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“ The theory of an apish ancestry for man, De Cyon declares pure assumption. He quotes Fraas, who devoted his long life to the study of fossil animals: ‘ The idea that mankind has descended from any Simian species whatsoever, is certainly the most foolish ever put forth by a man writing on the history of man. It should be handed down to posterity in a new edition of the Memorial on Human Follies. No proof of this baroque theory can ever be given from discovered fossils ’; and Virchow: Reminded, in a recent discussion with Jason Rosenhouse, of William A. Williams’s *The Evolution of Man Scientifically Disproved* (1925), a Scopes-era effort in using pseudomathematics to debunk evolution, I was skimming the book again. Chapter 28 is entitled “Scientists Condemn Evolution,” and it consists, predictably, of the usual assemblage of quotations and misquotations from various scientific authorities. As it happens, I have already blogged here at the Science League of America about a number of them: [Lionel S. Beale](#) [7], [Albert Fleischmann](#) [8] (misspelled “Fleishman” by Williams), [St. George Mivart](#) [9] (misspelled “Mivert” by Williams), [Ernst Haeckel](#) [10], and [Nathaniel S. Shaler](#) [11] (although at least his words aren’t misattributed to Darwin here). Of the remainder, most were familiar to me: Rudolf Virchow, William Dawson, James Orr, Thomas Henry Huxley, and Charles Bell (writing in 1833!). Refreshingly, and uncharacteristically for a creationist author of his era, Williams acknowledges taking these “testimonies” from earlier books: namely, Luther

Townsend's *Collapse of Evolution* (1905), Alfred W. McCann's [God—Or Gorilla](#) [12] (1922), and Philip Mauro's *Evolution at the Bar* (1922).

But who was Dr. Traas? Williams writes, "Dr. Traas, a famous palaeontologist, concludes: 'The idea that mankind is descended from any simian species whatever, is certainly the most foolish ever put forth by a man writing on the history of man.'" (He then snarkily asks, "Does this apply to H. G. Wells?" The novelist's *The Outline of History* was published in book form in 1920; unsurprisingly for a student of Thomas Henry Huxley, Wells devoted the first fifty pages or so to sketching the history of life.) Evidently so famous as not to require the use of a first name, Dr. Traas is not mentioned in Townsend, McCann, or Mauro's books. He is mentioned, as "Dr. Traas," in T. T. Martin's *Hell and the High Schools* (1923), where "simian" is capitalized and the sentence is followed by, "It should be handed down to posterity as a new edition of the Memorial on Human Follies. *No proof of this baroque theory can be given from discovered fossils*" (emphasis in the original). But that isn't of any help in identifying the famous paleontologist. And I wasn't able to find Dr. Traas in the standard works of reference, such as the *Complete Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (2008), or by trying a variety of clever on-line searches.

In the end, it was Theodore Graebner who showed the way. As I mentioned in ["The Two Theodores,"](#) [13] Graebner (1876–1950) was a Lutheran theologian who spent the bulk of his career at the Lutheran Synod of Missouri's Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. In his *Evolution: An Investigation and a Criticism* (1921)—which, as Ronald Numbers comments in *The Creationists* (1992), Graebner "erroneously regarded as 'the first scientific work printed in America against the evolution theory'"—I found that Graebner quotes the three-sentence passage as quoted by Martin (with a few variations: Graebner inserts "(ape)" after "Simian," refers to the "Memorial of" rather than the "Memorial on Human Follies," and doesn't emphasize the third sentence)—but attributes it to "Prof. Fraas, who devoted his long life to the study of fossil animals." That's Fraas with an *F*, not Traas with a *T*. Also importantly, Graebner indicates the provenance of the quote: from a book of essays by "[t]he Russo-French physiologist, M. Elie DeCyon, for many years professor in the Faculty of Sciences and in the Academie Medico-chirurgicale at the University of Petrograd."

Elie de Cyon (1843–1912)—born Ilya Fadeyevich Tsion, also known as Elias von Cyon—indeed published such a book of essays: *Dieu et Science* (1910), translated into German as *Gott und Wissenschaft* (1912) but never, it seems, into English. Am I unduly cynical to suspect that none of the Scopes-era creationists examined the book? The earliest description of it in English that I could find was in the *Literary Digest* for September 9, 1911, in "The Religious World" section under the heading, "From Darwin Back to Faith" (above). There the three-sentence passage, attributed to Fraas, is provided as it appears in Martin's book except the third sentence is not emphasized. By the time that the *Bible Champion* took notice, in its September/October issue of 1917, the same passage appears, attributed to Traas; it precedes, and is not connected with, a discussion of de Cyon's views on evolution. The author of the *Bible Champion's* article, entitled "Scientific Opinion Opposed to Evolution," is none other than Luther Townsend, on whose authority it seems likely that Williams, Martin, and William Bell Riley (in *Inspiration or Evolution* [1926]) relied for "Traas." In [part 2](#) [14], then, the task is to find, not Traas, but Fraas.

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