *The Amazing Crime and Trial of Leopold and Loeb*, 276. Bryan quoted this excerpt from Darrow’s Leopold-Loeb summation in the

All of this is not even to mention Bryan's populist political argument—essentially, as he liked to say, “The hand that writes the check rules the school,” by which he meant taxpayers in any area of the country—since they were funding education—should be able to elect officials who would determine what was taught in their schools. What was taught should not be determined by scientific elites, in other words. Bryan even acknowledged that it would be just as offensive if folks from Tennessee went to New York and dictated what should and should not be taught in schools there. Here, evolution had come to symbolize an antidemocratic spirit of elitism.

In this sense, the Scopes trial itself became a symbol, but not a cause, of the warfare model for understanding the relationship between science and religion. The warfare model had been developed by secular thinkers and then ironically adopted by evangelicals with such vigor that people easily forgot *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*—in other words, that there had ever been a time when one could be conservative, evangelical, and even fundamentalist and not be opposed to evolution *per se*. The most visible fundamentalists in America by 1925—leaders such as John Roach Straton of New York City, William Bell Riley of Minneapolis, and J. Frank Norris of Texas, to name three—all held antievolutionism as a central component of conservative theology, as seemed to be the case for the vast majority of other evangelical Protestants. At the same time, the trial serves as a symbol of the warfare model created by secularists, it also served as the culmination of a process that saw evangelicals embrace that model. In this sense, the Scopes trial had causal power in the development of fundamentalism, which brings us to our second question: How has the Scopes trial shaped our understanding of fundamentalism?

Fundamentalism is, by definition, a defense of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, as those are conceived by conservative Protestants. Historian George Marsden constructed this definition famously and powerfully in his 1980 book *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. “Fundamentalists,” he wrote, “were evangeli-

speech he intended to give at the end of the Scopes trial. Bryan, “Closing Statement of William Jennings Bryan at the Trial of John Scopes,” 92.

cal Christians, close to the traditions of the dominant American revivalist establishment of the nineteenth century, who in the twentieth century militantly opposed both modernism in theology and the cultural changes that modernism endorsed.”<sup>15</sup> His book created the “Marsden paradigm” for understanding fundamentalism, which held sway among historians for roughly thirty years. The paradigm has been challenged recently with historians arguing that Marsden included too many individuals and groups within his fundamentalist coalition. Various approaches to anti-evolution loom significant in this new argument. For example, are conservative Protestants fundamentalists, circa 1925 and after, if they reject evolution but do not want to fight about it in the public schools because they would rather focus their attention on evangelism and missions? This was precisely the view of those associated with what historian Michael Hamilton has called the Moody Network.<sup>16</sup> These Christians saw themselves as the spiritual descendants of the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody (d. 1899) and the Bible college and magazine named in his honor—Moody Bible Institute and *Moody Monthly*, respectively. They wanted to stay focused on the work of Moody, who famously would not identify with controversial movements. Rather, he emphasized saving souls, Bible study, and personal holiness in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ, another doctrine those in the Moody Network believed but tried not to fight over. The president of Moody Bible Institute, James Gray, for example, intentionally sought to distance his interdenominational college and entire movement from the most militant fundamentalists mentioned above—Riley, Norris, and Straton. At a similar institution, Dallas Theological Seminary, in 1923, president Lewis Sperry Chafer said of Riley, Norris, and two less-famous fundamentalists, “Just what these four plunging men will do before they are checked remains to be seen. But it certainly is a great embarrassment to the rest of us.” Chafer even predicted, wishfully and erroneously, “I believe the days of the fundamentalist movement are num-

15. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4.

16. Hamilton, “The Interdenominational Evangelicalism,” 230–80.

bered.”<sup>17</sup> Seven years later it was pretty clear he had been wrong about the demise of fundamentalism. “While we stand for all the fundamentals of the Word of God,” he told Wheaton College president J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., “we are not identified with the fundamentalist movement as such. I have not been in sympathy with the movement from the beginning.”<sup>18</sup>

The “fundamentalist movement” Chafer referred to consisted of those who fit Marsden’s definition as militant defenders of the faith. They mounted their defense within their denominations—Northern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention, and (northern) Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, primarily—and also in the culture where the antievolution movement loomed large in reality and even larger in the public imagination of what a fundamentalist was. In other words, to use today’s language, fundamentalists were culture warriors. Straton, Riley, Norris, and others so prominent in the public eye fought militantly within their denominations and also in the wider culture. Others who were equally conservative in theology—Gray and Chafer to name but two—chose not to engage in antievolution or other forms of culture war. Moreover, those in the Moody Network were interdenominational and so did not participate in Baptist and Presbyterian fights.

So, what does this mean for how we think about the Scopes trial? At least this: Along with the denominational battles of the early 1920s among Baptists and Presbyterians—battles that were headline news in the *New York Times* and other outlets—the trial became once again a symbol, not only of the warfare model for understanding religion and science, but also for what it meant to be a fundamentalist. Any individual or movement that did not believe in evolution was classified as fundamentalist, and presumably in support of Bryan at Dayton, even if they rejected militant fundamentalism, as Chafer and Gray did. By the time the trial took place

17. Quoted in Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure*, 223; Also quoted in Hannah, *An Uncommon Union*, 92. Chafer wrote this to Arno C. Gaebelein.

18. Quoted in Hannah, *An Uncommon Union*, 92. Chafer made these two statements in letters to Arno C. Gaebelein and James Oliver Buswell, Jr., respectively. The latter was president of Wheaton College.

the tension within evangelical Christianity was no longer between early antievolutionists and Darwin's forgotten defenders, but between antievolution culture warriors—i.e., fundamentalists—and equally conservative evangelicals who wanted to stay out of public controversy. The latter, by their own design, were happy to be left out of the perception of what constituted a fundamentalist, but the media placed all evangelicals and fundamentalists in the Scopes image and historians did something similar. As Hamilton has argued, we just lumped the Moody Network together with the militant defenders like Straton, Riley, and Norris, and called them all fundamentalists.<sup>19</sup> As this interpretation goes, there was nowhere for non-fundamentalist evangelicals to stand until the founding of the National Association for Evangelicals (1943), Fuller Seminary (1947), *Christianity Today* magazine (1956), and the advent of the term Neo-evangelical. And this brings us to our third question: How has the Scopes trial shaped the historiography of fundamentalism and evangelicalism?

In both popular interpretation and among many historians, the Scopes trial demarcated when conservative Protestantism moved from the center of American culture and politics to the periphery. The media began to dismiss fundamentalism as a fringe movement that was dying, and fundamentalists themselves voluntarily opted out of politics and culture, as this interpretation goes. This schema has always been contested, and one needs to be careful not to over-interpret historians who have used it, including Marsden himself. In his book *Revive Us Again*, Joel Carpenter traces the building of Bible colleges, parachurch ministries, evangelistic enterprises, and missions as the central activity of evangelicals in the generation after Scopes, not the culture warring of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies in denominations of the early 1920s and the antievolution crusade that led to the Scopes trial.<sup>20</sup> In my own case, I have argued that the central place of evangelicals in culture before 1930 is akin to the evangelical presence in politics since the advent of the Christian Right around 1980. The half-century between 1930 and 1980, roughly the period Carpenter covers, saw

19. Hamilton, "The Interdenominational Evangelicalism," 243.

20. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*.

evangelicals as activists in some ways but not as much in the public eye as they had been before. And yet, the subject of my first book, J. Frank Norris, never left the very public political stage in the period from the trial to his death in 1952. It would be inaccurate to say Norris, and by extension, his thousands of fundamentalist followers, left the political scene after Scopes. So, is he just an aberration within an otherwise politically quiet phase of fundamentalism?<sup>21</sup>

Matthew Sutton has argued that Norris and others like him were typical of fundamentalism after Scopes. They remained politically active with an apocalyptic message. In his book *American Apocalypse*, it was not so much that fundamentalists woke up politically after the Second World War but rather that their anti-communist activism became mainstream as the Cold War dawned. As Sutton and others have shown, the militant defense of America was in vogue across the theological spectrum, and the promotion of a Judeo-Christian culture was viewed as a defense of the American way of life against communism. Today, few, if any, historians would argue that the Scopes trial constituted such a thorough and embarrassing defeat of fundamentalism that the entire movement was relegated to the sidelines of American culture. But the trial still became a symbol for the time period when fundamentalists were no longer taken seriously, or at least as seriously as they had been before the trial. Scopes made it easier for the media and the public to hold up Riley and Norris as the epitome of conservative religion—i.e., as extremist cranks not to be taken seriously.

Ironically, however, while the Scopes trial did not cause an actual decline in fundamentalism, it did create that exact perception. Or, more accurately, the way the trial was interpreted in the 1930s and after symbolized, erroneously, that fundamentalism had been defeated and would henceforth fade away.

In the 1990s, the aforementioned Ronald Numbers did a survey of five major newspapers and a dozen national magazines in the years following Scopes and found that none of them portrayed the trial as a loss for fundamentalism. “I discovered not a single decla-

21. Hankins, *Jesus and Gin*; and Hankins, *God's Rascal*.

ration of victory by the opponents of antievolution, in the sense of their claiming that the crusade was at an end,” he wrote.<sup>22</sup> This is not surprising given that Bryan and the prosecution won the actual case, but it leaves the question, where did the widespread perception of fundamentalist defeat come from? Numbers’s PhD student at the University of Wisconsin, Edward Larson, built on his mentor’s work in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Summer for the Gods*. Larson argues compellingly that this perception began in 1931 with journalist Frederick Lewis Allen’s book *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties*. Writing for a depression-era audience nostalgic for the recent past, when life was simpler and better, Allen turned the trial into a battle between traditional religion and culture against the modern scientific era. “Allen reduced fundamentalism to antievolutionism and antievolutionism to Bryan,” Larson wrote. “Both reductions grossly oversimplified matters and forced Allen to reconstruct the story.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, while it would be nice to live again with the simple verities of traditional religion, the old worldview had wilted in the face of a modern scientific onslaught, and we must move forward. This neatly packaged narrative is essentially how Stephen Jay Gould characterized the film *Inherit the Wind* in his 1983 piece, quoted in the introduction to this essay. And little wonder, since the film followed the narrative of Allen’s book, not the trial itself.

The film was released across the United States in 1960 and was based on the 1955 play by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. The play and film turn Allen’s old versus new into good versus evil. The *New York Times* reporter who covered the trial characterized the atmosphere in Dayton as “half circus and half revival meeting.” By contrast, in the film, the town takes on a sinister aura with ominous lighting and gathering thunderclouds. A mob sings, “We’ll hang Bert Cates (the Scopes character) from an old apple tree” to the tune of the Battle Hymn of the Republic as they march to the jail. When they arrive, someone throws a glass bottle into the jail cell window, shards just missing Cates’s face (the real

22. Quoted in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 206.

23. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 226.

Scopes was never in jail). This was a far cry from the *Times* article, “Crank and Freaks Flock to Dayton,” where the reporter said the townspeople paid little attention to the out-of-town lunatics—a bookseller peddling *God or Gorilla*, a racist preacher saying Black people were not human, among others. Rather, the citizens of Dayton were “not to be urged, as has been said, into acting otherwise than usual.”<sup>24</sup> It is widely known that the citizens of Dayton generally liked Scopes and wished him well.

Like the *Times* reporter, journalist, theater critic, and public intellectual Joseph Wood Krutch covered the trial, then more than thirty years later reflected on the film in a 1967 essay. He was repulsed by the portrayal of the people of Dayton. “The authors of *Inherit the Wind* made it chiefly sinister,” he wrote in *Commentary*, “a witch hunt of the sort we are now all too familiar with. The atmosphere was so far from being sinister that it suggested a circus day.”<sup>25</sup> The witch hunt Krutch referred to, of course, was McCarthyism, and this is precisely what Lawrence and Lee had in mind when they wrote the play.

Where Allen’s *Only Yesterday* reduced fundamentalism to antievolution and antievolution to Bryan, *Inherit the Wind* portrayed Bryan (Brady) as an amiable buffoon who morphs into an evil manipulator. After gaining the confidence of Cates’s fiancé, he bludgeons her on the witness stand with the information he charmed out of her beforehand. After the verdict, Brady attempts to make a pitiful speech as people mill around the courtroom ignoring him; then, he falls over dead of a heart attack.<sup>26</sup>

Just as the Bryan character is transformed for the worse, the Darrow character, Drummond, played by the amiable and loveable Spencer Tracy, is, well, amiable and loveable. He is a modernist perfectly happy to reconcile the Bible with *Origin of Species*. In the final scene, he takes the two volumes and places them together in his hands, looking at both wistfully and with rev-

24. “Crank and Freaks Flock to Dayton,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1925, 1–2; quote on p. 2.

25. Krutch, “The Monkey Trial,” 83.

26. At the time of publication, this scene was available freely on YouTube. *Inherit the Wind*.

erence. During the actual trial, by contrast, the real Darrow's acerbic anti-religion led to an amateurish fixation with getting Bryan to accept 4004 BC as the year God created the earth. In the film, he succeeds, with Brady (Bryan) pinning the exact start of creation on October 23, 4004 BC, at 9:00 am. The real Bryan accepted at trial the view that the "days" in the Genesis account could be interpreted as long periods of time, an admission that bothered several hardline fundamentalists. During the actual trial, several mainline Protestant preachers lamented privately that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had even included Darrow on the defense team, which was fitting given that the organization had tried to keep the famous attorney away and then attempted to dump him once he joined. In the film, Drummond is the hero of open-mindedness, free will, and a tolerant and liberal form of Christianity, as opposed to the real Darrow of the trial who was something of an anti-religious bigot and sociological determinist, hardly a proponent of free will.

All this is to say that the Scopes trial came to symbolize fundamentalism's decline and exit from the cultural stage because the book *Only Yesterday* and then the film *Inherit the Wind* created a perception of exactly this erroneous symbol. This perception became ubiquitous not only in the media but also among historians. "No one has done more to shape the conception of the American 1920s than Frederick Lewis Allen," wrote historian Roderick Nash in 1970. "[T]he book's most enduring bequest to later historians has been the idea that older American values, traditions, and ideals meant little or nothing to the 1920s."<sup>27</sup> Influential religious historian William Warren Sweet, just eight years after the publication of *Only Yesterday*, borrowed from Allen in his widely popular textbook on religion in America. Sweet characterized the Scopes trial as "fundamentalism's last stand." In the 1960s, after the appearance of *Inherit the Wind*, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Richard Hofstadter characterized fundamentalism as one of America's chief forms of anti-intellectualism, writing that the movement, even in the 1920s, was in the "waning phase of its his-

27. Nash, *The Nervous Generation*, 5–8, as quoted in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 227.

tory” and experiencing a “shrinkage in its numbers.”<sup>28</sup> Neither of these was true, but both were consistent with the Scopes trial as portrayed in *Only Yesterday* and *Inherit the Wind*. And this brings us to the fourth question: How has the Scopes perception or definition of fundamentalism and evangelicalism been challenged and changed in the twenty-first century, especially in the Trump era?

The perception created by the portrayal of the Scopes trial lasted until the advent of the Christian Right in the 1980s when evangelicals and fundamentalists became the most reliable and visible voting bloc in the Republican Party. The rise of the Christian Right made it impossible to speak of the death or even decline of evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Evangelicals became so central to American politics that today, in the era (or moment) of Trump, they are being redefined from a religious cohort to a political/cultural one.

The religious definition of the term evangelical is known as the Bebbington Quadrilateral. For about a quarter century after 1989, there was a consensus among historians around this working definition. The British historian David Bebbington famously defined evangelicals across three centuries as Protestant Christians who believed in: (1) biblicism—the idea that the Bible was the unparalleled authority in matters of faith; (2) conversionism—the belief that one must have a born-again or saving experience of spiritual transformation; (3) crucicentrism—the centrality of the cross and the crucifixion of Christ for redemption of sin; and (4) activism—the impulse to live out one’s faith actively in the world through evangelism and social reform.<sup>29</sup> This is how many evangelical individuals and organizations have preferred to see themselves. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) website, for example, uses the Quadrilateral in its answer to the question, “What is an evangelical?”<sup>30</sup>

More recently, some historians have jettisoned that religious definition in favor of a political/cultural one. This has been articulated best by Kristin Du Mez in her book *Jesus and John Wayne*:

28. Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 117–18.

29. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2–3.

30. National Association of Evangelicals, “What is an Evangelical?” n.p.

*How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. “Today, what it means to be a ‘conservative evangelical’ is as much about culture as it is about theology,” she writes.<sup>31</sup> As political and cultural actors, Du Mez’s evangelicals are distinguished by: (1) Christian masculinity; (2) patriarchy; (3) nationalism; and (4) militarism. Taken together, I call these the Du Mez Patrilateral. The rise of Trump, and evangelical support for him, has blown apart a consensus as to what the term evangelical means and fundamentalism as a subset of evangelicals. Now, evangelicals seem to exist across a spectrum from the Bebbington Quadrilateral to the Du Mez Patrilateral.<sup>32</sup>

What is happening to the term evangelical in the era of Trump is what happened to the term fundamentalist after Scopes. In each case, the term in question morphed (evolved?) from the religious to the political and cultural. The Scopes trial can be seen as a form of what today we call culture war, along with other battles in the 1920s like Prohibition, the “obscenity wars,” and Protestant-Catholic tensions exhibited in the presidential election of 1928. Only a minority of conservative Protestants participated in these culture wars, but as I have argued above, the Scopes trial shaped the perception of what a fundamentalist was in an era when virtually all conservative Protestants were classed as fundamentalists whether they owned the term or not. Meanwhile, the older term “evangelical” virtually dropped out of public discourse. It is worth noting that when the Christian Right launched in the Reagan era, its leaders were routinely called fundamentalists, largely, one could argue, because their political activity was reminiscent of the culture war crusades of the 1920s, the Scopes trial chief among them. Today, however, the term fundamentalism is hardly ever used in public discourse. Instead, politically active conservative Christians who support Trump are called evangelicals. Even some Trump supporters who are not active Christians are called, and

31. Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 9–10.

32. For more on this as it pertains to Southern Baptists, see Hankins, “Baptists and American Evangelical Identity,” 697–723.

sometimes call themselves, evangelicals.<sup>33</sup> The term is defined implicitly or explicitly along the lines of the Du Mez Patrilateral, not the Bebbington Quadrilateral, just as the term fundamentalist after Scopes came to symbolize a political/cultural position more than theology. Some evangelicals are trying to retain or reclaim the Bebbington Quadrilateral, while others have given up on the term altogether and have ceased using it. Much like James Gray, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and the Moody Network of the twenties and thirties, they attempt to demarcate themselves from Patrilateral evangelicalism but rarely succeed. Just as Chafer and Gray attempted to distinguish themselves from the “plunging men” who engaged in antievolution and other culture war issues of the twenties, evangelicals at *Christianity Today* magazine and the NAE, to take just two examples, attempt to adhere to a religious and theological form of evangelicalism. And, just as was the case after Scopes, they have very little success in taking back the term.<sup>34</sup>

In conclusion, here are a few observations, explicit or implicit, within the four questions analyzed above. Scopes redefined the term fundamentalism in much the same way the Trump era is redefining evangelicalism. Before Scopes, a fundamentalist was a Baptist or Presbyterian who attempted to stave off the changes modernist theology was causing within their denominations, especially the Northern Baptist Convention and the (northern) Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. The term fundamentalist was coined in 1920 by Northern Baptist preacher and journal editor Curtis Lee Laws as someone “who was ready to do battle royal for the fundamentals.”<sup>35</sup> For him, “fundamentalism” was a religious term, and he never joined the antievolution crusade or the interdenominational culture war organizations led by the likes of William Bell Riley and J. Frank Norris. After 1925, therefore, he did not even fit the definition of the word he created.

33. See Burge, “So, Why is Evangelicalism Not Declining?” n.p. and Burge, “The Rise of the Non-Christian Evangelical,” n.p.

34. For an argument in favor of keeping the Bebbington Quadrilateral definition, see Kidd, *Who is an Evangelical?*

35. Curtis Lee Laws, “Convention Sidelights,” *Watchman-Examiner*, July 1, 1920, 834.

In a similar way, the Trump era has redefined the term evangelical from the religious Bebbington Quadrilateral to the political/cultural Du Mez Patrilateral. Neither Bebbington nor Du Mez coined the term evangelical, of course, but as historians they have both tried to define a movement that goes by that name. Prior to the Trump era, the religious traditions from which both historians hail were widely viewed as forms of evangelicalism. To the extent that today's evangelicalism is more Patrilateral than Quadrilateral, neither Bebbington nor Du Mez fits the term anymore.

Ironically, while both Scopes and the Trump era have had similar effects on the terms fundamentalist and evangelical, they have had opposite effects on public perception of those two groups—in other words, what those terms symbolize. Scopes, or the way it was portrayed in *Only Yesterday* and *Inherit the Wind*, symbolized fundamentalism as harmless because it had been defeated and was fading away—a remnant of a bygone era. The Trump era has ginned up the view that evangelicals are a powerful force within the Republican Party and quite threatening to democracy. The term Christian Nationalism has been created to describe the evangelical effort to turn back the clock on American pluralism with an insistence that the nation must be based on Christian ideals—even if force is necessary, as some evangelicals now argue.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, both the Scopes trial and the Trump era are vivid historical examples that it does not take a majority to redefine a movement. A visible and vocal minority that gets the attention of the media will do just fine. Tim Alberta, in his recent book *The Kingdom, The Power, and the Glory*, walks readers through the deeply troubling subculture of Patrilateral evangelicalism and Christian nationalism, and yet in a conversation with *Christianity Today*'s Russell Moore and evangelical attorney and *New York Times* columnist David French, the three speculate that probably only 15 or 20 per cent of evangelicals are on board with Christian nationalism and the MAGA movement. “That vocal minority will always push around the timid majority,” Moore says. “The people

36. For examples see Alberta, *The Kingdom, The Power, and the Glory*, 224, 247–49, 270–77, 302, 320, and 410.

who care the most usually get what they want.”<sup>37</sup> Likewise, after Scopes, only a minority of fundamentalists engaged in the anti-evolution crusade and other culture wars. But the public definition of fundamentalism fit Straton, Riley, and Norris, not James Gray, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Curtis Lee Laws, or the majority of evangelicals who did not identify with the antievolutionist, anticommunist, and anticatholic crusades of the period from roughly 1930 to 1980. The Neo-evangelicals of the forties and fifties—those who founded the NAE, Fuller Seminary, and *Christianity Today* magazine—rejected the Scopes definition of fundamentalism in favor of the term Neo-evangelical. It can be historically tricky to decide when it is time to stop redefining a term and instead invent another one, but the Trump era seems to be forcing Quadrilateral evangelicals to face that question.

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37. Alberta, *The Kingdom, The Power, and the Glory*, 336.

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