

Martin Roser: William Jennings Bryan, The Last Speech, 1925 (Ausschnitte)

William Jennings Bryan hatte geplant, am Ende des Scopes – Prozesses ein ca. 25.000 Worte umfassendes Schlussplädoyer, das seine christlich – fundamentalistische Position zusammenfassen sollte, zu halten. Aus verfahrenstechnischen Gründen kam es dazu nicht mehr.

„Science is a magnificent force, but it is not a teacher of morals. It can perfect machinery, but it adds no moral restraints to protect society from the misuse of the machine. It can also build gigantic intellectual ships, but it constructs no moral rudders for the control of storm tossed human vessel. It not only fails to supply the spiritual element needed but some of its unproven hypotheses rob the ship of its compass and thus endangers its cargo. In war, science has proven itself an evil genius; it has made war more terrible than it ever was before. Man used to be content to slaughter his fellowmen on a single plane – the earth’s surface. Science has taught him to go down into the water and shoot up from below and to go up into the clouds and shoot down from above, thus making the battlefield three times as bloody as it was before; but science does not teach brotherly love. Science has made war so hellish that civilization was about to commit suicide; and now we are told that newly discovered instruments of destruction will make the cruelties of the late war seem trivial in comparison with the cruelties of wars that may come in the future. If civilization is to be saved from the wreckage threatened by intelligence not consecrated by love, it must be saved by the moral code of the meek and lowly Nazarene ...

It is for the jury to determine whether this attack upon the Christian religion shall be permitted in the public schools of Tennessee by teachers employed by the state and paid out of the public treasury. This case is no longer

local, the defendant ceases to play an important part. The case has assumed the proportions of a battle-royal between unbelief that attempts to speak through so-called science and the defenders of the Christian faith, speaking through the legislators of Tennessee. It is again a choice between God and Baal; it is also a renewal of the issue in Pilate’s court ...

...Your answer will be heard throughout the world; it is eagerly awaited by a praying multitude. If the law is nullified, there will be rejoicing wherever God is repudiated, the savior scoffed at and the Bible ridiculed. Every unbeliever of every kind and degree will be happy. If, on the other hand, the law is upheld and the religion of the school children protected, millions of Christians will call you blessed and, with hearts full of gratitude to God, will sing again that grand old song of triumph: „Faith of our fathers, living still, In spite of dungeon, fire and sword; O how our hearts beat high with joy, Whene’er we hear that glorious word – Faith of our fathers – Holy faith; We will be true to thee till death!“

William Jennings Bryan, Bryan’s Last Speech: Undelivered Speech to the Jury in the Scopes Trial. Oklahoma City: Sunlight Publishing Society, 1925.

*Ausschnitte sind online verfügbar unter:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/monkeytrial/filmmore/ps_bryan.html*