

Foreword by Dan Egeler

Learning to Respond to a Dangerous Ideology

SCIENTISM *AND* SECULARISM

J. P. MORELAND



“Science is a wonderfully useful discipline, but in recent times it has been distorted into *scientism*, the view that science is the ultimate path to truth in any area of reality. Based on that false adulation of science, many have denied the value of religion and philosophy, and many have rejected the claims of divine revelation in the Bible. J. P. Moreland is a respected Christian thinker who has studied both science and the Scriptures in considerable depth. He clearly demonstrates the fallacies of the arguments for scientism. He shows how Christians can defend their faith against scientific objections, while affirming genuine science as a gift from God.”

John M. Frame, Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy
Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

“Scientism is a silent killer. Despite its name, it is neither scientific nor rational. Yet it attempts to kill our knowledge of God and the good life by claiming that the methods of science are sufficient for any knowledge we may need to know. J. P. Moreland, one of our greatest living philosophers, exposes scientism for what it is—a self-refuting and knowledge-stopping claim. This judgment in no way undermines real science, but rather encourages it. Once more, we are in Moreland’s debt.”

Douglas Groothuis, Professor of Philosophy, Denver Seminary;
author, *The Soul in Cyberspace*

“Moreland offers a brilliant critique of scientism and a comprehensive defense of theistic science. As valuable as this critique and defense is, I believe his book’s greatest contribution is his wake-up call to Christian leaders of how ‘scientism has forced the church to offer the gospel simply because it works rather than because it is true and can be known as such.’ Kudos to Moreland for equipping us to know through scientific evidence and philosophical reasoning that the Bible and the gospel indeed are true.”

Hugh Ross, President, Reasons to Believe; author, *The Creator and the Cosmos*; *Improbable Planet*; and *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is*

“Science is a gift from God, but scientism is an idolatrous perversion of that gift that is hostile to the Christian faith and to the proper practice of science. J. P. Moreland rightly contends that Christians need to understand what scientism claims, to recognize its pervasive effects in our society, and to expose its self-defeating pretensions. Moreland has been reflecting on these issues for decades, and I can think of no one better qualified to write on this topic. This incisive takedown of scientism is long overdue and most welcome.”

James N. Anderson, Professor of Theology and Philosophy,
Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte

“J. P. Moreland is one of the great Christian philosophers of our time. He has shown persuasively that we can know God just as well as we can know anything else. If, as philosophers tell us, knowledge constitutes ‘justified true belief,’ Moreland has shown that we can have such beliefs about God—and, thus, objective, as well as subjective, knowledge of him. In this trenchant critique, he shows not only how the ideology of scientism undermines the justifiable confidence that people should have in their knowledge of God, but that scientism ultimately defeats itself. Scientism claims that hard sciences such as physics, chemistry, and biology provide the only genuine knowledge of reality. Yet, as Moreland shows, scientism does not satisfy its own requirement, because it is not itself based upon scientific evidence or scientific method. Instead, Moreland shows with many concrete examples that many people in our culture simply *assume* that the hard sciences provide the only foundation for knowledge, leaving them with an impoverished and materialistic view of reality that denies them the joy, hope, and meaning that comes from the knowledge of God. For this reason, *Scientism and Secularism* is a philosophical treatise with a practical message for anyone wanting to live life more abundantly in accord with genuine knowledge of God. Highly recommended.”

Stephen C. Meyer, Director, Center for Science and Culture, Discovery Institute; *New York Times* best-selling author, *Darwin’s Doubt*

“If you’ve ever been tempted to dismiss a moral, philosophical, or theological belief because you were convinced only science gives real knowledge—or if it’s been done to you—then you’ve been taken in by scientism. This popular notion has crippled the confidence of multitudes of Christians, yet in *Scientism and Secularism*, philosopher J. P. Moreland handily exposes it for the fraud it is. Moreland cuts through the confusion with his characteristic clarity, insight, and surgical precision, deftly refuting the notion that only science can give knowledge while all else is mere opinion, feeling, or faith. Here is Moreland doing what he does best—dispatching foolishness with careful thought and rigorous assessment. For those taken in by the silliness of scientism, this book will be an eye-opener. Moreland’s effort also serves as a tutorial in the disappearing art of clear thinking for those floundering in the murky waters of secularism.”

Gregory Koukl, President, Stand to Reason; author, *The Story of Reality and Tactics*

“With cross-disciplinary depth and precise argument, J. P. Moreland not only puts science back in its lane, he defines the lane—and in doing so rescues true science from self-destructive overreach. Anyone responsible for educating the next generation of scientists, theologians, or anyone in between needs this surprisingly readable book.”

David Schmus, Executive Director, Christian Educators Association International

“J. P. Moreland’s *Scientism and Secularism* should be mandatory reading for serious Christians who want to intelligently engage in the interface of philosophy and science. Moreland elegantly guides the reader through concepts typically reserved for serious analytic philosophers and academics. In doing so, he provides a desperately needed and highly accessible treatment of elite-level arguments that both seasoned philosophy veterans and enthusiastic amateurs will enjoy. Moreland thus demonstrates a rare ability to distill complicated and abstract philosophical concepts into a framework for everybody to understand.

While scientists who are not philosophically inclined always tend to deride approaches that are not strictly empirical as superfluous, in recent years this tendency has accelerated. Major figures in both academic and popular science characterize philosophy as an anachronism to be abandoned, with only experimental or observable data worthy of discussion. Moreland argues expertly that not only are such claims internally inconsistent, this central dogma of scientism erodes the serious pursuit of knowledge. Scientism isn’t just poor science, it’s poor thinking.

Moreland has crafted an eminently readable text that clearly demonstrates that this kind of crude scientific thinking should be eschewed by all thinkers not dogmatically committed to worshipping at the altar of reductive physicalism. *Scientism and Secularism* is a book that should be read by any serious Christian who is motivated to integrate science, philosophy, and faith cogently and cohesively.”

Jeffrey M. Schwartz, MD, coauthor, *The Mind and the Brain and You Are Not Your Brain*

“The greatest barrier to communicating a Christian message in our day is the fact/value split. It decrees that truth is to be found only in the fact realm, while relegating morality and theology to the realm of values, which it defines as subjective, private, personal preferences. The result is that when Christian speak, people do not even ‘hear’ them making objective truth claims. That’s why this book by J. P. Moreland is so important. Moreland challenges the fact/value split, showing that it rests on the untenable assumption of scientism. Then he makes a persuasive case that fields like philosophy, morality, and theology yield genuine knowledge.”

Nancy Pearcey, author, *Total Truth; Finding Truth; and Love Thy Body*

“For decades, people have been weighing in on why children are leaving the faith in droves. J. P. Moreland gets to the core and offers information needed to stop the exodus. Every Christian parent and educator must read this book.”

Catherine Waller, Executive Editor, Defendable Faith Institute, *DeepRoots Bible Curriculum for Defendable Faith*; homeschool parent

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J. P. Moreland

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To Stephen Meyer
Dear Friend, Courageous Soldier, and Humble Leader

The idea that knowledge—and of course reality—
is limited to the world of the natural sciences is the
single most destructive idea on the stage of life today.

Dallas Willard

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Foreword

Our children are growing up in a post-Christian culture in which the public often views people of faith as irrelevant or even, in some cases, extremists. But the world desperately needs people of faith who can contribute to public life and enhance the public conversation. So how do we raise up a generation of Daniels to be the voices of faith in a cultural Babylon?

Philip Yancey, in *What's So Amazing about Grace?*, develops a word picture that provides a powerful reminder of the approach that must be taken when mentoring this next generation as ambassadors for Christ. Yancey says,

A phrase used by both Peter and Paul has become one of my favorite images from the New Testament. We are to administer, or “dispense,” God’s grace, say the two apostles. The image brings to mind one of the old-fashioned “atomizers” women used before the perfection of spray technology. Squeeze a rubber bulb, and droplets of perfume come shooting out of the fine holes at the other end. A few drops suffice for a whole body; a few pumps change the atmosphere in a room. That is how grace should work, I think. It does not convert the entire world or an entire society, but it does enrich the atmosphere.

Now I worry that the prevailing image of Christians has changed from that of a perfume atomizer to a different spray apparatus: the kind used by insect exterminators. *There's a roach!* Pump, spray, pump, spray. *There's a spot of evil!* Pump, spray, pump, spray. Some Christians I know have taken on

the task of “moral exterminator” for the evil-infested society around them.¹

The challenge is to uncompromisingly share absolute truth while not coming across as “bug spray.” Instead, we should be about the business of dispensing the “perfume of Christ.” The twenty-first century will require of believers a willingness to adopt winsome methods of engagement amid an environment of suspicion and skepticism.

In this book, J. P. Moreland articulates a way of friendly engagement with the prevailing worldview of scientism. He makes the case that *ideas matter*. As he explains,

As the ideas that constitute scientism have become more pervasive in our culture, the Western world has turned increasingly secular and the power centers of culture (the universities, the media and entertainment industry, the Supreme Court) have come increasingly to regard religion as a private superstition. It is no surprise, then, that when our children go to college, more and more of them are just giving up on Christianity.

Scientism says that the hard sciences alone have the intellectual authority to give us knowledge of reality. Everything else—especially ethics, theology, and philosophy—is, at least according to scientism, based on private emotions, blind faith, or cultural upbringing. As a result, these disciplines, long regarded by the Western world as a source of knowledge and a path of wisdom, are said to give us no truth about reality, at least no truth that could be supported by evidence and argumentation—which, according to scientism, means that theology and philosophy offer no truth at all.

Moreland provides a particularly persuasive argument that counters the popular perception that science can explain *everything*. In reality, he says, there are many things that science *cannot* explain. And what makes all of this especially interesting is that theism *can* explain those very things. Moreland gives examples: science cannot explain the origin of the universe; the origin of the

1. Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 146. Used by permission of Zondervan.

fundamental laws of nature; the fine-tuning of the universe; the origin of consciousness; and the existence of moral, rational, and aesthetic objective laws and intrinsically valuable properties. And these are all topics that theism *can* adequately address.

Moreland concludes with a very helpful compilation of strategies for integrating issues between faith and science. As a Christian living in a secular culture, I would concur with his plea: I concur with and applaud Moreland's analysis of the danger posed by scientism, and the very practical guidelines he offers for responding to that danger—in a winsome but convincing way.

Dan Egeler

Former President, Association of Christian Schools International

Acknowledgments

Over the years and in a number of ways, many people have contributed to empowering me to write this book. In fact, there are far too many to mention. However, I want very much to acknowledge the impact of three people without whom this book would have never been written. First, I have learned so much philosophy and philosophy of science over the years from my good friend and colleague Garry DeWeese (I have never been able to figure out why he has two Rs in “Garry.” Isn’t it supposed to be “Gary?”), that it is hard to know where his thinking ends and mine begins. Brother, you have been a real blessing. Second, it is difficult to know what to say to my Crossway acquisitions editor, Justin Taylor. He went far, far over and above what is required of an editor. Justin, you took this book under your wings and spent countless hours making it accessible to parents, pastors, school teachers, and lay readers of all kinds. Thank you for your effort and excellence. Finally, I have worked with a number of publishers, and Bill Deckard is in a league of his own as an editor. Bill, I can’t thank you enough for your hard work on this book. Crossway is lucky to have you on the team, as am I.

Introduction

I grew up in the 1950s, in a working-class neighborhood outside of Kansas City, Missouri. My father died when I was in second grade, and I was raised largely by my mother, though she did marry again during my seventh-grade year. My mother and stepfather were good to me, though neither could help much with my religious instruction. Neither were educated beyond high school. My mother worked in a paper cup factory, and my stepfather was a welder. We attended a mildly liberal United Methodist Church, though it didn't seem to have much impact on any of us.

One thing was constant through my childhood: a love for science. It goes back as far as I can remember.

I was a veritable glutton for all things scientific. On my fifth birthday, I got a microscope and spent hours and hours looking at slides. On my next birthday, I was rewarded with a chemistry set, and to this day I have no idea how I kept from blowing up our home. I had rock, moth, insect, and leaf collections, and I consumed a series of books for my age group on different branches of science. I remember dissecting toads (I used chloroform that my mom gave me, but I admit I wasn't sure the poor things were really konked out!) and trying to find the different organs inside them.

When I was eight, a friend and I created our own weather station and made detailed records of various weather factors. (We gave our own weather predictions which, at the time, were about as good as those that came from the television weatherman!) My childhood was filled with science and sports, and I loved them both.

In middle school (we used to call it “junior high”) and high school, my love for science continued to grow. My middle school biology teacher, Mr. Shain, made the subject come alive for me. And in high school, two teachers—Mrs. Manning (math and physics) and Mr. Endicott (chemistry) took me under their wings and mentored me in the respective subjects. As a result, in my junior year, my science fair project was submitted to the Greater Kansas City Science Fair, and a friend and I won second prize in physics. In my senior year, we won first prize in chemistry, and I was offered—and accepted—a sizable fellowship to major in chemistry at the University of Missouri.

In college, my interests developed in physical chemistry, and I was so captured by it that I became one of the three top chemistry majors at the university. One summer, I was one of four juniors to be selected to work as a chemist in industry. What a summer job! All my previous summers were taken up with (pretty bad) factory jobs and construction work. But, lo and behold, that summer I got to wear a shirt and tie every day, working in the chemistry lab at a major firm in Kansas City doing atomic absorption spectroscopy. They offered me a full-time, well-paying job when I graduated. I also joined a chemistry honorary fraternity called Alpha Chi Sigma. My last semester at Mizzou, I was offered a full ride to the University of Colorado to do research in nuclear chemistry. Looking back, I realize that I excelled at science not only because I had a natural talent for it, but also because I truly loved it.

But something happened to me in November of 1968 (my junior year) that would alter my life and my plans for the rest of my life. I was led to Christ by a Campus Crusade for Christ staff worker after weeks of meeting with him to ask questions about the evidence for Christianity. I immediately joined the Jesus Movement and became (and by God’s grace, continue to be) a radical follower of the Lord Jesus.

It would have been a wonderful calling to be a Christian chemist. Science is a noble and strategic vocation. And far from fearing science and what it will reveal, I regularly pray that God will send many Christians into the sciences to conduct their work and make discoveries with humble Christian confidence.

But upon conversion, a whole new world of ideas opened to me: history, biblical studies, theology, and most importantly, apologetics and philosophy (the latter of which I had previously thought was simply “psychology” misspelled!). I sensed my own calling was to turn down the chemistry fellowship and join the staff of Campus Crusade, which I did—and stayed on staff for ten years. My love for these newfound subjects led me to get a ThM in theology at Dallas Seminary, an MA in philosophy at the University of California–Riverside, and a PhD in philosophy at the University of Southern California. My love for science influenced my areas of specialization, namely, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, and metaphysics (which studies the nature of reality).

Sadly, during the process of my various studies, I constantly bumped into something dark, hideous, and, I dare say, evil. It was the philosophical notion of *scientism*, roughly the view that the hard sciences alone have the intellectual authority to give us knowledge of reality. Everything else—especially ethics, theology, and philosophy—is, at least according to scientism, based on private emotions, blind faith, or cultural upbringing. As a result, these disciplines, long regarded by the Western world as a source of knowledge and a path of wisdom, are said to give us no truth about reality, at least no truth that could be supported by evidence and argumentation—which, according to scientism, means that theology and philosophy offer no truth at all.

One of the great ironies of all of this is that *scientism is not a doctrine of science*; rather, it is a doctrine of philosophy. More specifically, scientism is actually a doctrine of epistemology (the branch of philosophy that studies what knowledge is and how we obtain it).

Here is another irony: *scientism distorts science*. By its very nature, science cannot claim to be the only way to know reality. I hope that one of the results of this book will be to equip you to see and explain to others that scientism is not a scientific view at all, and that it, in fact, does not serve or celebrate the incredible gift that science is.

In this book, I will provide you with reasons why scientism is harming our children, destroying the church, and undermining our

ability to get a fair hearing for the gospel. But let me be clear about something that by now should be obvious: My problem is not with science properly practiced. I love science. My issues are with *scientism*. Indeed, I believe that part of my life calling from God himself is to stand against scientism and warn and equip my fellow believers about what scientism is, to show that it is not only false and irrational but a grave danger. The book in your hands is my attempt to fulfill that calling.

So enjoy, think hard, and become an activist against scientism (and for genuine science).

J. P. Moreland

Distinguished Professor of Philosophy

Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

The (Scientistic) Air We Breathe

I was in the middle of a nine-day stay in the hospital following the removal of a cancerous tumor in my colon on April 27, 2016. During that time, several different shifts of nurses had come and gone. On this particular day, a new nurse came to care for me and take my vital readings.

As we chatted, she asked me what I did for a living. I told her I was a philosophy professor. “Where did you go to school?” she asked. Working backwards, I explained that my PhD in philosophy is from the University of Southern California, my MA in philosophy is from the University of California at Riverside, my ThM in theology is from Dallas Seminary, and my BS in physical chemistry is from the University of Missouri.

A puzzled look came on her face. She mused out loud that I had taken two very unrelated, divergent paths.

Before she could explain, I asked if this was what she meant: I started off in science, which deals with reality—hard facts—and conclusions that could be proved to be true. But theology and philosophy were, well, fields in which there were only private opinions or personal feelings, where no one was right or wrong, or if they were, no one could know who was right. Science was cognitive, and theology and philosophy were personal and emotional.

Looking surprised, as though I had read her mind, she acknowledged that my understanding was exactly what she had in mind.

My nurse was expressing the view called *scientism*. Since scientism is so pervasive today—it is the intellectual and cultural air that we breathe—she could not have even named the worldview she was presupposing and articulating.

What Is Scientism?

Roughly, *scientism* is the view that the hard sciences—like chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy—provide the only genuine knowledge of reality. At the very least, this scientific knowledge is vastly superior to what we can know from any other discipline. Ethics and religion may be acceptable, but only if they are understood to be inherently subjective and regarded as private matters of opinion. According to scientism, the claim that ethical and religious conclusions can be just as factual as science, and therefore ought to be affirmed like scientific truths, may be a sign of bigotry and intolerance.

Before looking in more depth at scientism—the view that the hard sciences alone have the intellectual authority to give us knowledge of reality—let me show some concrete examples of it and how it is part of everyday common sense.

Scientism Illustrated

Example: Michael Kinsley

On June 25, 2001, *Time* magazine featured an article by journalist Michael Kinsley defending stem-cell research on human embryos. He wrote, “These [embryos] are microscopic groupings of a few differentiated cells. There is nothing human about them, except potential—and, if you choose to believe it, a soul.”¹

Now the first thing to note about his conclusion is that it is bad science, claiming that there is nothing really “human” about human embryos, which is itself a scientifically absurd statement, contradicted by all of the standard textbooks of embryology!

1. Michael Kinsley, “If You Believe Embryos Are Humans . . .,” *Time* (June 25, 2001), 80.

But that's not my point here. Rather, I want to draw your attention to a part of Kinsley's sentence that you may not have noticed. Reread it carefully and note what he presupposes: we *know* scientific facts about human embryos, but we only *believe* things about human souls. For Kinsley, belief in a soul is not an item of knowledge. In his view, there is no evidence for it. He would probably put it in the same category as a unicorn. You can believe it if you want, perhaps because someone told you that it exists or because you wish that such a creature is out there, but you've never seen or heard or touched a unicorn and therefore it does not really count as knowledge. Kinsley undoubtedly thinks this kind of belief belongs in the pages of fantasy literature, not in the items of what we can truly know and be justified in believing. But Michael Kinsley is not advocating science. He's expressing scientism.

Example: Marilyn vos Savant

For a long time, Marilyn vos Savant (listed in five editions of the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the human with the highest recorded IQ) has written a column in *Parade* magazine titled "Ask Marilyn," where people submit questions and Savant provides answers. In one post, a man explains that his parents raised him in a certain religion. Now an adult, he still likes the religion, but his friends are trying to get him to rationally consider others. He wonders if Savant thinks he should consider his friends' arguments or just go on accepting his parents' religion.

Here is Savant's response: "You're smarter than those friends. Religions cannot be proved true intellectually. They come from the heart—and your parents—not the mind. In my opinion, you have behaved wisely [by not listening to your friends' "arguments"]."²

Marilyn vos Savant has no problem with this man holding to his parents' religious beliefs—"No harm, no foul," she might say—but she's critical of his friends for trying to reason with him or to persuade him that other religious beliefs are more compelling or truthful or best accord with the evidence.

2. Marilyn vos Savant, "Ask Marilyn," *Parade* (October 7, 2001), 25.

From reading her columns over the years, I assure you she would not say that *science* comes from the heart and not the mind, or that it comes from what your parents told you. Scientific claims can be proved true. But in her worldview, religious claims cannot. This is not science but scientism.

Example: Scientism in School

Scientism is found not only among those writing columns in popular magazines. It is also the required dogma in our schools, where it directly challenges Christianity's claim to be a knowledge tradition. For example, consider the "Science Framework" issued by the state of California in 1989, designed to guide its public schools' science curricula. The document offered teachers advice about how to address students who expressed reservations about the theory of biological macroevolution:

At times some students may insist that certain conclusions of science cannot be true because of certain religious or philosophical beliefs they hold. . . . It is appropriate for the teacher to express in this regard, "I understand that you may have personal reservations about accepting this scientific evidence, but it is scientific knowledge about which there is no reasonable doubt among scientists in their field, and it is my responsibility to teach it because it is part of our common intellectual heritage."³

This statement's significance comes not so much from its promoting evolution over creation as from the *picture of knowledge* it presupposes: knowledge about reality comes solely from science, and empirical knowledge claims derived from the hard sciences are the only claims that deserve the backing of public institutions.

This kind of reasoning seems to imply that religious and philosophical claims are simply matters of private feeling, which, by extension, means ignoring claims at the core of ethics, political theory, and religion. Words such as *conclusions*, *evidence*, *knowledge*, *no*

3. Cited in Mark Hartwig and P. A. Nelson, *Invitation to Conflict: A Retrospective Look at the California Science Framework* (Colorado Springs: Access Research Network, 1992), 20.

reasonable doubt, and *intellectual heritage* become associated with science, giving science the “right” to define reality, while words like *beliefs* and *personal reservations* are associated with nonempirical claims, framing religious beliefs as mere ungrounded opinions. Put simply, the state of California is requiring that all students abide by the dictates not merely of science, but of scientism.

Scientism Defined

We have looked briefly at some popular-level expressions, or pre-suppositions, of scientism, but now let’s hear from actual scholars who propose a definition. According to philosopher of science Tom Sorell, “Scientism is the belief that science, especially natural science, is . . . the most valuable part of human learning . . . because it is much the most [sic] authoritative, or serious, or beneficial. Other beliefs related to this one may also be regarded as scientistic, e.g., the belief that science is the *only* valuable part of human learning. . . .”⁴ Sorell notes that “What is crucial to scientism is not the identification of something as scientific or unscientific but the thought that the scientific is much more valuable than the non-scientific, or the thought that the non-scientific is of negligible value.”⁵ In other words, when you have competing knowledge claims from different sources, the scientific will always trump the nonscientific.

In scientism, therefore, science is the very paradigm of truth and rationality. If you look carefully at both of Sorell’s quotations, you may discern two forms of scientism: strong and weak. *Strong scientism* implies that something is true, rationally justified, or known if and only if it is a scientific claim that has been successfully tested and that is being used according to appropriate scientific methodology. There are no truths that can be known apart from appropriately certified scientific claims, especially those in the hard or natural sciences. Lawrence Principe correctly notes that, when it comes to strong scientism, the central idea is that “science and its methods provide the *only fully valid route* to

4. Tom Sorell, *Scientism: Philosophy and the Infatuation with Science* (London: Routledge, 1991), 1, his emphasis.

5. *Ibid.*, 9.

gaining knowledge and for answering questions, to the exclusion of other methods and disciplines.”⁶

Weak scientism is still scientism, but it allows for more “wiggle room.” Weak scientism acknowledges truths apart from science, granting them some minimal rational status even if they don’t have scientific support. Nevertheless, weak scientism still implies that science is by far the most authoritative sector of human knowing.

For practical purposes, weak scientism amounts to pretty much the same thing as strong scientism, though, technically speaking, they do differ. As noted above, weak scientism does not say that the sciences—especially the hard sciences—are the *only* way available to us to achieve knowledge of truth about reality; rather, advocates of weak scientism are willing to grant minimal rational status to at least some disciplines that most would not classify as scientific fields. If some field lacks scientific status or backing, then it is of negligible intellectual value and, if at all possible, the hard sciences (e.g., neuroscience) must take over nonscientific areas (e.g., spiritual teachings—note the number of books claiming that new insights from neuroscience have put spiritual growth on a new plane of authority) or must exert its influence in the more human sciences (psychology, education, etc.) in order to increase the credibility of those fields and to provide us with solid knowledge in them.

And of course, *ideas matter*. Indeed, we are largely at the mercy of our ideas. As the ideas that constitute scientism have become more pervasive in our culture, the Western world has turned increasingly secular and the power centers of culture (the universities; the media and entertainment industry; the Supreme Court) have come increasingly to regard religion as a private superstition. It is no surprise, then, that when our children go to college, more and more of them are just giving up on Christianity. In the next chapter, we will look in greater depth at the impact of scientism on the culture and the church.

6. Lawrence Principe, “Scientism and the Religion of Science,” in *Scientism: The New Orthodoxy*, ed. Richard M. Williams and Daniel N. Robinson (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 42, my emphasis.

SCIENCE:

systems of knowledge of the physical or material world based on facts obtained through observation and experimentation

SCIENTISM:

the view that the hard sciences alone have the intellectual authority to give us knowledge of reality

Rigid adherence to scientism—as opposed to a healthy respect for science—is all too prevalent in our world today. Rather than leading to a deeper understanding of our universe, this worldview actually undermines real science and marginalizes morality and religion.

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APOLOGETICS