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## THE KENTUCKY CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION

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Under the leadership of Dr. J. W. Porter, an active campaign has been carried on to secure legislation in the state of Kentucky forbidding the teaching of "Darwinism." Mr. William Jennings Bryan lent his aid to the movement. Bills were introduced into the Senate and House making the teaching of evolution illegal. The texts of these bills and an account of the arguments in favor and in opposition are given in this article. The House bill was lost by one vote. The result of the agitation has been a widespread public education on the subject of evolution.

The state of Kentucky has been passing through a period of intense religious discussion. In pulpit, press, schoolroom, social gathering, around the fireside, and on the street corner evolution has been the favorite topic. This controversy became state wide when a bill to prohibit the teaching of evolution was introduced in the Kentucky legislature, January 23, 1922. Inasmuch as the propaganda which is back of this bill is extending throughout the country, the religious and educational leaders of the nation have been much interested in the proceedings at Frankfort. The papers and magazines of the country have had articles and editorials on the Kentucky situation, treating it more or less lightly; but it is really a time to be serious, for what has been attempted here may be attempted in any state in the union.

The introduction of this bill was the culmination of an active campaign against the teaching of evolution which has been conducted with increasing vigor for four or five years.

The colleges and public schools of Kentucky have for years been teaching the modern scientific theory of evolution, and no objection has been made. One of the colleges which is under the control of the denomination which has been the most active in this recent anti-evolution movement celebrated the birth of Darwin in 1909. About five years ago a reactionary wing in the Christian church made an attack on the members of the faculty of the College of the Bible, one of their theological institutions which is located in Lexington. Among other things these men were charged with teaching the theory of evolution as it applies to man. This opposition has continued to the present. During recent months there has been a growing sentiment against the teaching of evolution in schools supported by public funds. The Baptists have taken the lead in this opposition, but they have had the support of other communions.

The immediate occasion for the attempted legislative barrier against the teaching of evolution was the proposed enlargement of the University of Kentucky. President Frank L. McVey launched a movement during the summer to enlarge greatly the state university. It was generally understood that the theory of evolution was taught in the university, and one of the professors has engaged in newspaper controversy on the subject with Dr. J. W. Porter, who was until recently the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lexington. Some of the professors of the university were accused of being radical in their views, and their statements and the effect of these on the faith of the students had been greatly exaggerated. This proposed enlargement of the University of Kentucky intensified the activities of those who were opposed to the teaching of evolution.

Plans were being formulated for several months for the campaign which was to drive evolution from the state. During the autumn the "Fundamentalists" held conferences in several of the important centers of the state, and much was said in

these meetings about the dangers of evolution. The campaign for legislative enactment against the teaching of evolution was inaugurated by Dr. J. W. Porter, who became the leader of the movement, in a resolution which was presented to the Baptist State Board of Missions, meeting in Louisville, December 6. This resolution charged that the "false and degrading theory of Darwinian evolution is taught in textbooks" of the state university and many of the high schools throughout Kentucky. This resolution led to the appointment of a committee which was to prepare literature, launch active propaganda against the theory and to carry the matter to the state legislature for the purpose of obtaining the enactment of "laws in harmony with the resolution." This committee was charged to "look into funds going to the state university if the university does not conform to the requirements of the resolution."

Shortly after this action by the Baptist State Board of Missions, Dr. Porter preached a sermon against evolution in the First Baptist Church of Lexington. In the course of this sermon he read a letter from William Jennings Bryan, praising him for his opposition to the teaching of the Darwinian theory of evolution in the public schools. In this letter Mr. Bryan said:

I have seen much of your activity and am gratified. You have done exactly what I think should be done and our Florida Baptists have taken the same step. I cited the action of the Baptists of your state in speaking to them here. The movement will sweep the country and we will drive Darwinism from our schools.

Mr. Bryan seemed to think that inasmuch as the evolutionists lacked courage it would be easy to rout them. He said:

The agnostics, who are undermining the faith of our students, will be glad enough to teach anything the people want taught when the people speak with emphasis. My explanation is that a man who believes that he has brute blood in him will never be a martyr. Only those who believe they are made in the image of God will die for a truth. We have all the Elijahs on our side. Strength to your arms.

In this sermon Dr. Porter declared that "Darwinism would be run out of Kentucky if it took every cent the Baptist people of the Commonwealth had to do it." He also stated that the Lexington City Board of Education would be petitioned to discontinue the use of the present textbook on zoölogy because it teaches the evolution theory.

The campaign was intensified by the coming of W. J. Bryan to deliver a series of addresses in central Kentucky. He had delivered his address in Louisville in September. He spoke before the House and the Senate in joint session January 19. He denounced the evolutionists with his usual vigor and called upon the lawmakers to protect our young people. His meeting in Lexington was typical of the others. Although the price of admission was fifty cents and one dollar the auditorium was crowded to hear him. Although he bitterly denounced Darwinism he did not seem to make any definite distinction between that and other theories of evolution. He warned students against the professor who teaches the Darwinian theory as "the most dangerous man that could be met." He referred to numerous incidents in various universities to show that the teaching of evolution destroys faith in God and the Bible. He read passages on evolution from some of the textbooks used in the Kentucky schools and urged that such teaching should be prohibited in schools supported by public funds. At the close of his lecture Rev. W. L. Brock, pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church of Lexington, presented the following resolutions which were adopted by a rising vote in which a large majority of those present participated:

Whereas, Darwinian evolution, the unscientific anti-Biblical teaching that man is descended from a lower form of life, is being taught in the schools of Kentucky, supported by the taxation of her citizens, and whereas we believe this teaching to be detrimental to the faith, and therefore to the morals of the rising generation; therefore, be it resolved:

1. That, while we cherish the right of every man to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and while we accord

to all men the right to found and maintain schools to teach the tenets of their faith, we vigorously deny the right of any set of men, whether orthodox, atheists, or infidels, to teach their own peculiar views of the Bible at state expense;

2. While conceding that state schools, on the ground of our constitutional separation between church and state, are excused from the positive teaching of the Bible, we yet maintain with deepest earnestness that this constitutional provision prohibits their teaching views antagonistic to the Bible—that separation prohibits alike the union of church and state and the union of state and atheism or infidelity;

3. In view of the above, we respectfully request presidents, faculties and trustees of state schools, municipal boards of education and trustees of public schools to co-operate in the elimination of Darwinism and similar evolution theories, teaching that man is descended from a brute or some lower form of life, from their teaching and textbooks;

4. We earnestly appeal to the General Assembly of Kentucky for legislation prohibiting the teaching in state schools of evolution, destructive criticism and every form of atheism and infidelity whatsoever.

These preliminary steps were followed by the campaign in the legislature. This was inaugurated by the introduction in the House of a bill against the teaching of evolution. This bill reads as follows:

KENTUCKY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1922

House Bill 191—Introduced January 23

By Representative George W. Ellis, Barren County

An act to prohibit the teaching in public schools and other public institutions of learning, Darwinism, atheism, agnosticism or evolution as it pertains to the origin of man.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

SECTION 1. That it shall be unlawful for a teacher, principal, superintendent, president or anyone else who is connected in any way with the public schools, high schools, training schools, normal schools, colleges, universities or any other institutions of learning in this Commonwealth, where public money of this Commonwealth is used in whole or in part for the purpose of maintaining, educating or training the children or young men or young women of this Commonwealth; for such teacher, principal, superintendent, president or other person connected directly

or indirectly with such schools or institutions of learning to teach or knowingly permit the same to be taught; Darwinism, atheism, agnosticism, or the theory of evolution in so far as it pertains to the origin of man; and anyone so offending shall on conviction be fined not less than fifty nor more than five thousand dollars or confined in the county jail not less than ten days nor more than twelve months, or both fined and imprisoned in the discretion of the jury.

SEC. 2. If any school, college, university, normal school, training school or any other institution of learning which has been chartered by the Commonwealth of Kentucky and which is sustained in whole or in part by the public funds of said Commonwealth shall knowingly or willingly teach or permit to be taught Darwinism, atheism, agnosticism, or the theory of evolution in so far as it pertains to the origin of man it shall forfeit its charter and on conviction shall be fined in any sum not to exceed five thousand dollars. In all proceedings of forfeiture or revocation of charter, the holder thereof shall be given thirty days notice in which to prepare for a hearing to be attended by its representative or counsel.

The Commonwealth or the accused may take such oral or written proof for or against the accused as it may deem it the best to present these facts.

This act is to be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval as provided by law.

This was followed two days later by the introduction of a similar bill in the Senate by Senator James R. Rash, of Madisonville. This bill is as follows:

An act prohibiting the teaching of evolution in any school, college or institution of learning maintained in whole or in part in this State by funds raised by taxation and providing penalties therefor.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

1. It shall be unlawful in any school or college or institution of learning maintained in whole or in part, in this State, by funds raised by taxation, for anyone to teach any theory of evolution that derives man from the brute or any other form of life, or that eliminates God as the creator of man by a direct creative act. No textbook containing any such teaching shall be adopted for use in any such school or college or institution of learning maintained in whole or in part by funds raised by taxation in this state. Any person violating any of the provisions

of this section shall be fined not less than fifty dollars nor more than one thousand dollars.

2. Any person acting as a teacher or instructor in any school or other institution of learning maintained in whole or in part by funds derived from taxation who shall teach or give instruction in any of the theories prohibited by Section 1 of this Act shall forfeit his position and place as such teacher or instructor and shall be entitled to no salary, either past or future.

Any two persons having information that instruction in any of the theories prohibited by Section 1 of this Act is being given or has been given in any school or institution of learning maintained in whole or in part by funds derived from taxation may make complaint thereof. Said complaint shall be in writing and signed by the parties making the charge and shall be delivered to the board or other persons authorized by law to employ such teacher. Within five days after the filing of such complaint said board shall call said teacher before them and shall investigate said complaint, and if the same is found to be true, said teacher shall be discharged.

The introduction of these two bills was the signal for a state-wide campaign. Most of the ministers in the state either preached against evolution, or attempted to show that it was possible for one to be an evolutionist and still be a Christian. The dailies and the county papers had articles and editorials for and against in almost every issue. Evolution was discussed by all classes wherever they met together. It was marvelous to see how proficient in scientific knowledge the average citizen of Kentucky suddenly became. The anti-evolutionists carried advertisements in the papers to further their propaganda. In these advertisements an attempt was made to discredit evolution by quoting authorities against it.

The arguments that were made against evolution can be summed up under four heads. It is antagonistic to the Bible, and the teaching of it undermines faith in Christianity. It lowers man to the brute, and takes away his divine birthright. It eliminates God from creation. It justifies force as a social program.

The opponents of legislation on the subject of evolution insisted that education should be untrammelled. They urged that instead of belief in evolution destroying faith in God, it gives him a larger place. The annual council of the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky, which met in Louisville shortly after the introduction of the bills, unanimously passed the following resolutions:

Whereas a bill was introduced Monday, January 23, in the Kentucky Legislature against the teachings of Darwinism, atheism, agnosticism, or evolution as pertains to the origin of man in schools maintained wholly or in part by State funds;

Be it resolved by this council, representing the Episcopal Church in the diocese of Kentucky, assembled at Christ Church Cathedral in Louisville, Kentucky, this 26th day of January, 1922, that we most urgently protest against the passage of such a bill for the following reasons:

First—The theory popularly known as Darwinism, or natural selection of evolution, is not synonymous with atheism or agnosticism, as the title of this bill seems to indicate. Some of the most scholarly, devout and eminent Christian thinkers have been and are today avowed evolutionists, notably the late Henry Drummond, Alfred Russell Wallace, the co-discoverer with Darwin, and many others.

Second—While opposing with all the earnestness possible the teaching of atheism or agnosticism, yet we deprecate the attempt of a popular legislative body to decide questions concerning the curricula of our schools and colleges and our textbooks, for which task they were not selected; nor have they the time, technique or training to fit them to be judges. These questions pertain to and must be left to the decision of those chosen and fitted for this purpose, namely, our educators themselves.

The test was first made in the Senate. Senate Bill 136, which had been introduced by Senator Rash, was argued before the Committee on Kentucky Statutes February 9. The senate chamber was crowded and the hour was one of intense feeling. Any legislation on the subject under consideration was opposed by President McVey of the University of Kentucky and Dr. E. L. Powell, pastor of the First Christian Church of Louisville. Some legislation on the subject was urged by President E. Y. Mullins of the Baptist Theological Seminary, of Louisville and Dr. J. W. Porter, of Lexington.

The following amended bill, which was agreed on at a meeting of Baptist ministers, was introduced at the instance of Dr. Mullins:

An Act prohibiting the teaching of anything that will weaken or undermine the religious faith of the pupils in any school or college or institution of learning maintained in whole or in part in this State by funds raised by taxation and providing penalties therefor.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

Whereas a fundamental principle of the separation of church and state is organic in our American laws, and

Whereas the separation does not imply an antagonism between church and state, but rather mutual respect and relations of friendship and co-operation, and

Whereas the religious rights of our people are guaranteed to them by law, and

Whereas it is glaring violation of the principle of religious liberty when teachers in our schools, supported by our taxes, attack or seek to undermine or destroy the religious beliefs of students.

1. Now in order to safeguard the religious rights of our people and to establish more securely the principle of separation of church and state, no teacher in any department of any university, normal school, or public school in the State of Kentucky, supported in whole or in part by funds raised by taxation, who shall directly or indirectly attack or assail or seek to undermine or weaken or destroy the religious beliefs and convictions of pupils of said university, normal school, or public school shall be employed as a member of the faculty of said university, normal school, or public school by the authorities entrusted with such duties.

2. Should such teacher, by oversight on the part of the board or misrepresentation by said teacher or teachers, be employed by the governing boards of any of said institutions entrusted with such duties, said governing boards shall duly consider any and every complaint made in writing by two persons against any teacher or teachers violating the above provisions, and if said charges are established as true, said teacher or teachers shall be immediately dismissed from the faculty of said institution.

President McVey argued that the legislation proposed "leads to a lack of personal liberty provided for under the rights of the constitution." He said, "If you can pass such an act as the one before you for consideration you would be

justifiable in passing one which provides for a certain religious belief." He declared that if the proposed legislation were enacted it would be impossible to secure textbooks for the schools of Kentucky. He maintained that such legislation would force our young people to go to church schools or to the universities of other states to complete their education.

Dr. Powell argued that the proposed legislation is un-American and contrary to the fundamental principles of Protestantism. He insisted that it is unconstitutional because it interferes with the freedom of conscience.

Dr. Mullins took the position that there should be no legislation that interferes with science, but he insisted that certain conditions exist which make some legislation necessary. He said: "I do not believe that the church shall have the power to say what shall and shall not be taught in the school, and, on the other hand, I do not believe that the state shall have the power to teach something that is a direct attack on the Christian religion." He urged the passage of the first amendment. Dr. Porter insisted on the passage of a bill that prohibits the teaching of any theory of evolution that derives man from a lower form of life.

The committee reported out the amendment suggested by Dr. Mullins which was discussed in the Senate February 15. The Senate seemed to be about equally divided with perhaps a slight majority in favor of the bill. After much filibustering the bill was finally referred to the Rules Committee by a vote of 19 to 17. This action virtually killed the bill as far as the Senate was concerned.

People generally seemed to think that there would be no further action during the present session, and they seemed to be satisfied to call a truce in the controversy and give time a chance to throw some light on the whole situation. The question, however, was reopened when the House voted to call the Ellis bill out of the Rules Committee. Practically the entire day, March 5, was given up to a discussion of the bill

with virtually the same arguments that were made before the Senate. Although this was the most objectionable of all the bills it was defeated by just one vote, the vote being 42 to 41. Thus the evolution controversy in this session of the General Assembly has ended with a slight victory for a free educational system.

It would perhaps be appropriate for the writer to make some personal observations on the whole situation. In the first place, the controversy greatly stimulated investigation, thought, and discussion of all subjects which have any bearing on evolution. There has been so much demand for the works of Darwin, works on biology, and on geology that it has been almost impossible to secure any of these in the public libraries. In the second place, the term evolution has lost much of its objectionable connotation as the public has become better informed. It is not so much of a scare-term as it was a few months ago. In the third place, the evolutionists and the anti-evolutionists are much closer together than they were three months ago. Many who were opposed to all evolution at the beginning of the controversy now grant it for all forms of life except man. Others who at first opposed any theory of evolution as it applies to the origin of man are now careful to state that they are only opposed to Darwinian evolution. On the other hand, the evolutionists have been careful to state that they do not hold or teach the Darwinian theory, that is, the theory of natural selection. In the fourth place, the teaching of evolution is quite probably removed from the realm of civil legislation. It does not seem probable that the question will ever come before the General Assembly again. In the fifth place, this controversy has helped to remove the teaching of evolution from the realm of ecclesiastical legislation. It will not be as difficult for a preacher, or a teacher in a theological seminary, to express himself sympathetically on the subject of evolution as it was before. The controversy has helped to turn on the light and good has come out of it.