

SOURCE: James G. Leyburn, "Idols We Bow Before," *The Christian Century*, 77 (Aug. 31, 1960), 993. Copyright 1960 Christian Century Foundation, Chicago. Reprinted by permission from *The Christian Century*.

Still another form of idolatry is scientism. The intellectual affirms that every intelligent man must respect science, regarding it as one of the means God has given us to discover his laws of nature, to conquer age-old ills, to explore the universe of the macrocosm and the microcosm. The idolatry consists in the worship of science as the panacea for all woes; in the myth that science is infallibly accurate, whereas all other knowledge is random and partial; in the belief that man can with security rely on science alone for salvation.

In its present form the idol of scientism was given foundation during the revival of learning in the Renaissance; it reached its height of glory in the confident optimism of the late 19th century. Given the remarkable discoveries and advances of the latter era, one can well understand the enthusiasm with which its adherents welcomed the new messiah. One can also understand the relief of man who breathed the free air that had long been tainted by decaying religious dogma. It is not even surprising that men began to assume that to be scientific required one to be materialistic in philosophy.

The 20th century, with its devastating wars made hellish by "scientific" weapons, has witnessed the defection of a number of sensitive souls away from the idol of scientism. It is now apparent to the thoughtful that science is knowledge, not wisdom; that its discoveries are quite impersonal and can be turned by man to devilish as well as to beneficial ends. A number of brilliant contemporary physicists have stalked out of the temple of scientism. Their exploration of the atom has cast serious doubt on materialism. Grandsons of men who announced that God was dead are now admitting that there may after all be a God; some are even proclaiming their belief in him.

Many social scientist, however, have become devoted adherents of scientism. A decade or so ago, one of them wrote a book with the title, *Can Science Save Us?* His answer was a clear Yes. This, I think, is scientism.

1811. World Conditions—Secularization and Neglect of the Bible

SOURCE: Mary McLeod Bethune, "Recommends Bible as Source of Wisdom, Inspiration" (column), in the *Chicago Defender*, Oct. 9, 1954, p. Copyright 1954 by the Robert S. Abbott Publishing Co. Used by permission of the publisher.

Sometimes we get too proud to acknowledge our religious background of simple, pious Christian faith. It is strange that we should be ashamed or reluctant about the very thing that made us what we are as people! . . .

I am greatly concerned with the fact that as the standards of education are being raised, there is somehow less and less emphasis on the teaching of the Word.

Secularization is a process that sets in when a society becomes proud. But God confounds such.

How can any man call himself educated who has no knowledge of the Bible . . .? And how can any nation justify its own life without the Bible in the hands and in the hearts of its people?

Perhaps we do not know the God of the Bible, our Father and Creator to whom we owe life itself. The Bible is our means of such acquaintance and thought [i.e., through] it every man is free to form his own friendship with the Divine.

1812. World Conditions—Social Conditions and Attitudes

SOURCE: Paul Tillich, "On the Boundary Line," *The Christian Century*, 77 (Dec. 7, 1960), 1437. Copyright 1960 Christian Century Foundation, Chicago. Reprinted by permission from *The Christian Century*.

But there is another side to the picture: my increasing awareness of the state of mind in large groups of university and college students (and sometimes even high school students) since the end of World War II and the beginning of the cold war. It is a feeling of emptiness, insecurity, meaninglessness—often increased by loneliness—feelings of guilt, hostility and disgust; in short, characteristics of the human predicament as described by existentialist literature, art and philosophy. These experiences have led some to cynicism, others to indifference, and many to a search for security at any price. It was unavoidable that as a widely traveling lecturer I would discuss the problems implied in this situation; and the response showed that this was the point from which the question of the meaning of life, the religious problem, could be approached. From here it was also possible to arrive at an appraisal of the sources and value of the resurgence of religious interest in the last ten years. The fact is indisputable; the interpretations and evaluations are controversial. Perhaps one can say that the predicament described above is widely felt, is not confined to youth, and that the turn to religion is an attempt to find a transcendent security in a world in which neither social nor spiritual security is guaranteed.

1813. World Conditions—A "Time of Troubles"

SOURCE: Paul Hutchinson, *The New Ordeal of Christianity* (New York: Association Press, 1957), p. viii. Copyright 1957 by National Board of Young Men's Christian Associations. Used by permission.

The only thing of which we can be certain is that we are in the midst of a global crisis—a "time of troubles," to use Toynbee's phrase—which is agitating every region and every type of society and is affecting every phase of human activity.

We are warned by those whose words carry weight that this crisis differs from others which have gone before in that we now have at our command means for the extermination of our kind, while we have no assurance that our moral controls are strong enough to insure that these means will not be employed. Our technology has so far outstripped our morals that there is a real danger of racial self-destruction. Even if our native optimism rejects this terrifying prospect, we still know that we are caught in a time of awful tension and conflict, that we seem to be helpless puppets blindly stumbling about in a nightmare world where gigantic, impersonal forces which we cannot even comprehend, much less control, are locked in desperate battle.

1814. World Conditions—Union of all Higher Religions Urged

SOURCE: Arnold Toynbee, *Christianity Among the Religions of the World* (New York: Scribner, 1957), p. 85. Copyright 1957 by the Trustees under the will of Waterman T. Hewett. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

I have suggested that, in the unified world that has been called into existence by the world-wide expansion of the post-Christian modern Western civilization, all the living higher religions ought to subordinate their traditional rivalries and make a new approach towards one another in face of a fearful common adversary: a revival of the worship of collective human power, armed with new weapons, both material and spiritual. I have also suggested that we might consider whether this reconciliation can be achieved without abandoning convictions, because, without convictions, a religion has no spiritual power.

¹Neufeld, D. F., & Neuffer, J. (1962). *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Student's Source Book*. Commentary Reference Series. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.