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**"MORONS," MONKEYS AND MORALITY:
REACTIONS TO THE SCOPES TRIAL IN TEXAS**

by Charles R. Wilson

During July of 1925 the state of Tennessee tried a young high school science teacher, John T. Scopes, for violation of its law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in the public schools. Although the Scopes trial occurred in the small town of Dayton, Tennessee, its significance was not limited to one community or even one state. The trial, with William Jennings Bryan as prosecuting attorney and Clarence Darrow as Scopes' defense lawyer, was front-page news throughout the United States and since then has been seen as the peak of the Fundamentalist movement of the 1920's.¹

The Scopes trial occurred at a time when the Fundamentalist movement was strongest in Texas. An unsuccessful attempt to pass legislation similar to that in Tennessee had been tried in 1923 and again in February of 1925. Although the 1925 bill was favorably reported from the Committee on Educational Affairs it failed to pass both houses of the legislature.² More importantly, one of the leaders of the Fundamentalist movement, J. Frank Norris, was located in Texas as pastor of the First Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Since the early 1920's Norris had led in attempts to prevent the teaching of evolution at state-supported and denominationally-supported schools. He was successful in causing the dismissal of several professors, and bragged that he had removed "eight anthropoid apes," commonly known as professors, from Baylor University in Waco.³ As a result the state was agitated over the evolution question intermittently throughout the decade.

The Scopes trial evoked comment from concerned Texas newspapers, religious leaders, and educators. An examination of these reactions during and shortly after the trial reveals that, like the legislative battle and the controversy in the universities, the trial simulated the discussion of science and religion in Texas. But the trial was even more important than that; it was to Texans symbolic of a clash of values and ways of life. Fundamentalists felt that evolution involved more than just monkeys. To many religious people evolution represented the worst of the modern world and its values, which threatened true morality. The Scopes trial touched more than just Fundamentalist fears, though. The defenders of evolution in Texas were themselves beset by fears. These people were afraid that their society was not changing rapidly enough to meet the challenges of the modern world. To these educated people the laughter of the outside world was more annoying than its morality. Both religious leaders and educators believed that they had much to lose, and this explains much of their defensiveness.

On a superficial level the trial at Dayton produced reactions one would expect from a front-page news item. The trial and the evolution issue were keynotes for numerous advertisements, including a Dallas department store, an Austin jewelry store, a Waco loan company, and a swimming supply company ("Don't Moneky Around and be Content to Just Paddle About"). These advertisements were typically accompanied by pictures of monkeys.⁴ The utilization of the trial for such a purpose set the tone for many who failed to take it seriously. The same point seemed to emerge from the mock trials that occurred in several cities. A salesman's club in Sweetwater and the weekly San Antonio Optimist Club meeting used live monkeys in their mock trials, while in Fort Worth an Episcopal minister participated in a comical courtroom scene.⁵

Indeed, one cannot examine events in Texas connected with the Scopes trial without discovering humorous and unusual occurrences. The Negro pastor of a Dallas Baptist church lost his job because he told his congregation that they were descended from apes. The pastor was even taken to court to prevent such future teaching. "I may have come from an ape," said one member of the congregation, "but I want legal proof."⁶ Estelle McClure of Dallas, who claimed to be the great-great niece of Jefferson Davis, was just as concerned. During the trial she announced the completion of a scenario for a motion picture dealing with evolution. The first part of the movie was to be a literal rendition of the book of Genesis, while the latter part would "indict the Darwinian hypothesis through broad allegory." Although she took her script to California, the movie industry, which was a frequent target of Fundamentalist attacks, evidently did not get beyond the first part of the scenario.⁷

Newspapers did more than just report such reactions. The Dayton trial was a popular topic for editors' comments in the summer of 1925, and editorial response was overwhelming in its dismissal of the trial's seriousness. The *Temple Daily Telegram* urged an early end to the "useless discussion." Its editorial "The Circus Comes to Dayton" noted than an inappropriate holiday atmosphere surrounded the trial.⁸ The Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* agreed, finding the entire entertainment mood "repugnant." An editorial cartoon with the title "Playing It for All It's Worth," accurately conveyed the notion that the trial was an advertising venture concocted as much by local Dayton merchants as by Scopes and the state of Tennessee.⁹ Similarly, after the trial was completed, the *Dallas Morning News* commented that it was "a spectacle for the delectation of the flippant and the consternation of the saints." Unfortunately, though, "it lacked a good deal of being Armageddon." All the principal figures of the trial, it felt, were disappointing.¹⁰

Newspapers sometimes commented on the trial through brief fillers on editorial pages. These generally were off-hand and humorous remarks about Dayton and the participants in its trial. For instance, one filler charged the city with trying to remove the "k" from "monkey," while another thanked it for chasing movie stars from the front pages.¹¹ George M. Bailey, who wrote fillers for the *Houston Post-Dispatch*, characterized the trial as a combination of "law, ballyhoo, religion and photography." He even composed a lyric for the Dayton court to sing: "The elephant now goes round and round/The band beings to play,/And the little boy near the monkey's cage/Had better keep away."¹² It was a bad song but it captured the carnival spirit of the trial as perceived by most newspapers and many other Texans.

Some editors felt that important issues were involved in the Scopes trial but that it was naive to think the trial could settle any of them. The *Galveston Daily News* concluded that America's refusal to take Dayton seriously was the most heartening aspect of the controversy. It would be depressing indeed, the editor observed, if a courtroom in a small town could decide issues of freedom of thought and religious faith.¹³ The *Austin American* pointed out that most Americans did not see the trial as a real test of freedom of thought. "Unlearned though the public may be, it nevertheless has a sense of proportion," an editorial said. The trial was "too ridiculous for words" to most people; "truly in their eyes 'monkey business.'"¹⁴

A favorite target of editorial reaction was William Jennings Bryan. Some lampooned him with humor, as in the *Houston Post-Dispatch*, which said that Bryan would either score a hit in Dayton, or "get his base on bawls."¹⁵ The Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* charged Bryan with bringing more contempt on religion than any scientist could. Indeed, one cartoon painted him closing the door on science.¹⁶ Bryan was singled out, not only because he was prosecutor at the Scopes trial, but also because he was the best known Fundamentalist at the national level and because of his political reputation. Several

newspapers felt that Bryan was merely trying to regain the prominence he had once had. The *Austin American* charged, somewhat prophetically, that if Bryan could not have the spotlight his heart would fail to function. Three days after the trial Bryan died of a heart attack in Tennessee.¹⁷

Bryan's few defenders were among the small town weekly papers, which made little mention of the trial but which did carry articles on the death and burial of Bryan. They preferred to remember his past glories rather than his role as a Fundamentalist. "The world has been made better for his having lived," was the judgement of the *Granger News*, and a typical comment of the rural newspapers.¹⁸ Of the daily papers the *Galveston Daily News* was Bryan's staunchest defender. It observed that the Commoner emerged from the trial as a more dignified figure than the agnostic Darrow. The paper felt that Darrow and many Northerners at the trial were contemptuous of all things Southern, especially the Southern religion.¹⁹ This defensive attitude was prevalent elsewhere in Texas, but most newspapers were proud to disassociate themselves from what they considered to be anti-intellectual attempts to prevent the spread of science through "a little trial in a little backwoods court!"²⁰

Texas newspapers generally dismissed the importance of the Scopes trial, but religious leaders and educators did not. They believed that the trial involved significant issues which when resolved could threaten them. In the religious world, the trial was the basis for many sermons and revivals. A San Angelo Baptist church advertised its coming revival as an attempt to collect a "menagerie of evolutionists," surround them with a spiritual environment, and sweat the devil out of them. "If you have been 'monkeying' with yourself, we want you in our cages."²¹ Several summer encampments of Baptists expressed opposition to evolution, urging Baptist-supported schools to immediately dismiss any professors teaching evolution.²² The Baptists were not the only ones noting the trial and its issues. The Seventh-Day Adventists held their annual South Texas Conference during July of 1925, and one of its organizers viewed the trial in prophetic terms, as indicating the approaching end of the world. "The present fight on evolution is the contest between Christ and anti-Christ referred to in the Bible."²³

An integral part of religious leaders' rhetoric was the assurance that science was not on trial at Dayton because true science and religion could not conflict. D. C. Dove, editor of the *Baptist Progress* in Dallas, was explicit about his view of the role of science in the trial. Darrow, he said, was trying to make science the main issue, but "science is in no way involved in that trial. No scholar claims that evolution is a science. Science is founded on facts found, while evolution is at best only a very poor guess."²⁴ Another minister defined science as a systematized statement of the laws of nature and claimed that the *Origin of Species* did not fit this definition since it was an unproven hypothesis.²⁵

W. F. Bryan, pastor of the First Methodist Church in Austin, believed that while science and religion were not contradictory, evolution and the Genesis account of creation were antithetical and irreconcilable. He centered his attacks on the lack of a missing link connecting one species to its predecessor in the evolutionary scale. To prove itself as a scientific fact, he said, evolution would have to "take a horse, lift it out of its species and make it a cow, bridging the gap between two species in development."²⁶ Arthur J. Drossaerts, bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Antonio, similarly emphasized that evolution was only a theory. He complained that those scientists who did believe in the validity of Darwin's theories were giving the uneducated the impression that evolution was a fact, when it was only an hypothesis with, he admitted, some evidence in its favor but not conclusive proof. "Science has nothing to say on this particular phase of the question," he insisted.²⁷

The official vote of the Southern Baptist Convention in Texas was the *Baptist Standard*, published in Waco, and it, too, repeatedly denied that science was on trial at

Dayton. At the start of the trial it remarked that the only issue was whether the laws of Tennessee should be obeyed. The editor stated, with some exaggeration, that he did not know a single member of the Southern Baptist Convention who opposed science. Southern Baptists did oppose, the editor admitted, "the teaching of science, falsely so-called," but he felt there was "a vast difference between the established facts of science and unproven theories of philosophy and pseudo-science which are exploited and paraded in the name of science."²⁸

This insistence that they did not oppose true science reflected a defensiveness on the part of these religious leaders. As the trial progressed, the *Baptist Standard* became ever more defensive, observing that opponents of the Bible at great expense had come to Dayton with the aim of questioning the authority of the Christian scriptures. "Along with a denial of the supernatural," the paper said, "has been shown a regrettable and surprising sectional feeling against and a contempt for, Southern ideals and institutions." The editor cautioned against bitterness toward these opponents of the "religious beliefs of the Southern people."²⁹

One draws closer to the real significance of these attacks on evolution with the realization that many religious leaders thought of the doctrine more in religious terms than in scientific terms. They argued that since the Constitution prohibited the teaching of religious doctrines in schools, and since the teaching of Christianity was generally excluded from school curriculums, then evolution should also be excluded because it stated a creation story with religious overtones. Baptist minister H. C. Morrison wrote a column for an Austin newspaper in which he chastened the scientist for pronouncing on spiritual matters. This was "professing wisdom above his field."³⁰ Another minister remarked that Christian faith "destroyed in the name of Biology" was just as dead "as if it were destroyed in the name of Beelzebub."³¹

Although religious leaders insisted that science was not on trial in Dayton, they just as firmly maintained that the nation's morality was on trial. This was the real issue to the Fundamentalists. Acceptance of evolution was, they feared, the first step in a campaign that would weaken the morality of the young. R. W. Bailey, assistant pastor of a Dallas Baptist church, speaking on "The Ape Case in Dayton, Tennessee," observed that if Scopes was not convicted, within twenty years the nation would see a generation of infidels. "Evolution is a tool of the devil spewed up from out of the bottomless pit to destroy the Bible and drag God's people down to destruction," he said. Such a statement indicated no room for compromise. The claim of some to be able to harmonize the Bible with evolution he dismissed as only "anesthetic" so they could "swallow the dose more easily."³² One Houstonian was just as upset; he felt evolution was a worse menace than alcohol, the great evil to most Southern Fundamentalists. He agreed that the "evolution theory itself is of the devil," because it broke the moral fiber of the young. By destroying their faith in the Bible's accuracy on evolution, it destroyed the young's faith in Christian moral teachings as well.³³

Pierre B. Hill, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, wrote a book in 1925, *The Truth About Evolution*, in which he drew together these religious views of the roles of science and morality in the Dayton trial. Hill discussed science's role in the controversy, arguing that while science was not dangerous to religion the unsubstantiated assumptions of some scientists were destructive. Moreover, the tendency of evolution was upward, indicating that humanity and the universe were improving, and this conflicted with the idea of the fall of man.³⁴

But Hill's strongest remarks were reserved for evolution's effects on the life of the young. He attributed the change in morals during the 1920's to evolution's effects. If you teach man that he is an animal, the minister wrote, then he will act like an animal. Along with the teaching of Darwin's theory in schools and universities had come

a marked deterioration in the morals of youth. A disregard for conventionalities; a lack of sense of shame evidenced in the undue exposure of the body; dances changed from the conservative and rhythmic types to those borrowed from the lowest tribes of Africa, Argentina and the Orient. The names given these dances, for example, the Turkey Trot, the Bunny Hug, the Grizzly Bear, the Camel Walk, the Flea Hop, and others all give evidence of the degrading effect of evolutionary teaching upon the life and character of youth.³⁵

Hill felt Darwinism was responsible for the spirit of the age, justifying the sensualist in his degradation, Prussian militarism in its violence, and Bolshevism in its anarchy. He reflected the defensiveness of many religious people, remarking that he resented the implication that those who opposed evolution were "absolutely devoid of observation and human intelligence."³⁶

Hill voiced Fundamentalist concerns but the real leader of the movement in Texas was J. Frank Norris. Norris had been permanently expelled from membership in the Southern Baptist Convention in 1924 because of his divisive tactics, but he had power stemming from his position as pastor of one of the largest churches in the country. He spoke to a different audience than the *Baptist Standard*, which held a moderate position. A large part of Norris' appeal was his showmanship. A typical performance was his appearance before a large crowd in a circus tent at an Arlington revival shortly after the Scopes trial. Moving around the platform, with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other, he had been known to use live monkeys to dramatize his remarks on evolution, but at this meeting he limited himself to defining evolution, praising Bryan, and challenging Darrow to a series of debates in which he vowed to "skin the skunk's hide from him from one end of the country to the other."³⁷

Norris did not miss any opportunity to campaign against evolution. Earlier in 1925, when the state legislature was considering a bill to outlaw the teaching of evolution, Norris appeared before the House and declared that he would never remain silent when evolutionists tried to "ram down the throats of Southern Baptists that hell-born, Bible-destroying, deity-of-Christ-denying, German rationalism known as evolution."³⁸ His appeal obviously was not to a calm consideration of the issues, but that was probably one reason for his effectiveness. He was a propagandist and a very active one. The week before the Scopes trial he was in Seattle at the Northern Baptist Convention trying to organize an attempt to expel modernists from the main body of the church. After saying that he planned to go to Dayton to observe the trial, Norris made these comments on the theory of evolution:

The scientists say now that everything came from the amoeba and that it would take a man 250,000 years to count a pile of them the size of a pinhead. After billions and trillions and quadrillions of years some of them put on scales and some of them developed fins and osme [sic] of them feathers and some of them feet and tails, and then went swinging in the branches of the trees.

And some of the little ones got cheated out of the trees and went and hid in the caves and lost their hair and got bald-headed. And then they put on clothes and became professors at the University of Chicago.³⁹

Norris evidently did not see the trial as a blow for the Fundamentalist movement, despite the death of Bryan. He invited the official stenographer of the trial to his church in order to given an account of the trial.⁴⁰ For Norris the Scopes trial was only one event in his continuous battle against evolution in Texas.

One of the weaknesses of the Fundamentalist movement was the lack of unity among its members. For instance, Norris' extremism alienated many people, including

James B. Cranfill, who was the elder statesman of the movement in the twenties. Already famous as the vice-presidential candidate on the Prohibition ticket in 1892 and as editor of the *Baptist Standard* at the turn of the century, Cranfill was at age sixty-seven still actively opposing the teaching of evolution. During the trial he even challenged an out-of-state minister who had been critical of Bryan to a debate on evolution.⁴¹ Several months after the Scopes trial Cranfill wrote to a friend that it was time for every person of prominence to declare in unequivocal terms a position on evolution. "All of this pseudo-scientific stuff is plain rot to me," he said. "I do not believe we are descended from brutes, nor do I believe that these pseudo-scientists know any more about how the world came into being than a deaf and dumb rabbit."⁴² He too could see no compromise, for if evolution was a scientific fact it would undermine the Bible, the concept of revealed religion, and the miracles in the Bible. As a result he said he was "unalterably, eternally and unqualifiedly opposed to Darwinian evolution."⁴³

Not all ministers, of course, rejected evolution. Liberal Christians were an important force in opposing Fundamentalist attempts to prevent the teaching of evolution in schools. Sometimes moderate churchmen pointed out the shortcomings of both extreme Fundamentalists and scientists, as did a San Antonio Presbyterian minister who preached a sermon on "Foolish Fundamentalists" one week and discussed "Senseless Scientists" the next.⁴⁴ Another minister attacked the "shallow enemies of science" as well as the "insectile gadflies and barnacles" who engaged in "prejudicial warfare" against religion.⁴⁵

Other liberal ministers went even further and endorsed evolution. Unitarian pastor Edward Day of San Antonio argued that evolution broadened man's view of the Divine Being and provided a basis for hope about the universe. He believed that evolution could lead to a "nobler conception of God than the anthropomorphic one described in the second chapter of Genesis." Significantly, he recognized that one had to accept evolution if he wanted to be known as a modern man.⁴⁶ Frank Atkinson, of the First Congregational Church in Houston, felt that the discovery of mankind's birth through evolution was refreshing and not destructive of religious faith. He made a quaint analogy between this discovery of mankind's true origins and a man's recognition that he did not come from the stork. When a child realizes the stork story is a myth he merely has to make an adjustment. "Of course 'God made man'; and a mature understanding of what that means is like a mature understanding of what it means to say 'God made me.'" All that had to be surrendered was mankind's misinterpretation.⁴⁷

Liberal ministers had much in common with educators on the evolution issue. But educators as a group responded less to the issues raised by the Scopes trial than did religious leaders. Many must have felt like Lee R. Tag, a young student at Southwestern University in Georgetown. He went back to his hometown of Cameron for the summer of 1925, and while there observed that everyone was, to use his word, "agog" over the evolution issue. Moreover, in his community, like other small towns, "the drug store theologians and garage high financiers are the ones that know it all." He complained that the college educated were dubbed "cranks and smart alecks," and related that someone told him to crawl off and die if he believed in evolution. One old lady even accosted him on the street and questioned him about what he was learning at Southwestern. Tag considered himself an educated man and was defensive about, as well as proud of, his acceptance of evolution.⁴⁸

The *Daily Texan* of the University of Texas was similarly defensive, observing that the Fundamentalists had "thrown down the gauntlet in formal challenge to the school of biological science which is attempting to explain the evolution of the higher and specialized order of living organisms . . ." The *Texan* quarrelled with Bryan's claim that the trial was a duel to the death. Such a decisive clash between opposing ideas, it

said, had to be fought out in the spirit of inquiring minds. That criteria automatically excluded Bryan.⁴⁹

The Scopes trial prompted a Childress public school teacher, Dan Mowrey, to write a letter castigating those preachers who condemned the evolution theory, even though they knew no more about it than he did. Mowrey confessed that he had never taught evolution but since the theory was accepted by many educated men he felt it should not be quickly dismissed. To do so would be "the most absurd and ridiculous thing I can think of."⁵⁰

Not many public school teachers responded to the trial, but several college professors did. John Granbery, Professor of sociology at Southwestern University, had already made his stand as a staunch civil libertarian and opponent of the Fundamentalists. In 1922 he had resigned in anger as head of the departments of history and economics at Baylor College in Belton because he was required to answer a questionnaire about his religious beliefs. Granbery was a religious man who published articles in Nashville's *Christian Advocate*, one of the best-known religious papers in the South, but he felt it was "absurd" to belittle science, which provided mankind with a generally accurate picture of the objective world. Of course such a picture was not the complete one and had to be supplemented by religious insights, but science could not be ignored.⁵¹

Another professor, Carl Hartman, zoology teacher at the University of Texas, was not an active opponent of the Fundamentalists, but did respond to the trial in a speech to the Austin Young Men's Business League. He defended scientists, saying that they were not like Bryan, "able to get by with statements which contain but a modicum of truth." Evolution, to Hartman, was simply a tool, a useful way to classify facts. "It is part of our business to knock theories into cocked hats, and we would willingly knock the evolution theory into a cocked hat, if we could find a better one to take its place."⁵²

Not all educated people took the Dayton trial seriously; for instance, J. W. Calhoun, mathematics teacher at the University of Texas, argued in a humorous speech that all Tennesseans did not believe in a flat earth. He said that since man constantly engaged in "monkey business" man, but not woman, was descended from the chimpanzees.⁵³ He did not explain why women failed to ape the men's behavior.

However, the most detailed and incisive critique by an educator of the issues raised at the time of the Scopes trial came from a teacher who was a strongly religious man. Frederick Eby, former professor at the University of Chicago and Baylor University, was in 1925 Dean of the School of Education at the University of Texas and was in charge of the summer school classes there during 1925. On July 10, the day the Scopes trial started, Eby made a speech before the Austin Lions Club, in which he labelled the trial "a war of morons" between church bigots and scientific determinists. The intellectual life of the American people was on trial in Dayton and if the "church bigots" won then "we will revert to ancient standards of living in the Dark Ages." Church interference in educational affairs was to him the "most diabolical and damnable enemy of mankind." In response to that statement his audience applauded for almost a minute.⁵⁴

Eby did not view the trial as a harmless prank, but approached it in the same spirit as many religious leaders. However, whereas religious leaders believed that America's civilization could not survive the destruction of morality stemming from acceptance of evolution as fact, Eby and other educators felt that America's civilization was in danger due to the curtailment of academic freedom. Eby was especially critical of Bryan, noting sarcastically that one could have sympathy for a man who, with such an extensive vocabulary, could not imagine his own evolution from "an animal which has only twelve noises for a vocabulary."⁵⁵

The Austin educator, who the week before the speech had taught his usual Bible class at a Baptist church, was no uncritical defender of science. As well as attacking the Fundamentalists, he indicted the "morons who are teaching biology without seeing God." Nevertheless, he felt that the greatest danger came from the Fundamentalists. If evolution was not taught, then academic freedom would be abolished and intellectual progress would halt. The real issue was an ominous one. "If biology is attacked, all sciences are attacked," he concluded. Science did not always conform to a literal interpretation of the Bible, and if biology was undermined then astronomy, which had been curtailed in the past, would be next to be censored. He maintained that the Fundamentalists were needlessly raising a false issue, for a correct interpretation of evolution did not conflict with a correct reading of the genesis account of creation.⁵⁸

What was the importance of the Scopes trial in Texas? In the area of legislation there was little effect. State senator J. D. Parnell of Wichita Falls predicted that an anti-evolution bill would be introduced in the legislature in 1926 and he insisted that he would oppose it. Another state senator, W. S. Moore of Gainesville, similarly argued against adoption of an evolution law. He saw no need for one since religion was in no danger from scientific ideas. "Truth and fact," he wrote, "is eternal and is in conflict with no true religion and always benefits humankind."⁵⁷ As it turned out no bill was introduced until 1929 and it failed to pass then.

However, a law against the teaching of evolution was not really needed to accomplish the goals of the Fundamentalists since such teaching had been effectively eliminated from Texas schools in October, 1925, less than three months after the close of the Scopes trial. A resolution adopted on October 15 by the Texas State Textbook Commission stated "that all objectionable features in science texts shall be revised or eliminated to the satisfaction of the revision committee . . ."⁵⁸ In effect this meant that references to evolution were to be deleted from books adopted for use in public schools. The book *New Essentials for Biology*, which was the textbook that Scopes had used in Tennessee, was offered to the Commission but it refused altogether to accept that book. One book which was adopted was Truman J. Moon's *Biology for Beginners*, but the Commission ordered the deletion of three chapters dealing with evolution. In other books particular phrases were excised, although entire chapters were not removed. The term "evolution" itself was disturbing to the Commission so "development" was substituted for it. One pious member of the Commission even urged that the word "evolution" be taken from the dictionary, but the board decided that the dictionary was not really a state textbook. Publishers reacted to the ruling by putting out two editions of their textbooks, one for Texas and other Southern states and the other for the rest of the country.⁵⁹

Litter adverse reaction to this action was heard in the state. When questioned about the order, superintendent of the San Antonio schools Marshall Johnson said that he did not object because he approved of the "old-time religion."⁶⁰ But to a few the Commission's decision seemed to be a coup on an unsuspecting public. One Dallasite was concerned that not a single politician, teacher or office-holder had raised a complaint against the ruling. "We are a helpless, disorganized army," he observed, "and as long as we continue to drag along as we have, we shall be defeated in every contest."⁶¹ The *El Paso Herald* was one of few newspapers to comment on the situation. It felt that young Texans would not be deterred from the truth by this act of censorship. "Progressive Texas fears no dark ages and only asks that Texas clowns be not taken seriously."⁶²

Governor Miriam Ferguson was the chairwoman of the Texas Textbook Commission and the leading force in adoption of the ruling. She had been elected in 1924, despite opposition to her by the Fundamentalists, but in Texas Fundamentalists and fundamentalists could agree on the evil of evolution, if nothing else. *Ferguson's Forum*,

the weekly newspaper published in Temple by Miriam's husband, ex-governor James E. Ferguson, printed stories and letters critical of evolution, as well as weekly columns of moral instruction by the Governor.⁶³ Miriam did not consider herself an enemy of education; indeed, on the day of the Commission's ruling she proclaimed the observance of education week throughout Texas. "The age of ignorance is forever past," she declared, "and the light of education continues to dispel from every corner of the Nation the hindrances of unenlightenment. Progressive civilization depends upon progressive education."⁶⁴ But evolution was to have no part in progressive education. Concerning the material excluded from the textbooks, she said, "I'm a Christian mother . . . and I am not going to let that kind of rot go into Texas textbooks."⁶⁵ Miriam Ferguson was known throughout the state as Ma Ferguson.

The exclusion of evolution material from textbooks was a tangible effect of the renewed discussion of evolution at the time of the Scopes trial. It suggests, moreover, that one cannot argue arbitrarily that the trial marked the high point of the Fundamentalist movement. The trial was a dramatic and symbolic high point, but that should not obscure the fact that the controversy continued at the local level in varying degrees of intensities. For instance, the year after the trial, the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Houston, voted to ban the teaching of evolution at denominationally-supported schools.⁶⁶

At any rate, many observers have noted that the trial's real significance was less tangible than influencing textbook commissions. Rather, the trial was important in stimulating the discussion of science, a discussion which destroyed the Fundamentalists. The evidence in Texas indicates that this was partially true. Several libraries reported a rise of interest in books on evolution. A Fort Worth reporter made a survey of book sellers in that city and discovered that, judging by sales, the most popular book was *Origin of Species*. The same reporter examined books on evolution in the public library and observed that nearly all were well thumbed and had marginal notes.⁶⁷ Some perceptive observers realized that the trial would have the effect of stirring interest in evolution and science. A columnist for the *Dallas Morning News* decided that the effect of Dayton would be to bring "the subject of evolution into the light of day. Heretofore it has lurked in laboratories and chattered in conventions of scientists . . . Men will now be somewhat less ashamed to say they originated in lower forms of life and graduated through apedom."⁶⁸ The *San Antonio Express* agreed that one result of the trial would be "a general revival of popular interest in Charles Darwin and his works."⁶⁹

Even so, such an education in science could have only a long-range effect. Judging by the textbook committee ruling and the continuation of Norris' efforts in Texas, science was not suddenly popularized nor was evolution made acceptable to the people who had opposed it before the trial. For one thing, the same libraries that reported the popularity of science books also noticed an equal vogue for theology books. As the *Temple Daily Telegram* remarked, the Scopes trial made people think about the Bible as well as science. Moreover, much of the discussion of evolution was conducted by religious people, whose goal was to discredit the theory. Thus, when the Young Man's Bible class at an Austin Presbyterian church announced it was meeting to study evolution, that did not necessarily mean that evolution was better understood after the meeting than before.⁷⁰

The Scopes trial did increase the discussion of science but that did not automatically mean Fundamentalists were crippled by such a discussion. The implication that increased discussion of evolution would dissipate its opposition was an incorrect one. Individuals who listened to Fundamentalist leaders such as Norris tended to be poorly educated; they were not likely to be interested in or affected by the spread of information on science. Those better-educated people, such as Cranfill, who also were

Fundamentalists, had already read Darwin before the trial and still did not accept his ideas. They perceived a very real threat to their literal interpretation of the Bible. They believed that morality was the real issue of the Scopes trial, and that was more important than scientific ideas. Certainly, the re-emergence of anti-evolution forces in the last decade indicates that forty more years of the popularization of science and evolution has not resolved the issue. In truth, the decline of the organized Fundamentalist movement of the 1920's was due to several factors—Bryan's death and the loss of a national leader, the renewal of interest in the Prohibition issue in 1926, the concern over social issues with the coming of the Depression.⁷¹ More enlightenment on evolution and science by itself could not have undermined the movement.

In Texas the Scopes trial was only one of a number of events during the 1920's that stirred interest in evolution and caused attempts to circumscribe the teaching of evolution to the young. Perceptions of the trial varied with the degree of importance one attached to the issues involved. While newspapers contemptuously dismissed the trial, religious leaders and educators ironically were united in believing it important. Fear was the basis of their agreement; newspapers did not share these fears and this explains their attitude toward the trial. The controversy was never really resolved; it simply faded from the forefront of popular concern as Fundamentalists became exhausted from the dissipation of their energies on a number of different issues and Texas and the nation became preoccupied with other interests.

NOTES

¹Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement* (Paris, 1963), 18; Donald F. Brod, "The Scopes Trial: A Look at Press Coverage After Forty Years," *Journalism Quarterly*, XLII (Spring, 1965), 219; John Thomas Scopes, "Reflections—Forty Years After" in *D-Day at Dayton*, ed. Jerry R. Tompkins (Baton Rouge, 1965), 30; Blake Smith, "The Evolutionary Controversy: Remembrance and Reflection," in *Darwinism in Texas*, ed. Thomas F. Glick (Austin, 1972), 36.

²*Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Texas*, 39th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Austin, 1925), 386, 682, 1787.

³J. Frank Norris, *Inside History of First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, and Temple Baptist Church, Detroit: Life Story of Dr. J. Frank Norris* ([Fort Worth? 1938?]), 159.

⁴Austin *American Statesman*, July 26, 1925, 3, July 31, 1925, 5; Dallas *Morning News*, July 19, 1925, Sect. 1, 3; Waco *Times-Herald*, July 19, 1925, 3; Houston *Post-Dispatch*, July 26, 1925, 7; San Antonio *Express*, July 19, 1925, 7. Unless otherwise noted, future newspaper references are to 1925.

⁵Sweetwater *Daily Reporter*, July 14, 4; San Antonio *Express*, July 2, 22; Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, July 28, 4.

⁶Austin *American*, July 12, 1.

⁷Dallas *Morning News*, July 26, Sect. 3, 7.

⁸Temple *Daily Telegram*, July 15, 4, July 4, 4, July 7, 4.

⁹Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, July 4, 4, July 18, 4; Dallas *Morning News*, July 8, 1.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, July 23, 14.

¹¹*Ibid.*, July 12, Sect. 3, 4, July 16, 14; Houston *Post-Dispatch*, July 16, 6. See also San Antonio *Express*, July 15, 12; Galveston *Daily News*, July 17, 4. After Bryan remarked that the trial was a duel to the death between evolution and religion, a filler in the Dallas *Morning News* asked "will the loser be a good sport and play dead?" After the trial the same paper noted, "Now that the battle to the death is over, who's dead?" Dallas *Morning News*, July 24, 14, July 10, 14.

¹²Houston *Post-Dispatch*, July 12, Edit. Sect., 6, July 15, 6.

¹³Galveston *Daily News*, July 11, 4.

¹⁴Austin *American*, July 2, 4.

¹⁵Houston *Post-Dispatch*, July 13, 6. The trial was in July, the middle of baseball season. The ubiquitous Tennessee monkey even appeared in a sports cartoon. Dallas *Morning News*, July 19, Sect. 2, 1.

¹⁶Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, July 26, 4; Dallas *Morning News*, July 13, 1.

¹⁷Austin *American*, July 9, 4, July 14, 3; Sweetwater *Daily Reporter*, July 13, 2.

¹⁸Granger *News*, August 6, 4. See also Naples *Monitor*, July 31, 1.

¹⁹Galveston *Daily News*, July 22, 4.

²⁰Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, July 24, 8. Texas newspaper reaction was in line with other papers nationally. Darrow complained that "most of the newspapers treated the whole case as a farce instead of a tragedy." Darrow, *The Story of My Life* (New York, 1932), 249.

²¹San Angelo *Daily Standard*, July 26, Sect. 1, 3.

²²*Ibid.*, July 12, Sect. 1, 9; *Baptist Standard* (Waco), July 30, 9, 20.

²³Dallas *Morning News*, July 30, 13; also Waco *Times-Herald*, July 25, 7.

²⁴Dallas *Morning News*, July 16, 14.

²⁵Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, July 29, 8.

²⁶Houston *Post-Dispatch*, July 22, 11; Austin *American-Statesman*, July 26, Sect. 2, 5; *Daily Texas* (Austin), July 12, 4; Austin *American*, July 13, 2. Bryan preached a sermon entitled "Clarence Darrow, the Most Dangerous Man in America."

²⁷San Angelo *Express*, July 12, 8.

²⁸*Baptist Standard*, July 9, 6, September 3, 7.

²⁹*Ibid.*, July 23, 6.

³⁰Austin *American*, July 19, Sect. 2, 2.

³¹Pierre B. Hill, *The Truth About Evolution* (San Antonio, 1925), 34. Also see *Baptist Standard*, July 16, 17.

³²Dallas *Morning News*, July 18, 7, July 20, 7.

³³*Baptist Standard*, August 20, 12.

³⁴Hill, *The Truth About Evolution*, 2, 27.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 30.

³⁶San Antonio *Express*, July 18, 2.

³⁷Maynard Shipley, *The War on Modern Science* (New York, 1927), 179; C. Allyn Russell, "J. Frank Norris: Violent Fundamentalist," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXXV (January, 1972), 281.

³⁸Shipley, *The War on Modern Science*, 171-172.

³⁹Waco *Times-Herald*, July 4, 1.

⁴⁰Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, July 25, 10.

⁴¹Dallas *Morning News*, July 11, 14.

⁴²Letter to George W. Truett, February 16, 1926, Cranfill Papers, Barker Texas History Center.

⁴³Dallas *Morning News*, July 27, 8.

⁴⁴San Antonio *Express*, July 11, 4.

⁴⁵Houston *Post-Dispatch*, July 13, 7. See also Big Spring *Herald*, August 7, 3.

⁴⁶San Antonio *Express*, July 30, 5.

⁴⁷Houston *Post-Dispatch*, July 12, Edit. Sect., 6.

⁴⁸Letter from Tag to John Granbery, August 16, 1925, Granbery Papers, Barker Texas History Center.

⁴⁹*Daily Texan*, July 8, 2.

⁵⁰Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, July 16, 8.

⁵¹Letter from Granbery to G. Watts Cunningham, October 21, 1926, Granbery Papers; "The Passing of Materialism," Packet #2P391, Granbery Papers.

⁵²*Austin American*, July 18, 3.

⁵³*Ibid.*, July 25, 1, July 28, 1.

⁵⁴*Austin American*, July 10, 1-3.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Waco *Times-Herald*, July 7, 1; Dallas *Morning News*, July 23, 14.

⁵⁸*Austin American*, October 15, 1.

⁵⁹Shiple, *The War on Modern Science*, 172-174; Maynard Shipley, "Growth of the Anti-Evolution Movement," *Current History and Forum*, XXXII (May, 1930), 330-332.

⁶⁰Shiple, *The War on Modern Science*, 174.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 174-175.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 175.

⁶³See, for instance, *Ferguson's Forum*, August 20, 8, September 24, 5.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, October 15, 2.

⁶⁵Shiple, *The War on Modern Science*, 174.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 179-180. S. P. Brooks, president of Baylor University, said he "would die and rot in my grave before I would sign the Houston resolution."

⁶⁷Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, July 9, 19; Houston *Post-Dispatch*, July 12, 9.

⁶⁸Dallas *Morning News*, July 12, Sect. 3, 4.

⁶⁹San Antonio *Express*, July 21, 10.

⁷⁰Waco *Times-Herald*, July 11, 6; Temple *Daily Telegram*, July 15, 4.

⁷¹For the best discussion of Southern religion, see Kenneth K. Bailey, *Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1964).