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EVOLUTION

The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory

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CHAPTER 9

AMERICA'S ANTI-EVOLUTION CRUSADE

Evangelist Billy Sunday jumped, kicked, and slid across the stage. "Many a minister today has lost his vision. He is standing up in the pulpit preaching tommyrot to the people... that we came from protoplasm, instead of being born of God Almighty, instead of being created of the Lord," he shouted in his trademark staccato cadence to a packed house on the first night of his February 1925 Memphis revival. "I don't believe the old bastard theory of evolution.... I believe I am just as God Almighty made me." Sweat sprayed from his tossing head as he pounded both fists on the lectern. Sunday probably had given the same sermon at least a hundred times to a total of more than a million people in cities and towns across the United States. He had rehearsed every word and choreographed each gesture.[1]

At the time, Sunday stood alone as the nation's preeminent Protestant evangelist. But his eighteen-day-long Memphis revival held special significance: the Tennessee state senate was then considering legislation banning public-school instruction in human evolution. A senate committee had rejected such a bill prior to Sunday's arrival, but after his various sermons in Memphis drew crowds totaling some two hundred thousand people, the committee reversed itself—leading to enactment of the nation's first law against teaching evolution and a storied showdown over the statute's meaning and validity at the Scopes trial later that year.

Sunday's denunciation of the theory of evolution reflected broad developments within American popular culture. He was not a doctrinaire fundamentalist; Sunday characterized

his views as "pure Americanism," which in many ways they were.[2] A product of the nation's rural heartland, he played major-league baseball before feeling the call during the 1890s to become an itinerant evangelist in the tradition of George Whitefield, Charles Gradison Finney, and Dwight L. Moody. Without formal training in theology, Sunday preached the familiar gospel message of individual sinfulness, redemption through personal faith in Jesus, and utter fidelity to the Bible as God's word. He added an earthy, melodramatic style that took the nation by storm in an era of vaudeville theatrics.

Dubbed a "gymnast" for Jesus in his authorized biography, Sunday used slang and stage acrobatics to attract huge crowds in virtually every major American city.[3] Invitations to preach came from a broad spectrum of Protestant churches. Politicians embraced his crusades. Theodore Roosevelt once joined Sunday onstage and Woodrow Wilson invited him to the White House. By his death in 1935, Sunday had preached to more than one hundred million Americans and claimed that more than a million of them had responded to his altar calls.

Sunday opposed evolutionary theories of both human origins and religious understanding. The two blurred in his mind. Embracing developments in biblical higher criticism, many theologically liberal Christians accepted the so-called "modernist" interpretation of the Bible as a collection of accounts about God written over time by various authors, with earlier accounts typically offering more primitive concepts than later ones. Both religious modernism and the scientific theory of evolution denied the literal truth of Genesis, Sunday argued. "When the word of God says one thing and scholarship says another, scholarship can go to hell," he asserted. "If by evolution you mean advance, I go with you, but if you mean by evolution that I came from a monkey, good night!"[4]

When Sunday peopled hell in his sermons, Charles Darwin inevitably flailed in the fiery flames. Huxley and Spencer occasionally joined him. During World War One, German evolutionists, Social Darwinists, and expositors of biblical higher criticism bore the brunt of Sunday's venom. By the time of his 1925 Memphis revival, in the heat of battle over anti-evolution legislation, Sunday focused on evolutionary educators. "Teaching evolution. Teaching about pre-historic man. No such thing as pre-historic man. In the beginning God made man—and that's as far back as it runs," he declared. "A-a-ah! Pre-historic man. Pre-historic man. Ga-ga-ga-ga," at which point, Memphis's leading newspaper reported, "Mr. Sunday gagged as if about to vomit."[5]

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Although Sunday expressed his opinions more loudly than most conservative Christians, his stated reasons for rejecting Darwinism resonated widely among them. Sunday maintained that any theory of human evolution conflicted with a literal reading of Genesis. Yet no scientist had ever observed people evolving from other primates or, for that matter, one distinctly different kind of animal developing from another. Even if evolution represented the best naturalistic explanation for the origin of species, anti-evolutionists like Sunday declared their intent to stick with a literal reading of God's word until science proved evolution by direct observation. Further, Sunday complained that Darwinism replaced the traditional Christian belief in a perfect original creation broken by human sinfulness with the image of humanity ascending through purely natural processes from savage origins to ever-higher levels of development. The fact that many liberal Christians, spiritual modernists, and agnostics welcomed this reversal of viewpoint made traditional Christians all the more wary. Finally, Sunday linked evolutionary biology to Social Darwinism, eugenics, and other forms of biological de-

terminism that stood in opposition to his message of individual salvation and sanctification available through divine grace to all people regardless of their supposed genetic fitness.

By the early twentieth century, theologically conservative Protestants in the United States had splintered into various subgroups. Evangelicals proclaimed the traditional Protestant gospel of personal salvation though faith in Jesus and upheld the Bible as God's inspired word. In the 1910s, a subgroup of militant evangelicals began calling themselves "fundamentalists" to emphasize their commitment to what they saw as the fundamental tenets of biblical Christianity: the inerrancy of Scripture, the veracity of Old and New Testament miracles, and the trustworthiness of end-time prophecies. Pentecostals emerged as a separate subgroup claiming power through the Holy Spirit to heal, prophesy, and speak in tongues. The vast majority of Americans who identified with these subgroups shared to some degree Sunday's concerns about the theory of evolution. Indeed, most conservative Christians never warmed to Darwinism.

Before Darwin published *Origin of Species* in 1859, orthodox Christians within the scientific community were among the staunchest defenders of the doctrine of special creation, and many of them held out the longest against Darwin's ideas. As scientific support for creationism waned, some theologians, ministers, and lay Christians took up its defense. In his 1874 book *What Is Darwinism?,* for example, the noted Princeton theologian Charles Hodge presented a tightly reasoned argument leading to the answer, "It is atheism [and] utterly inconsistent with the Scriptures." Hodge spoke for many conservative Christians when he stressed that Darwin's "denial of design in nature is virtually the denial of God."[6] Beginning in the late nineteenth century, conservative Christian publishers poured forth a steady steam of anti-evolution books and tracts. In one of his final sermons, Dwight L. Moody damned

the "false doctrine" of materialistic evolution as one critical sin-inducing "temptation" afflicting modern life; after his death in 1899, his ongoing Bible Institute emerged as a center for anti-evolutionism.[7] By the 1920s, many leading American evangelicals and fundamentalists had taken a public stand against the theory of evolution. Powerful Baptist and Presbyterian pastors launched drives to purge denominational colleges and seminaries of Darwinian influences. Among those responding to a 1927 survey of American Protestant ministers, a significant percentage of Lutherans (89), Baptists (63), Presbyterians (35), and Methodists (24) answered "yes" to the question, "Do you believe that the creation of the world occurred in the manner and time recorded in Genesis?"[8]

Notably, only about one in ten of the Episcopalian and Congregationalist ministers responding to this survey affirmed a belief in the Genesis account of creation. Because of their wealth and social standing, Episcopalians and Congregationalists tended to carry weight in elite culture, higher education, and state politics disproportionate to their numbers. Evolutionism often became part of the religious worldview of liberal theologians and ministers in these and other Protestant denominations. The renowned Congregational pastor Henry Ward Beecher blazed the trail in 1885 by publishing *Evolution and Religion,* in which he extolled evolution as "the method of God in the creation of the world" and in the development of human society, religion, and morality. "Evolution is accepted as *the method* of creation by the whole scientific world," Beecher wrote. "It is the duty of the friends of simple and unadulterated Christianity to hail the rising light and to uncover every element of religious teaching to its wholesome beams."[9]

In 1922, the mounting concerns of American evangelicals and fundamentalists erupted into a nationwide effort to drive Darwinism from public education. More than anyone,

William Jennings Bryan transformed an inward-focused campaign to purify church doctrine into an outward-looking crusade to change government policy.

OUTLAWING A THEORY

Bryan was a legend in his own lifetime. A political liberal with decidedly conservative religious beliefs, he entered Congress in 1891 as a young, silver-tongued Nebraska populist committed to defend rural America from economic exploitation by Eastern bankers and railroad barons. Rejecting the Social Darwinian government policies of his day, Bryan delivered his most famous speech at the 1896 Democratic National Convention, where he demanded an alternative silver-based currency to help debtors cope with the crippling deflation caused by reliance on gold-backed money. "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns," he shouted in an address heard from Wall Street banking houses to Rocky Mountain silver mines, "you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."[10] The speech electrified the convention and secured him the Democratic presidential nomination; at age thirty-six, he was the youngest person ever so honored by a major political party. A seasoned orator exploiting the nation's new network of railroads, Bryan carried his campaign to the people. More Americans heard him speak during that campaign than had ever heard anyone in so short a period. Bryan became known as the "Great Commoner" and changed how candidates ran for president. Front-porch campaigns gave way to whistle-stop tours.

A narrow defeat against a favored opponent did not diminish Bryan's standing. He secured two subsequent presidential nominations and served as secretary of state in the Wilson administration, all the while denouncing imperialism abroad and exploitive business practices at home. Although he was

trained as a lawyer, Bryan's principal vocation became speaking and writing, with his words coming from both the political left and the religious right. During the balance of his life, he delivered an average of more than two hundred speeches a year and wrote dozens of popular books. In the 1920s, Bryan began speaking out against Darwinism with a shrill tone of urgency.

Two decades earlier, Bryan had criticized the theory for the support it gave to Social Darwinism. "The Darwinian theory represents man as reaching his present perfection by the operation of the law of hate," Bryan complained in 1904, "the merciless law by which the strong crowd out and kill off the weak."[11] He said little else publicly about evolution until 1921, when he began blaming a materialistic, survival-of-the-fittest philosophy for both German militarism during World War One and a loss of religious faith among educated Americans.

His standard argument had two prongs. First, he claimed that the theory of evolution was neither scientific nor credible. "Science to be truly science is classified knowledge," Bryan argued. "Tested by this definition, Darwinism is not science at all; it is guesses strung together." He inevitably bolstered this point by ridiculing various evolutionary explanations for human organs—such as the eye, which supposedly began as a light-sensitive freckle. "The increased heat irritated the skin—so the evolutionists guess, and a nerve came there and out of the nerve came the eye! Can you beat it?" Bryan asked rhetorically. "Is it not easier to believe in a God who can make an eye?" Second, he laid out the dangers of accepting such an unproven hypothesis as true. "To destroy the faith of Christians and lay the foundations for the bloodiest war in history would seem enough to condemn Darwinism," he concluded.[12]

Although Bryan spoke out against it, he did not initially call for laws against teaching evolution. That changed in Jan-

uary 1922, after he heard about such a proposal in Kentucky. "The movement will sweep the country, and we will drive Darwinism from our schools," Bryan wrote to the proposal's sponsor. "We have all the Elijahs on our side. Strength to your arms."[13] With a clear legislative objective in sight, the anti-evolution effort became a political crusade. Bryan spent the two months touring Kentucky in support of the proposal, which lost by a single vote in the state's House of Representatives. Teach students that they descended from apes, Bryan told audiences, and they will grow up to act like monkeys.

The crusade spread quickly. Protestant ministers and evangelists who had backed efforts to purify their churches of Darwinian influences enlisted in the new push against teaching evolution in public schools. But Bryan remained the principal driver, giving hundreds of speeches, writing scores of newspaper articles, and publishing three popular books on the topic. The timing and intensity of the protest (coming as it did more than sixty years after Darwin published *Origin of Species*) surprised evolutionists. It certainly puzzled Bryan's wife, who privately cautioned her husband against pushing the matter too far. "Just why the interest grew, just how he was able to put fresh interest into a question which was popular twenty-five years ago, I do not know," she commented in 1925. "The vigor and force of the man seemed to compel attention."[14]

Yet even Bryan could not seed a storm on a cloudless day. Undoubtedly the spread of compulsory public secondary education shaped the particular form that anti-evolutionism took in the 1920s. Prior to that time, most Americans did not attend high school and many communities did not provide public education beyond the eighth grade. The expansion of public secondary education carried evolutionary teaching to an increasing number of students, and did so by force of law

at taxpayer expense. Thus Bryan could ask, "What right have the evolutionists—a relatively small percentage of the population—to teach *at public expense* a so-called scientific interpretation of the Bible when orthodox Christians are not permitted to teach an orthodox interpretation of the Bible?"[15] The same legislature that passed the nation's first law against teaching evolution created Tennessee's first comprehensive system of state-supported high schools. Tennessee governor Austin Peay believed that he had to accept the former to secure the latter. Whatever underlay its timing, however, the effect of Bryan's crusade was stunning. An editorialist for the *Chicago Tribune* observed, with a mixture of amazement and concern, "William Jennings Bryan has half of the country debating whether the universe was created in six days."[16]

At the time, most American states had part-time legislatures that only met in general session during the first few months of odd-numbered years. Kentucky was an exception, but when its anti-evolution bill died early in 1922, Bryan and his followers had to wait until 1923 for their next shot at lawmaking. The legislatures in six Southern and border states (including Tennessee) actively debated anti-evolution laws during the spring of 1923, but only two lesser measures passed. The Oklahoma legislature barred the purchase of Darwinian textbooks with state funds; Florida's lawmakers adopted a resolution urging public-school teachers not "to teach as true Darwinism or any other hypothesis that links man in blood relationship to any form of lower life."[17]

Sobered by their failures, anti-evolutionists focused their attention on building grassroots support in Tennessee and a few other promising states in advance of the 1925 legislative sessions. Victories in those states then could lead to later successes elsewhere, they reasoned. Bryan, Sunday, and other prominent national anti-evolution leaders spoke in Tennessee on multiple occasions during 1924. Thanks to their ef-

forts, teaching evolution became a major issue during the 1924 elections, with many legislative candidates vowing to support "Bryan and the Bible."

Representative John W. Butler, a farmer-legislator and Primitive Baptist lay leader from rural east Tennessee, offered an anti-evolution bill of his own composition shortly after the Tennessee House of Representatives convened in January 1925. Butler proposed making it a misdemeanor, punishable by a maximum fine of $500, for a public-school teacher "to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animal." Most of Butler's colleagues apparently already agreed with this proposal, because six days later the House passed it without amendment and virtually without debate.

After the lower house acted so quickly and decisively, partisans on both sides focused their attention on the state Senate. Almost overnight, Butler's bill became the subject of petitions, church sermons, and newspaper articles. Educators, editorialists, and liberal clerics tended to denounce the proposal; evangelicals and fundamentalists embraced it. Acting in the glare of publicity, the Senate judiciary committee repeatedly voted down various anti-evolution measures and the full Senate tabled Butler's bill, but Speaker L. D. Hill, a devout Campbellite Protestant, kept the legislation alive until Billy Sunday returned for his second Memphis revival in as many years.

"A star of glory to the Tennessee legislature, or that part of it involved, for its action against that God forsaken gang of evolutionary cutthroats," Sunday told his audience on the first night of the revival—and soon the Senate earned its star, too.[18] During its spirited three-hour floor debate over Butler's bill, few senators addressed the scientific merits of Darwinism. Instead, lawmakers on both sides dwelt on issues of religious freedom. Proponents, including Hill, argued that public schools should not force students to learn theories that undermine their religious beliefs. Opponents countered that no one's religion should set the standards for science education in public schools. One reluctant supporter justified his vote by saying that "an overwhelming majority of the people of the state disbelieve in the evolution theory and do not want it taught to their children."[19] A colleague estimated that majority at 95 percent. Ultimately, the Senate bowed to popular opinion.

Bryan rejoiced upon hearing that Tennessee had outlawed teaching the theory of human evolution. "Other states North and South will follow the example of Tennessee," he predicted.[20] Fearing that result, opponents of the law set about to derail it. Leading this charge, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) issued a press release in New York City offering to defend any Tennessee schoolteacher willing to challenge the validity of the new statute in state court. Its leaders saw the law as a clear violation of free speech, academic freedom, and the separation of church and state: three principles standing at the core of the ACLU's civil-liberties agenda but which, at the time, received scant legal protection against acts committed by state governments. John Scopes, a twenty-four-year-old science teacher in the small east Tennessee town of Dayton, promptly accepted the ACLU's offer.

MONKEY TRIAL

Like so many archetypal American events, the trial itself began as a publicity stunt. Inspired by the ACLU offer, Dayton civic leaders saw a chance to gain attention for their ambitious young community.[21] "The town boomers leaped to the assault as one man," H. L. Mencken reported. "Here was an unexampled, almost a miraculous chance to get Dayton upon

the front pages, to make it talked about, to put it upon the map."[22] Scopes became their willing defendant at the urging of local school officials, even though, strictly speaking, he was not a biology teacher. The young teacher was neither jailed nor ostracized. Quite to the contrary; in the month before his trial, Scopes was feted at a formal dinner in New York City; embraced by the presidents of Harvard, Columbia, and Stanford universities; received at the Supreme Court in Washington; and awarded a scholarship for graduate study at the University of Chicago. When it became clear that the ACLU was seeking to discredit Tennessee's new anti-evolution statute through the Scopes trial, Bryan offered to assist the prosecution. If the town boomers of Dayton wanted a show trial, then Bryan would give them one.

To the extent that Bryan then stood as America's foremost champion of Christian government, Clarence Darrow stood as his opposite. Darrow first gained fame during the 1890s as a criminal-defense lawyer for labor organizers and militant leftists. His notoriety grew as he spoke out against religious influences in public life, particularly biblically inspired legal restrictions on personal freedom. His opposition to religious lawmaking stemmed from his belief that revealed religion, especially Christianity, divided people into warring sects and represented an irrational basis for action in a modern scientific age. In speeches and popular books, Darrow sought to expose biblical literalism as foolish and harmful. He offered rational science—particularly an ill-defined Lamarckian form of evolutionism—as a more humane foundation for ethics. When Bryan volunteered to prosecute Scopes, Darrow signed up to defend him. The sixty-seven-year-old trial lawyer immediately became the brightest light in an already luminous defense team assembled by the ACLU to challenge Tennessee's anti-evolution law.

People everywhere called it "the Monkey Trial." News of

it dominated the nation's headlines during the weeks prior, and pushed nearly everything else off American front pages throughout the eight-day event. Two hundred reporters covered the story in Dayton, including some from Europe. Thousands of miles of telegraph wires were hung to transmit every word spoken in court, and pioneering live radio broadcasts carried the oratory to the listening public. Newsreel cameras recorded the encounter, with the film flown directly to major American cities for projection in movie houses. Telegraphs transmitted more words to Britain about the Scopes trial than had ever before been sent over transatlantic cables about any single American event. Trained chimps performed on the courthouse lawn as a carnival-like atmosphere descended on Dayton. The courtroom arguments addressed the nation rather than the jurors. Both sides agreed on one fact: The American people would decide this case.

The defense divided its presentation among its three principal attorneys. The prominent New York attorney Arthur Garfield Hays raised the standard ACLU arguments that Tennessee's anti-evolution statute violated the individual rights of teachers. Bryan's former Assistant Secretary of State, Dudley Field Malone, a liberal Catholic divorce lawyer, argued that the scientific theory of evolution did not conflict with a modernist interpretation of Genesis. Darrow, for his part, concentrated on debunking fundamentalist reliance on revealed scripture as a source of knowledge about nature suitable for setting education standards. Their common goal, as Hays stated at the time, was to make it "possible that laws of this kind will hereafter meet the opposition of an aroused public opinion."[23]

The prosecution countered with a half dozen local attorneys led by the state's able prosecutor and future U.S. Senator Tom Stewart, plus Bryan and his son, William Jennings, Jr., a Los Angeles lawyer. In court, they focused on proving that

Scopes violated the law and objected to any attempt to litigate the merits of that statute. The public, acting through elected legislators, should control the content of public education, they maintained. The elder Bryan, who had not practiced law for three decades, remained uncharacteristically quiet in court, and saved his oratory for lecturing the assembled press and public outside the courtroom about the vices of teaching evolution and the virtues of majority rule.

After the defense lost a pretrial motion to strike the statute as unconstitutional, the prosecution presented uncontested testimony by students and school officials that Scopes had taught evolution. Following this presentation, the defense attempted to offer the testimony of a dozen nationally recognized evolutionary scientists and liberal theologians, all prepared to defend the theory of evolution as valid science that could be taught to no public harm. The prosecution immediately objected to such testimony as irrelevant to the issue of whether Scopes broke the law. The anti-evolution statute was not on trial, prosecutors argued, only the defendant. After three more days of debate, the judge sided with the prosecution. The trial appeared to have ended without ever directly addressing the supposed conflict between evolutionary science and biblical Christianity.

Frustrated by his failure to discredit the law through the testimony of scientists and theologians, Darrow invited Bryan to take the stand in its defense. Bryan accepted Darrow's challenge. Up to this point, lead prosecutor Tom Stewart had masterfully limited the proceedings and confined his wily opponents. But Stewart could not control his impetuous cocounsel. "They did not come here to try this case," Bryan explained early in his testimony. "They came here to try revealed religion. I am here to defend it, and they can ask me any questions they please."[24] Darrow did just that.

Thinking the trial all but over, and hearing that cracks had

appeared in the ceiling below the overcrowded second-floor courtroom, the judge had moved the day's session outside, onto the courthouse lawn. The crowd swelled as word of the encounter spread. From the five hundred persons initially in the courtroom, the number rose to an estimated three thousand spread over the lawn—nearly twice the town's normal population. Darrow posed the well-worn questions of the village skeptic: Did Jonah live inside a whale for three days? How could Joshua lengthen the day by making the sun (rather than the earth) stand still? Where did Cain get his wife? In a narrow sense, as Stewart persistently complained, Darrow's questions had nothing to do with the case because they never inquired about human evolution. In a broad sense, as Hays repeatedly countered, they had everything to do with it because they challenged biblical literalism. Best of all for Darrow, no good answers existed. Bryan could either affirm his belief in seemingly irrational biblical accounts, and thus expose that his opposition to teaching about evolution rested on narrow religious grounds, or concede that the Bible required interpretation. He tried both tacks at various times without appreciable success. To Bryan's growing frustration, Darrow never asked about the theory of evolution itself: He knew the Great Commoner would deliver a stump speech in response.

Darrow raised only two issues involving the supposed conflict between science and Scripture, and in both cases Bryan sought to reconcile them. In a modest concession to Copernican astronomy, Bryan suggested that God extended the day for Joshua by stopping the earth rather than the sun—an occurrence that would defy the laws of Newtonian physics, Darrow noted. Similarly, in line with established evangelical scholarship dating back to the days of Georges Cuvier, Bryan affirmed his understanding that the Genesis days of creation represented geologic ages or periods, leading to the following exchange, with Darrow asking the questions:

Courtroom photographs of Clarence Darrow (left) and William Jennings Bryan (right), with coat and collar removed because of the heat, at the trial of John Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee, July 1925.

> "Have you any idea of the length of these periods?"
> "No; I don't."
> "Do you think the sun was made on the fourth day?"
> "Yes."
> "And they had evening and morning without the sun?"
> "I am simply saying it is a period."
> "They had evening and morning for four periods without the sun, do you think?"
> "I believe in creation as there told, and if I am not able to explain it I will accept it."[25]

The earth could be six hundred million years old, Bryan admitted. Though he had not ventured far beyond the bounds of biblical literalism, the defense made the most of it. "Bryan had conceded that he interpreted the Bible," Hays gloated. "He must have agreed that others have the same right."[26] Of course the reporters loved it. Forget Scopes and his inevitable

conviction by a jury that had heard but two hours of testimony during the week-long trial (and none of Bryan's testimony); the lead story became the Great Commoner's public humiliation at the hands of the man Bryan denounced in the midst of his ordeal as "the greatest atheist or agnostic in the United States."[27] A next-day editorial in the usually staid *New York Times* commented about Bryan, "It has long been known to many that he was only a voice calling from a poorly furnished brain-room. But how almost absolutely unfurnished it was the public didn't know till he was forced to make an inventory."[28]

Most neutral observers viewed the trial as a draw, and few saw it as decisive. America's adversarial legal system tends to drive parties apart rather than reconcile them, and that certainly resulted in this case. Despite Bryan's stumbling on the witness stand, both sides effectively communicated their message from Dayton—maybe not well enough to win converts, but at least sufficiently well to energize those already predisposed toward their viewpoints. Due largely to the media's portrayal of Darrow's effective cross-examination of Bryan, later made even more cutting in the popular 1955 play and 1960 movie *Inherit the Wind,* millions of Americans thereafter ridiculed religious opposition to the theory of evolution. Yet the widespread coverage given Bryan's impassioned objections made anti-evolutionism all but an article of faith among conservative American Christians. When Bryan died a week later in Dayton, they acquired a martyr to this cause.

Anti-evolution activism increased following the trial, but it encountered growing resistance. Mississippi and Arkansas promptly passed statutes modeled on the Tennessee law and several other states imposed lesser restrictions. An anticipated legislative victory in Minnesota turned into a demoralizing defeat, however. When one Rhode Island legislator introduced such a proposal in 1927, his bemused colleagues

referred it to the Committee on Fish and Game, where it died without a hearing or a vote. A forty-year-long standoff resulted: A hodgepodge of state and local restrictions on teaching evolution coupled with the heightened sensitivity of some parents elsewhere led most high-school biology textbooks and many individual teachers virtually to ignore the subject of organic origins. Consequently, after the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed Scopes's conviction on a technicality in 1927, and when no state or locality brought any other prosecutions under their anti-evolution laws, courts did not have another opportunity to review the meaning and validity of those restrictions until the 1960s. By then, the scientific and religious landscape in America had changed in two key respects. On the one hand, opinion among biologists on how evolution operated coalesced around the starkly Darwinian modern synthesis. On the other hand, opinion among conservative Christians hardened in its fidelity to the biblical account of creation. These developments took decades to unfold, however. For the time being, America's anti-evolution crusade had run its course.