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RICE UNIVERSITY

“There can be no education without religion”:
Tennessee Evangelicals and Education, 1875–1925

by

Charles Alan Israel

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

"There can be no education without religion":

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As host to the infamous Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, Tennessee has an obvious history of conflict over religion and education. By examining white Tennessee Baptists and Methodists in the half-century leading up to the showdown in Dayton, this dissertation argues that Tennessee’s 1925 anti-evolution law and the resulting Scopes trial were less about the truth or falsehood of evolution and more about the important question of the place of parents, churches, and religious belief in New South public education. Furthermore, this investigation of religious attitudes about public schools—the laboratories in which many different forces hoped to shape the future of society—reveals a systematic southern evangelical interest in earthly social relations rarely recognized by previous scholars.

From an early opposition to state funded public education as necessarily “godless,” Tennessee evangelicals gradually acquiesced, assuming that the schools would reflect the values of their predominantly Protestant local communities. Further, they believed that the home, Sunday school, and denominational college would provide any
additional moral leavening necessary for their vision of a religious New South. But as
Progressive-era school reforms increasingly removed control of education from the hands
of parents, local school boards, and church communities—all of whom would
presumably guarantee a role for religion—evangelicals feared they would lose the
schools and the rising generation. Further trepidation over the supposed secularization of
higher education—symbolized most poignantly for Tennessee evangelicals in the
separation of Vanderbilt University from the southern Methodist church—led many
evangelical leaders to advocate a more explicit respect for Christianity in the public
schools. The logical extension of this changed attitude appears most clearly in the first
decades of the twentieth century with the 1915 enactment of a state-wide law requiring
the Bible to be read every morning in the schools and the more infamous Butler law of
1925 that criminalized the teaching of evolution. Symbolic conceptions of the South as a
distinctively religious society led many Tennessee evangelicals to break taboos about
mixing religion and politics and support the Butler anti-evolution bill.
Acknowledgements

When I first began this project, I opened a computer file in a vain attempt to keep track of all the people who deserve thanks for helping me complete the research and writing of this dissertation. Now, several years later, I am humbled by the great generosity of so many colleagues, friends, and family, but I am also chagrined about the number of people who have helped but nonetheless slipped beyond my recognition. I am tempted to print the file as is, but I will instead make an attempt at organization. My apologies in advance to anyone I have inadvertently omitted.

Librarians and archivists are history's keepers, and I have been fortunate to work with a number of helpful individuals and institutions. Francine Arizmendez and the rest of the staff of the Rice University interlibrary loan department have allowed me access to many materials without having to leave Houston. Similarly, the interlibrary loan office of the Tennessee State Library and Archives arranged distant access to nearly fifty years worth of weekly Baptist and Methodist newspapers, allowing this Tennessee expatriate to better utilize my limited research travel time to inspect other sources. Vincent McGrath has proven not only a helpful keeper of Tennessee's legislative archives, but also a great conversationalist, an incredible resource for current state educational and legislative issues, and an astute student of the history of Tennessee, and particularly Nashville, Catholicism. Thanks as well to Susan Gordon and everyone else in the TSLA manuscripts and archives division.
Von Unruh of the Tennessee Annual Conference archives of the United Methodist Church shared his insightful mind, keen interest in religious history, and amazing mental catalogue of biographical information on Tennessee Methodists. Harriet Vivion provided a tangible link to Nashville’s Methodist past through her family stories about George Winton, McKendree church, and Bishop Marvin, as well as more than a few extra pounds by introducing me to the lunch and desert delicacies at Satsuma. Also in Nashville, director Bill Summers, Jean Forbis, and all the staff of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives gave valuable direction to my searches, and also arranged for a Lynn E. May Jr. travel grant to support research at the library. At Vanderbilt University, Kathy Smith and her staff in the University Archives and Special Collections were helpful, informative, and courteous even though I requested cartloads of boxes and ordered reams of copies. Pam Dennis, formerly of Union University, proved a cheerful contact and a delightful resource, sharing portions of her own research into the school and the city of Jackson. Thanks as well to President David Dockery of Union University for permission to read and quote from the university’s Board of Trust minutes.

In addition to the numerous scholars cited in the notes and bibliography, I would like to thank many other academics who have read chapters, commented on conference presentations, or discussed science, religion, and education in Tennessee with me: Amy Binder, David Carlton, Paul K. Conkin, Paul Harvey, Mary S. Hoffschwelle, Douglas Kellner, Ernie Limbo, Ronald L. Numbers, Claudia Rapp, Beth Barton Schweiger, John Abernathy Smith, J. Douglass Smith, David B. Tyack, Carroll Van West, and the members of the Houston Area Southern Historians seminar. A generous dissertation completion fellowship from the Spencer Foundation allowed me the free time and
finances to finish writing the dissertation in 2000–2001. Among the other fellows, I would particularly thank Susan Searls, Aaron Stalnaker, Chris Swanson, and especially Craig Peck for his guidance through the minefields of the history of education and reassurances that that schools of education do not have exclusive claim to the history of education. Gerald L. Smith and John C. Willis of the University of the South provided a good foundation in religious studies and southern history and have remained great friends and resources long after I left Sewanee.

At Rice University, I have benefited from an outstanding community of scholars. Primary thanks must of course go to John B. Boles. Beyond his interest in this project, he has through his own example created a culture among his students that encourages intellectual curiosity, hard work, service to discipline and university, and a caring and challenging community of scholars. Carolyn Earle Billingsley, Susan Hanssen, and Bethany L. Johnson have been a great cohort of fellow students, living with this project since I have and reading and re-reading papers on religion and education probably far more often than they ever want to again. Other members of the occasional southern lunch club, Scott Marler and Jason Phillips, have been equally valuable critics, friends, and collaborators. Other colleagues, mentors, and teachers at Rice have shaped me and this project in many and often imperceptible ways: Alex Byrd, Edward Cox, Ira Gruber, Thomas Haskell, Alan Matusow, Gerald McKenney, Paula Sanders, Allison Sneider, Sarah Thal, Albert Van Helden, and Michael Willrich; Patti Bixel, Patricia Burgess, Evelyn Nolen, Elizabeth Hayes Turner, and Ken Williams; Carlos Blanton, David Dillard, Tanya Dunlap, Gary Garrett, Jim Good, Randal Hall, Melissa Kean, Paul Leveanood, Meshack Owino, Francelle Pruitt, Shane Story, Elaine Thompson, Matt
Thompson, and Steve Wilson. Thanks as well to Paula Platt and Verva Densmore for keeping me organized, even though it wasn’t their job, and helping me get out the door despite my best efforts to misplace, lose, or outright forget key deadlines and paperwork.

Researching Tennessee evangelicals while living in Texas necessitated many research trips and I was fortunate to have family who could provide both lodging and the occasional research assistance when I misplaced documents after returning home. Thanks especially to Martha J. Israel and Ruth P. Israel for putting me up in my many passes through Memphis. My parents, Don and Katherine Israel, have provided far more than lodging in Nashville. They have given encouragement, guidance, financial assistance, and, most importantly of all, provided me a great foundation in both education and religion.

Finally, I offer profound thanks to my wife Katherine for her love, patience, encouragement, and occasional reality-checks on what really happens inside schools and what is most important in life. This project may have never begun without her; it certainly could not have been completed without her.
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Chapter I

Laying the Foundations of a Christian Civilization in the New South: An Introduction

In 1879 an unsigned editorial in the Memphis (Tenn.) Baptist, a regional weekly newspaper edited by the conservative Baptist dogmatist and controversialist James R. Graves, proposed to give the paper’s readers a vision of the future of southern society. The article began with the author’s account of witnessing workmen digging the foundations for the new Tribune building in New York and his fascination with “that strong and immovable foundation” of granite and concrete. He then turned his observations southward, presenting both a brief for the New South of industrial development and a call for schools and churches to lay firm foundations in sound education and religion in order to anchor the region’s anticipated development to the religious tenets of white southern evangelicals:

In the South we are laying foundations. The old building has been torn down. A new South is being built. What it will be a hundred years hence it may be difficult to say. Much, almost everything, depends on the nature and character of the foundations.

The author listed a number of industrial developments—the opening of new mines, the growth of new mills and industries, and other “signs of material prosperity”—praising them as keys to southern rebirth. They would be the foundations of a new economy after the “old dispensation” of slavery had passed away.¹

Though he was proud and supportive of the New South's industrial growth and its anticipated future prosperity, the author of "Laying Foundations" saw greater promise in a different kind of substructure: the religion and education of the region.

If the foundations are laid in the general education and Christianization of the people, white and colored, we may expect the future to produce a civilization unsurpassed in other lands. Educational work was a matter of cooperation between the churches and the state; "the States have made liberal provision for the schools," the tax-supported and state-run "common school is gradually working its way into the intellectual life of the people," and "all the denominations have labored earnestly to lay the foundations of their colleges and universities." Turning to metaphor, he urged the builders of schools to "avoid 'hay, wood, and stubble'" in the foundations and instead to "use the best materials, as 'gold, silver, and precious stones'." Such groundwork could be found in a stable southern church that was in turn "resting upon 'Jesus Christ himself as the chief corner-stone'" and utilizing "the word of God" as its "square and rule," from which "no departure" could "be allowed." Having thus pronounced a plan to undergird southern industry with suitable education and religion, the anonymous author concluded his essay with a prediction masking an admonition: "With such foundations, and such superstructures rising to the glory of God, our Southland, in years to come, will not be the least among the thousands of Israel."²

This dissertation is an investigation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century efforts of white Tennessee Baptists and Methodists to build and maintain those "foundations" for both church and state and to justify their earthly and heavenly authority

² Ibid.
for doing so. It is focused first on religion and then on the churches, schools, families, and political culture of the New South.

An understanding of and regard for religion—both in its personal forms of individual belief, devotion, and world-ordering as well as in its institutional forms of religious associations, churches, and denominations—is a vital component of social and cultural history. Investigating the history of the South, a region recognized by natives and outsiders alike as especially or peculiarly religious, requires sensitivity to the place of religion in the regional culture. The roots of the South's peculiar religiosity stretch back at least to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Great Revival in the West sprang from a series of camp meetings on the Kentucky-Tennessee frontier and spread religious fervor and an evangelical framework throughout the region. In spite of the efforts of southern Christians from the 1850s and well into the twentieth century to claim recognition for the region as especially religious (with "religious" understood by native southerners to denote orthodox evangelicalism), the larger nation did not seem to notice until the 1920s.

National attention to the South's religiosity came largely as a result of the high-profile defense by many southern individuals and denominations of certain "fundamentals" of the Christian faith. Though there was a national movement that began and had many clearly identified supporters in Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and California, the fundamentalist crusade against theological liberalism and the teaching of evolution in

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3 The most succinct account of the revivals and the resulting evangelical mindset is John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), which was reprinted in 1996 with the new subtitle *Beginnings of the Bible Belt*. 
public schools had its greatest success in the American South and in Tennessee particularly.\(^4\) The event that crystallized national attention was the so-called Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925: a circuit court trial and media circus held in East Tennessee in which the jury found John T. Scopes, a Dayton, Tennessee, high school teacher, guilty of breaking a recently enacted state law prohibiting instruction about human evolution in publicly funded schools. Major national newspapers covered the trial’s two opposing larger-than-life lawyers, Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan; and Chicago-based WGN radio broadcast large portions of the proceedings, and much of the rest of the nation noticed—albeit in a largely unfavorable light—the peculiarity and pervasiveness of religion in the South. The acerbic newspaperman H. L. Mencken grafted a negative interpretation onto the national recognition of a peculiar brand of southern religion, labeling the region a “cesspool of Baptists, a miasma of Methodists, snake charmers, phony real estate operators, and syphilitic evangelists.”\(^5\)

\(^4\) The best national view of American Fundamentalism is George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). Though sensitive to the theological and social elements of fundamentalism, Marsden’s otherwise excellent book in its effort to situate fundamentalism as a reaction to theological liberalism concentrates on controversies within northern denominations and seems to dismiss the South as already and always fundamentalist, just waiting for the label to be invented. In his phrasing, “there was a strong anti-modernist impulse in Southern religion well before modernism became a distinct movement in America” so that “when in the twentieth century fundamentalism became a distinct entity, Southerners with a long history of revivalist conservatism eventually flocked to the movement” (p. 103). On the same page, Marsden misidentifies the home of the “vitiolic *Western Recorder* of Tennessee” which was actually published in Louisville, Kentucky. My argument in this dissertation is not that the South did not prove remarkably receptive to fundamentalism in the 1920s, but that there was a greater level of diversity than Marsden’s dismissal suggests. Future research in southern and particularly Tennessee religion should concentrate on a number of liberal evangelicals like James I. Vance, Will Alexander, and James McCulloch, all of Nashville, and their creation of a pocket of religious liberalism in the “City of Churches” as well as the growing gaps between Baptist and Methodist denominational leaders and their rural constituency in Tennessee and throughout the South.

Taking the spectacle of the Scopes trial as its endpoint, this dissertation backs up in time a half century, to the 1870s, in order to explore the regional origins of the trial and, more importantly, the essential roles of religious belief, ideology, and expression—individual and denominational, formal and popular—in the social, cultural, and political history of Tennessee in the fifty years that preceded the enactment of the Butler anti-evolution law (by which Scopes was convicted). Southern evangelicals perceived their native region as particularly religious and were determined to maintain, if not to reinforce and enlarge, a regional focus on piety. They took great interest in preserving and transmitting their culture to the rising generations of youth. Concerned about the nature of the “foundations” of the New South as was the anonymous Memphis Baptist essayist, many southern evangelicals were anxious about the content and control of their children’s education. Despite their professions to recognize distinctions in the responsibilities and realms of church and state, many Tennessee parents and religious leaders did not neatly divide education into sacred and secular. As Tennessee’s system of public education grew and its curriculum became the province of state-level legislators and administrators, parents and local community (including church) leaders came to understand that questions of politics and governance had important religious implications for their efforts to build a New South with firm spiritual foundations.

Southern religion was at once intensely personal—focused on the central evangelical themes of salvation and a personal relationship with God—pervasively communal and institutional—affecting almost every aspect of everyday life and society.6

6 The clearest presentation of a “central theme” of southern evangelicalism is Samuel S. Hill Jr., Southern Churches in Crisis (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), esp. 73-115. Charles Reagan Wilson has been the most prolific contributor to the history of “popular” religion in the South. For a very short account see the “Introduction” to Judgment and Grace in Dixie, xv–xviii,
While many of the individual and personal aspects of religion elude the historian's net, religion in its institutional forms—in denominations particularly, but also on smaller community church levels—is often easier to spot if not to fully identify or understand. This dissertation concentrates on the two largest white evangelical denominations in Tennessee: the regular Baptists of the Tennessee Baptist Convention (and by extension the Southern Baptist Convention) and the Methodists of the Memphis, Tennessee, and Holston Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It focuses on the internal and external affairs of these institutions by examining the written records of their thoughts and activities as expressed in church, association, conference, and convention minutes as well as in their state denominational newspapers—the Nashville Christian Advocate and the Nashville Baptist and Reflector.\footnote{The institutional records are supplemented by diaries, letters, and other personal sources in order to explain the thoughts and actions of a majority of religious Tennesseans throughout this crucial half century.}

Though to a degree dependent on these denominational sources, the dissertation does not examine the churches in isolation but as part of broader religious expression and

as well as his more developed excursion into somewhat institutionalized southern popular religion of the "Lost Cause" in the decades following the Civil War, Baptist in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980). The Nashville Christian Advocate was published in Nashville throughout the period of study, and, although in the twentieth century it increasingly took on a South-wide constituency and focus, its editorial offices and much of its content remained focused on Tennessee. It will be supplemented where possible with extant copies from the Nashville Midland Methodist, which attempted to fill the Advocate's place as a state paper. The Baptist and Reflector moved to Nashville in 1889 as the combination of the Memphis Baptist, both edited by J. R. Graves and R. B. C. Howell before him) and the Chattanooga Baptist Reflector. Usually owned by the editors, the paper continued to absorb other local Tennessee Baptist newspapers throughout the early twentieth century until the Tennessee Baptist Convention bought the paper in 1921.
activity. It investigates how religious thoughts and actions—though most clearly embodied in denominational arenas and records—pervaded the surrounding society.

Postbellum southern churches, like their antebellum ancestors, focused on the process of evangelism—spreading the gospel and preaching repentance to individual sinners—but they also sought to expand the vision and influence of religion to the surrounding society. The “central theme” of southern evangelical religion throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, as Samuel S. Hill Jr. has argued, is that “the southern church ‘makes all of individual Christianity’ and regards the conversion of men [individuals] as virtually the whole task of the church.”

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8 Hill, Southern Churches in Crisis, 73. While by no means rejecting Hill’s pioneering and enduring work outright, this dissertation is meant to be in an extended historiographical discussion with Hill’s and others’ emphasis on the individual—almost to the exclusion of societal—focus of southern white evangelicalism. A new generation of scholars—Keith Harper, Paul Harvey, and Beth Barton Schweiger, among others—has nibbled at the edges of Hill’s central theme, with Wayne Flynt taking perhaps the biggest bite, but they have mostly been unable to show if or how southern advocates of what Harper terms “social Christianity” moved beyond organized charity or whether they were any more than what John B. Boles has described as “clerical radicals” “on the very fringes of southern Protestantism.” Boles, “The Discovery of Southern Religious History,” in John B. Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen, eds., Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higginbotham (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 541. John Eighmy has provided a persuasive investigation of the social concerns of Southern Baptists, emphasizing both their interests in and limitations on social reform efforts. The relatively democratic structure of southern evangelicalism left the churches largely subject to other social conditions, but not powerless. Instead of focusing on isolated incidents or reforms or some southern incarnation of the Social Gospel with its attendant liberal theology, this dissertation, while still recognizing the limitations of Tennessee evangelicals on some questions of race, economics, and political culture, nonetheless argues that religious ideas and language contributed to their efforts to organize society, particularly through the creation and control of systems of education. Keith Harper, The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890–1920 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996); Paul Harvey, Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865–1925 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Beth Barton Schweiger, The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); J. Wayne Flynt, “Southern Protestantism and Reform,” in Samuel S. Hill, ed., Varieties of Southern Religious Experience (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 135–57; and John Lee Eighmy, Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists (1972; rpt. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987).
emphasized the vertical relationship of the individual sinner to God over almost any
recognition of horizontal human-human relationships or temporal social affairs. While
efforts at conversion were of utmost importance to Tennessee evangelicals, a great
majority of the state’s Methodist and Baptist leadership and apparently a significant
portion of the rank-and-file membership were also interested in their earthly
society—even if only to better shape conditions so as to facilitate future conversions. In
1882 editor Oscar Penn Fitzgerald of the Nashville Christian Advocate acknowledged the
churches’ dual orientation, explaining that “though divine in its origin, and in the
essential elements of its power and perpetuity, the Church is planted in the soil of this
world” and as such must take notice of earthly conditions.9

The emphasis that Fitzgerald and other Tennessee evangelicals placed on earthly
conditions developed from the historic Christian emphases on charity (to the sick, the
hungry, and the orphaned) and they frequently exhorted Christians to aid the needy.
Religious leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also took an interest
in education—not just of paupers and orphans but also of the whole rising
generation—indicating an interest in doing more than merely converting individual
sinners. They founded and expanded Sunday Schools to minister to the young people of
the church and to lay the seeds for conversion, but at the same time they looked for other
means to reach a wider audience which they found in the system of public education that
developed in the early postbellum years. This interest in education reached new public
and national levels at the time of the 1925 Scopes trial, when John Scopes was convicted

9 [Fitzgerald], “Authority,” Nashville Christian Advocate, January 28, 1882, p. 1. I have adopted
the practice of placing the name of the paper editor in brackets when citing to unsigned editorial
matter that I believe is most likely attributable to a particular editor but not explicitly signed.
of teaching evolution in contradiction of both a state law and, many religious Tennesseeans contended, "the story of the Divine creation of man as taught in the Bible."\textsuperscript{10} In their concern over public education in Tennessee, mainstream Methodists and Baptists demonstrated consistent, sustained interest not just in vertical human-divine relationships, but also in horizontal human-human relationships, and questions of social organization. Tennessee evangelicals wanted control of the schools to teach children the religion of their fathers and mothers. They also sought to use public schools to create the type of society they desired to see on the earth, in the state, in the present time. Theirs were temporal, not just eternal interests.

Seeing concern over the content and control of education as a key expression of evangelicalism in the New South, this dissertation also attempts to expand the definition of "education" beyond a simple notion of what occurs in the schoolroom. It broadens the definition and examines education as something far broader than what occurs formally in schools by adopting Bernard Bailyn's invitation to see "education not only as formal pedagogy but as the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across the generations."\textsuperscript{11} Recently, John Hardin Best has turned Bailyn's keen insight toward the South, setting a research agenda for educational history that describes southern schooling as much more complex than simply a later development of the New England common school ideal. Building on Bailyn's conceptions, Best argues that the only way to understand education in the South is to accept that "The [formal] education of the South

\textsuperscript{10} Tennessee General Assembly 1925, House Bill 185. Better known as the Butler anti-evolution law (enacted as Tennessee Public Acts 1925, Chapter 27), the bill is filed in the legislative archives of the Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville (TSLA).

arose from nonformal sources, from the southern culture, traditions, and institutions more fundamental than mere schools.”

This dissertation is in part an educational history along the lines outlined by Bailyn and Best. It examines fifty important years in the development of public education in Tennessee—from the enactment of the foundational school legislation of 1873, through the opening of Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist Universities in 1875, to the passage of the reactionary Butler anti-evolution bill of 1925. It briefly describes the founding of schools, the training and selection of teachers, the reform efforts of the early twentieth-century Progressives, and the changing relationship of denominational colleges to their founding churches and state-funded counterparts. But the purpose is less to chronicle the growth of schools—public especially, but also private—than it is to understand what happened to those “nonformal sources” and the “culture, traditions, and institutions” surrounding the newly emerging public schools. Perhaps the most important of those non-formal sources—the parents and churches—did not go away but became increasingly vocal about the schools.

While examining the growth of formal schooling in Tennessee, the dissertation also explores the place of evangelical religion in shaping the changing role and understanding of the family in the New South. Antebellum education was almost the exclusive prerogative and responsibility of the individual family—particularly the head of the household—whose duty it was to determine what kind and what extent of education, if any, the children were to receive. Antebellum Tennessee courts recognized an almost

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absolute power of the patriarch over his household. By 1913, however, the Tennessee General Assembly had passed a statewide compulsory education law, requiring children’s school attendance for a minimum number of days each year. Some Tennesseans in the 1860s and early 1870s opposed the creation of a system of public education as an undue infringement on parental rights and responsibilities. Others feared the state schools would be entirely secular and thus threaten to undermine religion. However, by the early 1880s Tennessee Methodists and Baptists, led by editor O. P. Fitzgerald of the Christian Advocate, endorsed the public schools, believing that parents and churches would continue to provide sufficient denominationally religious instruction to complement the non-sectarian teaching of the public schools. In the first decades of the twentieth century, as evidence mounted that many parents were failing to live up to the responsibilities assigned them by Fitzgerald and others, many Tennessee evangelical leaders called for more explicitly religious instruction in the state’s common schools through their campaigns to require school Bible reading and prohibit instruction in evolution.

In the period under study, religion and education extended into the broader arena of southern political culture. Religious ideas of what constituted proper education influenced the actions of individual parents, legislators, bureaucrats, and activists, as control of education shifted from local communities to state agencies. In the nineteenth century, debates over education were largely isolated within individual rural areas and small communities, and the public schools rarely strayed far from the wishes of the community. The first public schools in Tennessee were extremely decentralized, and local school boards (often with only one school per district board) were quite responsive to the desires of local parents and the community. As education grew more formal and as
public elementary schools became the common experience of Tennessee children, their parents and, to some extent, church leaders delegated responsibility for education to the new institutions. Following the success of Progressive-era drives for centralization, standardization, and professionalization of schools, curricula, and teachers, these former arbiters of educational standards—parents and church and community leaders—turned to the state legislature to obtain a voice in the governance of public schools. State religious leaders recognized the new power of the teachers, schools, and educational bureaucracy to shape the minds of the future generation. As one Baptist educator explained, they would have in the future “to enter … into politics to preserve the rights of the little child”: rights that most Tennessee evangelicals believed included religious instruction and, later, protection from the supposedly irreligious theory of evolution.13 From at least the 1870s, Tennessee religious leaders had been concerned about not just the industrial but also the religious and educational “foundations” of the New South; changing political conditions forced them to seek new and often more explicitly political means for securing their old goals.

Following this introduction, the dissertation continues with Chapter II, “From ‘godless schools’ to a ‘handmaid to Christianity’: Evangelicals’ Evolving Response to Public Education in Tennessee,” which addresses denominational efforts to rebuild following the Civil War and white evangelicals’ relationship to public education up through the turn of the century. For a variety of reasons, state religious leaders initially

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13 Rufus Weaver, “The Obligation of Southern Baptists to Improve the Rural Elementary School and the Method Which Ought to be Employed to Secure this Result,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, January 31, 1918, pp. 1 and 4.
objected to the Reconstruction-era creation of public schools in Tennessee, believing education was the exclusive province of church and home. But by the 1880s, however, they had accommodated the growth of publicly funded elementary education along the lines of a “home rule” compromise outlined by Oscar P. Fitzgerald in the Nashville Christian Advocate. He sought to avoid the ethnic and sectarian strife of several other regions over questions of religion in the schools (most notably those in the early 1870s in Cincinnati between Catholics and Protestants over daily Bible reading). In formulating the compromise, he explicitly recognized potential constitutional (state and, to a limited extent, national) protections of minority religious views; he argued that by avoiding specific legislation ordering religious observance or teaching in the schools, such instruction, if it were the result of local decisions by local school boards, would be Constitutional. Public schools would be decentralized and under the control of predominantly evangelical Protestant local parents, school commissioners, and community leaders, who would presumably guarantee a place for religion in the curriculum.

A large part of Fitzgerald’s home rule compromise depended on the establishment and growth of denominational colleges to complete the education begun in the public schools, to provide teachers for state schools, and to supply the religious and secular leaders of the New South with morally and religiously sound education. Chapter III, “‘The hope of our Zion’: Denominational Higher Education in Tennessee, 1875–1925,” examines the history of religious higher education—specifically, the Methodists’ Vanderbilt University in Nashville and Southwestern Baptist University (name changed to Union University in 1907) in Jackson—and its relationship to denominational founders
and growing state universities. Perceptions of the declining fortunes of some church
colleges and the supposed secularization of others inspired many religious leaders to call
for more explicit respect for Christianity in the public schools and greater public scrutiny
of officers in the state university.

Chapter IV, "From Temperance to Prohibition: Tennessee Evangelicals and the
Legislation of Morality," explores an important parallel movement by white Baptists and
Methodists to control their surrounding society. Much like their concern for the
education of youth, evangelical activity in the temperance and prohibition campaigns
signified a new era and level of social engagement by Tennessee Christians.
Furthermore, evangelicals' experiences with the mixed success of the prohibition
crusade—at its heart an attempt to control social behavior—reinforced in their minds the
need to shape the morals and behavior of future citizens in the schools. Many adults
opposed and openly violated prohibition laws and, in their obstruction, led many
evangelicals to concentrate their efforts on raising up a generation of Tennesseans with
the internal morality (learned in the school, not left to chance in the home) to resist
alcohol and to support prosecuting their fellow citizens who disobeyed the law. In the
prohibition campaigns, evangelical leaders rehearsed many of the arguments they utilized
in the early twentieth century in favor of requiring daily Bible reading and banning the
teaching of evolution in the public schools.

Chapter V, "Legislating Religion into the Schools: Evangelicals and Public
Education in Tennessee, 1900–1925," picks up the narrative begun in Chapter II,
exploring the changing relationship of religion and public education in Tennessee during
the first decades of the twentieth century. At the turn of the century, state evangelical
leaders went from simply accommodating the public schools to actively endorsing and promoting them. Tennessee’s common school publicity campaigns from 1903 through 1909 took on the flavor of religious revivals and were widely supported from the pulpit and by the religious press. Progressive-era school campaigns had several unintended consequences, primarily dismantling the “home rule” compromise as state school officials expanded public education to include high schools and colleges and centralized school control in the hands of a school bureaucracy. School reformers aimed at improvement through standardization; standardization of teacher credentials was based not on old questions of character, morality, or religion—questions important to local school boards, parents, and churches—but increasingly on state certification in methodological training and professional standards. In the new, centrally organized schools, religious parents and church leaders saw both a threat to their authority and a new opportunity to spread their religion through the public schools. Beginning as early as 1903, and picking up speed during and after the World War I, many Methodists and Baptists argued for moral and even specifically religious instruction—especially in the form of required daily Bible reading—in the public schools. They no longer evaded constitutional questions as Fitzgerald had done a generation before; instead they boldly proclaimed that religion in the public school was a question of majority rule. America was a “Christian nation,” the Bible was “non-sectarian,” and they were exercising a “citizen’s right” in demanding its use in the schools.

Religious arguments in favor of Bible-reading in the public schools laid the groundwork for the campaigns, a decade later, to ban teaching evolution in Tennessee public schools. Chapter VI, “The right of the people ... to control the schools”: 
Evangelicals, Evolution, and Education in Tennessee, 1875–1925,” combines the themes of Chapters II and V with a specific focus on the reception of theories of evolution by Tennessee evangelicals. The role of white Tennessee Methodists and Baptists in passing and enforcing the Butler anti-evolution law developed from their reactions to evolutionary biology and theological liberalism and their concern for the religious content and popular control of public education in the early twentieth century.

Writing in March 1881 in the Nashville Christian Advocate, Fitzgerald presented what he believed should be the “true policy for the South.” Much like the admonitions of his Baptist counterpart only two years earlier about the necessity of building firm foundations, Fitzgerald considered both earthly and divine goals in his plans. The “true policy,” Fitzgerald asserted, should be to “build cotton factories and school-houses, reclaim the wasted lands, stay at home, and cling to the God of our fathers.”

Religion, in the mind of Fitzgerald and his contemporaries, pervaded southern life—in homes and schools as much as in industry and government. As government grew, and as isolated individuals and families increasingly became part of larger and more interrelated social and political networks, evangelicals expressed their beliefs and desires in more formal arenas. Through campaigns against alcohol and in favor of religious study in public education and attempts to demonstrate the superior morality of the South, Tennessee evangelicals blurred the lines between church and state in an effort to realize their apotheosized vision of a particularly religious South.

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14 Fitzgerald, Nashville Christian Advocate, March 5, 1881, p. 8.
Addressing a convention of county public school superintendents in the summer of 1887, southern Methodist clergyman and editor Oscar Fitzgerald praised them for their efforts in rebuilding Tennessee’s society in the twenty or so years since the end of the Civil War. Stating that “everything was broken to pieces in that great convulsion,” Fitzgerald hyperbolized that “Nothing in all the history of this world equals the progress made by the South in the two decades extending from 1867 to 1887.” Such progress was remarkable, he continued, because it came in spite of the interference of “repressing and disturbing influences from abroad.” Fitzgerald came to the convention to praise the efforts of the educators as well as to give direction for their future activities. While lauding the role of education in rebuilding the South, he insisted on properly situating it within the larger realm of southern culture and society. The success (from a southern point of view) of Reconstruction “would have been … impossible … had you not had the elements of a Christian civilization so inwrought into the thought, conscience, and aspirations of the people that nothing short of their annihilation could destroy it.”¹ This “Christian civilization” was the only thing that had saved the South so far, Fitzgerald intimated, and it was most important that it not be ignored in continuing efforts to rebuild the region.

¹ Oscar P. Fitzgerald, “Welcome Address,” in Frank M. Smith, Proceedings of the Convention of County School Superintendents held in the City of Nashville, December 6th and 7th (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce, 1887), 5.
Education, to Fitzgerald and most of his contemporaries, was not merely matter of
learning the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Education was instead the
whole process of transmitting culture from one generation to the next. As such,
education was not confined to school buildings and lesson plans but was interwoven with
a myriad of cultural events and processes. School teachers and officials had an important
role to play in education, but parents, pastors, and community leaders were equal partners
in this great responsibility of perpetuating that distinctive southern culture. But all of
these parties did not necessarily agree on what parts of that culture should be passed on to
the new generation or, even more importantly, who got to decide such a question.

Before the Civil War, education in Tennessee, as in much of the antebellum
South, was an informal process carried on in the home, the church, and in everyday social
interactions. What formal education existed was decidedly *ad hoc*, consisting of tutors to
wealthy families, subscription schools in some communities, scattered denominational
"colleges" and "seminaries," and in the late antebellum period, a few city schools for
orphans and pauper children. In the twenty postbellum years Fitzgerald was reviewing,
the Tennessee legislature had created, dismantled, and then recreated two systems of
public education—one for white children and a decidedly inferior one for black children.
In making elementary schools a regular concern of the state government, Tennessee’s
educational advocates were attempting to institutionalize education. With the
formalization of at least some parts of education in the public schools, new contests
emerged over the control of the new schools and over what was actually taught. Parents
and church leaders at first saw the new schools as unallowable threats, but gradually they
came to see them as powerful allies in their efforts to perpetuate local and Christian culture.

This chapter explores how efforts to create a system of public education unleashed debates in Tennessee and throughout the South about the role of parents and religion in the New South. Above all else, Fitzgerald and his religious contemporaries wanted to insure that the region's "Christian civilization" would be reproduced in the rising generation of Tennesseans. The creation of a system of public education threatened the cultural authority of ministers and even parents as increasingly formalized elementary education became a recognized function of the government. Such efforts to create and centralize a public educational system in Tennessee forced citizens to reexamine this emerging notion of the secular state and their own role and that of religion in the state.

"The relation of the State to [the] Schools" was, as a concerned Nashville minister exclaimed, "the greatest problem of our times."\(^2\) What families and churches thought about public education can reveal much about their understanding of the proper role of government in the New South. But, even more importantly, their concerns for maintaining a "Christian civilization" led them increasingly to embrace a social role for religion in Tennessee. Ultimately concerned with the spiritual health of their children, religious Tennesseans wanted to insure that the new schools would not be inimical to

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\(^2\) C[ollins] D. Elliott, *The Eagle Wing vs. The Mayflower, or Familyism in Education vs. Stateism, or Tennessee vs. Massachusetts in Schools* (Columbia, Tenn., 1886), p. 15. Pamphlet at Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville. Elliott apparently gave this address several times throughout the 1860s to 1890s; he introduces this printed version as "the second edition." It is "printed for the benefit of the members of this present General Assembly." A similar, undated, and hand-written version as well as a printed version from 1880 are found in Elliott's collected papers. Collins D. Elliott Papers, 1810-1899, microfilm acc. 802, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter TSLA).
religion. In doing so, they began to expand the scope of the church’s work in this world, recognizing that they could and should work to affect present society as a whole, not just the souls of individual sinners.

**The Concept of the Especially Religious South**

When Oscar Fitzgerald addressed the school superintendents in 1887, the South was a defeated region, struggling in the throes of racial, economic, and social realignments. Yet he and his audience could readily agree on the importance of the region’s Christian heritage. The South had long recognized itself as the country’s Bible Belt, with Tennessee near the proverbial “buckle” because of its proximity to the genesis of the 1800 southern revival in nearby regions of Kentucky as well as the large number of southern denominations headquartered in Nashville, the so-called Protestant Vatican. Fitzgerald and other postbellum southerners cultivated the image of the especially religious South to fit their cultural agendas, but they did not create the image of a religious South out of whole cloth—it was an image with some basis in reality, but also one that had long been inflated to fit southern political, social, and cultural needs.

Antebellum Tennessee evangelicals never faced the problems of an established church as did their neighbors to the east, but they were nonetheless inheritors of a dissenter heritage and tended to identify most strongly with their local church communities. White Baptists were some of the earliest settlers of Tennessee, followed near the end of the American Revolution by a smaller number of Methodists. But both
nascent denominations trailed the Presbyterians in numbers and influence among the first settlers and in the early society. However, in the early frontier settlements of Tennessee, the three denominations, despite their aggressive proselytizing, could claim only about 5 percent of the population as formal members when Tennessee became a state in 1796.³ These conditions changed quickly with the dawn of the nineteenth century when the Great Revival began near the Kentucky and Tennessee border in 1800 and radiated throughout the state and the South. Although the revivalism had peaked by 1805, the intensity of those five years greatly increased Methodist and Baptist membership in the state. At the same time, the Presbyterians, who had been the original leaders of the revival, split over the propriety of revival methods. Alexander Campbell’s Reformers and Barton Stone’s Christians rounded out the majority of religious adherents in the state after the first decades of the nineteenth century.⁴

By the time of the Civil War, white Tennessee Baptists and Methodists had moved from a position of religious and social dissent to form part of an evangelical social and cultural establishment and believed themselves to be living in a particularly religious society.⁵ According to the Federal Census of 1850, Tennessee Methodists had 861

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⁵ For a broad summary of this trend throughout the South, see John B. Boles, "Evangelical Protestantism in the Old South: From Religious Dissent to Cultural Dominance," in Charles Reagan Wilson, ed., Religion in the South (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1985), 13–34. In a more recent approach, Christine Leigh Heyrman emphasizes the dialectic relationship of evangelicalism and southern society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as “Southern whites came to speak the language of Canaan as evangelicals learned to speak with a southern accent.” Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 27.
churches in the state, estimated at a value of $381,711 and with a seating capacity of 249,000. Baptists followed with 646 churches, 195,315 seats, and property worth $271,899.⁶ "No institution save the family loomed larger" than did the churches in the everyday lives of religious Tennesseans on the eve of secession.⁷

Part of the success of the antebellum evangelicals in gaining converts and social status came through a silencing of their potential for social criticism, especially criticism of the institution of slavery. Tennessee evangelicalism, born of the revivals at Cane Ridge and spread throughout the state by continued revivalism, focused far more on the condition of the individual human soul than on society. As John Boles explains about the antebellum church, "the conversion emphasis was not one to elicit social criticism. Instead, the tendency of southern religion was toward an acceptance of the existing social arrangements."⁸ Indeed, a number of Tennessee evangelicals in the early 1800s supported the peaceful abolition of slavery, noting that "it is an evil" but refusing to endorse any particular strategy for ending the institution. Some East Tennessee Baptists joined manumission societies in the 1810s and 1820s, but, like most of their southern

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⁶ Statistics reproduced in Albert W. Warden Jr., Tennessee Baptists: A Comprehensive History, 1779–1999 (Brentwood, Tenn.: Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1999), 156. There is some debate about the utility of judging church strength by the Federal Census measurements of "accommodations." Warden, through a count of Baptist association records around 1850 enumerates only 54,000 members in over 850 churches (p. 150). Since various denominations had widely varying standards for membership (among evangelical Protestants, church membership usually did not equal church attendance), one must take such statistics with caution. Baptists and Methodists had greatly outpaced the pioneer Presbyterians by this time. Presbyterians in the same census only enumerated 363 churches, with seats for 135,517, although they were wealthier, being credited with $367,081 in property. Warden Jr., Tennessee Baptists, 156.


⁸ John B. Boles Religion in Antebellum Kentucky (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976), 142–43. For a fuller description of the individual focus of southern evangelical Christianity, see Boles, Great Revival, 165–74.
counterparts, grew more reticent as northern abolitionism increasingly emphasized
immediatism. Tennessee Baptist editor R. B. C. Howell dismissed an 1840 pro-abolition
circular as nothing but "rant, nonsense, mis-statements, and fanaticism." Arguing that
"Southern Christians and Southern people are the only true friends of the black race,"
Howell and other southern evangelicals pronounced Biblical defenses of slavery and
endorsed slavery as a means for civilizing Africans: "This race under their hands have
become more ameliorated and christianized since the recent period of their deportation
from savageism than any other people redeemed from barbarism."\textsuperscript{9} Early Tennessee
Methodists likewise agitated over the slavery question, though by 1820 the Tennessee
Conference (covering Middle Tennessee only) "was decidedly under proslavery
control."\textsuperscript{10}

Although some Tennessee Baptists and Methodists were less forceful in their
defense of slavery than the surrounding white society and were even willing to point out
problems \textit{within} the peculiar institution, they had nonetheless joined ranks with other
religious groups to, in effect, sanctify the existing society and culture.\textsuperscript{11} The religious

\textsuperscript{9} Wardin Jr., \textit{Tennessee Baptists}, 82–83.

\textsuperscript{10} John Abernathy Smith, \textit{Cross and Flame: Two Centuries of United Methodism in Middle
Tennessee} (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1984), 73 and 85–93. West Tennessee also quickly
migrated into the pro-slavery camp, but mountainous East Tennessee remained far more divided
on the issue of slavery throughout the antebellum period.

\textsuperscript{11} Mitchell Snay highlights the transition among antebellum southern evangelicals as sectional
pressures and criticisms led them to closer and closer identification with their society, from
defending slavery to sanctifying it. \textit{Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the
Antebellum South} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Drew Gilpin Faust
emphasizes how the close identification of the church and the Confederacy could cut both ways,
suggesting that as the war fortunes of the South soured, some religious leaders were willing to
attribute their misfortune to God's displeasure with their insufficient fulfillment of their duties to
their slaves and to their God. "'God Will Not Be Mocked': Confederate Nationalism and Slavery
Reform," in Faust, \textit{The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil
corrects some of the "lumping" tendencies in descriptions of southern evangelicals by
distinguishing Georgia Methodists' "neutral attitude toward slavery" \textit{The Sacred Flame of Love:}
endorsement of southern society as particularly religious and the justification of slavery as an evangelistic tool to civilize and Christianize Africans made it possible for leaders of the Confederacy to further legitimate the separate southern nation as also divinely favored. As Drew Gilpin Faust has suggested, the creation of Confederate nationalism involved "more than simply establishing a new political status for the South; it required the location of the Confederacy not only within the world but within eternity, as an instrumental part of God's designs."12 The Confederacy was, in the words of Episcopal Bishop Stephen Elliott, "the nation to do His work on earth."13 Once this image of the South as a religious society was established, it did not disappear easily from the minds of religious leaders or even common southerners.

Confederate defeat doomed evangelical hopes for a separate, religious nation based on Christian slaveholding. But, instead of causing southern evangelicals to doubt their chosen status, the horrors of war reinforced their conception of the South as a particularly religious region.14 Indeed, as Gardiner Shattuck Jr. has argued, "most [white]
southern Protestants were well prepared theologically to meet the challenge Appomattox presented.” The task of postwar southern religion was to provide an explanation for the Confederate defeat; a task most southern clergy accomplished by reaffirming white southerners as “God’s chosen people.” Presbyterian Robert Louis Dabney of Virginia explained that “temporal good and the exemption from temporal evil” were not signs of God’s favor; white southerners should instead should find solace in “the darkness of mysterious suffering.”\textsuperscript{15} A Georgia Baptist editor explained southern defeat to his readers in 1866:

\begin{quote}
He [God] has done what he thought best. ... He may have laid his hand heavily upon us; certainly we are deeply smitten, but in the midst of it all, we rely on his goodness, and would not, if we could, interfere with his workings of his Providence, and rejoicing ever in tribulation, we feel it is

\begin{quote}
“Sweet to lie passive in his arms
And know no will but his.”\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}
\end{quote}

As sociologist Peter Berger has suggested, theodicy involves a certain element of “masochistic liberation”—a surrender of the self (and in this case the Confederate nation) to a larger, divine reality.\textsuperscript{17} Such immersion in the faith blunted the questions potentially

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\textsuperscript{16} Quoted in Rufus B. Spain, \textit{At Ease in Zion: A Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865–1900} (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 18.
\textsuperscript{17} Peter L. Berger, \textit{The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion} (New York: Anchor, 1967), 56. The ultimate test for religion or for any legitimizer of the social order is its ability to sustain the socially-held nomos in the face of aberrant, marginal, or ecstatic experiences or situations. Anomic phenomena such as “evil, suffering, and, above all, death ... must not only be lived through, they must also be explained—to wit, explained in terms of the nomos established in the society in question” (p. 53). Theodicy, therefore, is the religious
arising out of defeat about where God's favor really lay. Abraham Lincoln had suggested in his second inaugural that both northern and southern partisans prayed to the same God but that neither could have their prayers fully answered. Lest the Union military victors make exclusive claims on divine support of their effort, southern Christian apologists like Elliot and Dabney retreated from cocksure antebellum expressions of divine favor to chastened reminders of the inscrutable nature of divine will. Religious reassurance in defeat, Berger explains, results from religion's alienating power; power which obscured the southern faithfuls' realization that their society—including that which led to the recent war—and their religion were to some degree their own constructions. This alienating power of religious belief provided a welcome relief from the potentially anomic situation of defeat with a divinely stable legitimating force to order and explain the world.

In his study of the southern religious response to Confederate defeat, Charles Reagan Wilson has suggested that cultural and religious leaders developed a new civil religion of the Lost Cause. Citing anthropologist Anthony F.C. Wallace, Wilson notes that "religion originates 'in situations of social and cultural stress'" and points out that, following the Civil War, the South was in distress, suffering from poverty as well as disillusionment, disorder, and a perceived loss of meaning—a state of communal anomic. Using Clifford Geertz's conception of religion, Wilson explains how the religious

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legitimization, on any level of theoretical sophistication, of the nomos and explanation for these phenomena. Berger explains that there is an implicit theodicy in the social order, even prior to any religious legitimations. In fact, the nomos itself requires a surrender of the self to a larger reality, providing comfort and legitimation in return, a process which Berger terms "masochistic liberation." Key to understanding Berger's explanation of theodicy is his claim that man, as a biologically-created social creature, "cannot accept aloneness and he cannot accept meaninglessness." In such a conception, theodicy must provide meaning even more than it must provide relief from suffering (p. 56).
response to disorder is "the creation of symbols 'of such a genuine order of the world
which will account for, and even celebrate, the perceived ambiguities, puzzles, and
paradoxes in human experience." Wilson sees this response embodied in the rituals of
the Lost Cause, a distinctively southern civil religion that was a "revivalistic movement,
aiming, as [Anthony F.C.] Wallace has said, 'to restore a golden age believed to have
existed in the society's past;'" an attempt to resurrect the culture and values of the Old
South.\textsuperscript{18} The cult of the Lost Cause was indeed a new creation, but instead of creating a
new conception of the religious South out of whole cloth, it might be better understood as
a reappropriation of previous religious legitimations of the South.

Putting aside questions about the existence of the especially religious Old South,
this concept of the South as a particularly religious society nonetheless carried enormous
cultural capital—not just for politicians, but for religious leaders as well.
Denominational leaders utilized the images of the Old South as a particularly religious
region to spur on southern Christians (both within and outside of their particular
denominations). These defeated southerners attempted to assuage their grief by
redoubling their efforts to make the New South a sacred society. Episcopal Bishop
Stephen Elliott admonished his flock that even in the humiliation of defeat, to "forget not
that you are Christ's servants, bound to do His work in the church militant upon earth,
and to advance His kingdom wherever He may spread the banner of the Cross. Instead of
permitting suffering to overcome your faith, let it rather lead you on to perfection."\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Michael Banton, ed. \textit{Anthropological
Approaches to the Study of Religion} (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966); and Anthony F. C.
\textit{Baptized in Blood}, 10–11.
Following the charge of Bishop Elliott and many others, Tennessee Christians sought to continue and strengthen the religion of southerners. They desired to rebuild their own particular denominations, but also to add to them. Indeed, as Tennessee Methodist O. P. Fitzgerald admonished his audience of school superintendents two decades after the war, it was only a “Christian civilization” that had saved the South through the war and Reconstruction, and now they in turn should strive to continue and perfect that civilization in the rising generations.

White Baptists and Methodists answered this charge, in part, by increasing their missionary efforts to the recently emancipated slaves. During and soon after the war most white leaders had opposed the exodus of black members from what had been biracial churches. Asserting that they were “the best friends the black man ever had, or will have,” the ministers of the Memphis Annual Conference of the southern Methodist church hoped to maintain religious as well as cultural and political control over their black members. Most white denominations feared their black co-religionists could not sustain proper interpretations of the Gospel without the continued influence of their former white religious leaders, or, even worse, could fall under the influence of northern missionaries who might upset southern cultural, racial, and political hierarchies. Failing to keep blacks within their churches—black Tennessee membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South declined from 12,676 in 1860 to a mere 17 in 1877—white leaders hoped either to provide white ministers for the blacks or to train the black ministers and to keep black Christians under the oversight of white denominational

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leaders. Ultimately white religious leaders had to admit defeat, with the southern
Methodists helping to create the Colored (later Christian) Methodist Church with a black
hierarchy, but even it paled in numerical comparison to separate black-led religious
organizations such as the African Methodist Episcopal and AME Zion churches.\(^{21}\) When
their efforts to control the religious and social organization of blacks were largely
frustrated by individual black agency and desires for religious self-determination, white
Tennessee religious leaders mostly settled for retaining at least some limited contact with
their black counterparts and at the same time enhancing their efforts to shore up the
religion and morality of white society.

Increasingly unable to reach their former black co-religionists, Tennessee
evangelicals concentrated on strengthening their membership among whites. Their first
priority was reestablishing the denominational institutions that had been greatly disrupted
by the preceding years of warfare and disorganization. Local Baptist and Methodist
churches reconnected with other similar churches in the state to reestablish
denominational structures in 1865 and 1866. Tennessee Baptists, who had long been
divided into separate general associations in the state’s three geographical regions,
resumed their antebellum efforts at union soon after the war, eventually forming the
Tennessee Baptist Convention in 1874.\(^{22}\) Methodist denominational leaders and

\(^{21}\) Stowell, Rebuilding Zion, 81. On the broader trends of black outmigration from southern,
white-led churches see, in addition to Stowell, William E. Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine
and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865–1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana
State University Press, 1993); and Paul Harvey, Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and
Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865–1925 (Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press, 1997), 45–74; and for an investigation of the process in a Texas urban setting, see
Charles A. Israel, “From Biracial to Segregated Churches: Black and White Protestants in
\(^{22}\) Wardin Jr., Tennessee Baptists, 229–30.
enterprising Baptist ministers and laymen resumed editing and printing religious newspapers in Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga, aiding in the spread of religious and secular news throughout the state. Both denominations resumed missionary efforts at home and abroad, seeking to spread the Gospel and to add to their denominational numbers.

An even more important component of Tennessee Baptists' and Methodists' religious reconstruction of the state was the strengthening of their existing membership and taking measures to provide for the religious education of the rising generation. Denominational leaders accomplished this, in part, through the establishment or reopening of colleges under the sponsorship and supervision of the denominations. A closer examination of two such schools—Southwestern Baptist University in Jackson and the Methodists' Vanderbilt University in Nashville—can be found in Chapter III below. But, recognizing that no matter how low the tuition was, denominational colleges could only serve a small percentage of their memberships, religious leaders sought to strengthen the faith of the rising generation through the institution of the Sunday School. Like the individual churches and denominational organizations, most Sunday Schools had suffered great disorganization during the war. West Tennessee Baptists lamented in 1866 that "the large majority of the Churches" in their bounds were "without schools." Baptist leaders in Middle Tennessee likewise complained in 1865 that few churches outside the cities had Sunday Schools and recorded their perception that "it is a painful
fact that too many christian [sic] parents take no interest in the Sabbath Schools—a large number of our country churches have none at all." 23

Tennessee evangelicals saw the education of their children as their greatest opportunity for strengthening their hold on southern society. Baptists in West Tennessee supported the expansion of the Sunday Schools as "a most efficient means of instilling moral and religious sentiments into the minds of children, and properly training the rising generations for the momentous responsibilities which must soon devolve upon them as members of society and of the church of God." 24 Not only would children learn the particular tenets of Baptist or Methodist faith and thus hopefully be led to conversion and salvation, but denominational leaders further hoped the children could be trained to lead pious lives on earth and afterwards, spreading the Gospel and increasing the membership of the church. In his excellent account of what he calls the "religious reconstruction" of the South, Daniel W. Stowell has recently argued that southern Christians valued education highly because "they understood that the perpetuation of their distinctive religious identity depended on their success at transmitting cultural ideals to the next generation." Stowell explains the efforts of southern denominations to rebuild ante-bellum institutions such as Sunday Schools and denominational colleges as expressions of their desires to maintain their hold over the minds of their young. 25 The history of institutions

23 West Tennessee Baptist Association, 1866, and Central (Tenn.) Baptist Association, 1865, both quoted in Stowell, Rebuilding Zion, 118.
24 West Tennessee Baptist Association, 1866, quoted in Stowell, Rebuilding Zion, 118.
25 Stowell, Rebuilding Zion, 114. Charles Reagan Wilson examines another Tennessee denominational college, the Episcopalians' University of the South in Sewanee, as an institutional embodiment of "Lost Cause Education." Wilson is more interested in the pro-Southern and Lost Cause apologetics at Sewanee and Virginia's Washington College (later renamed Washington and Lee after the death of school president Robert E. Lee) than in their theological and social importance to the denominations themselves. Baptized in Blood, 139–60.
such as Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist Universities are certainly revealing, but this concentration on strictly religious enterprises overlooks the fact that few Tennessee evangelicals were willing simply to surrender other means of education to the state. "The future of the land we love," warned one Tennessee religious educator early in the twentieth century, "depends upon what we make of our public school system." When Reconstruction and Redeemer state legislators formalized a system of public elementary education in the state, denominational leaders endeavored to insure that such schools would further their religious goals, or at least not oppose them.

THE EMERGENCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN TENNESSEE

Nineteenth-century Tennessee, both before and after the Civil War, was a predominantly rural society. Formal schooling was a rarity most rural children experienced for only a month or so, if at all, during any given year. But this did not mean that the children were uneducated; they were instead educated—raised and influenced—by their families, churches, and broad communities. As educational historian David B. Tyack has explained, formal "schooling—which farmers usually associated with book learning—was only a small, and to many, an incidental part of the total education the community provided." Instead of focusing narrowly on literacy skills,

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27 Fred A. Bailey, "Caste and the Classroom in Antebellum Tennessee," The Maryland Historian, 13 (1982), 42.
Tyack suggests that in rural societies like that of nineteenth-century Tennessee, “the child acquired his values and skills from his family and from neighbors of all ages and conditions.” Education did not come only in *McGuffey’s Eclectic Reader*, Webster’s Blue-backed speller, or practicing ‘figuring’; rather, “a child growing up in such a community could see work-family-religion-recreation-school as an organically related system of human relationships” and education.  

Education reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fetishized literacy statistics as a clear indication of a community’s level of education. By such standards, antebellum Tennesseans were obviously deficient, with roughly one-quarter of the white population unable to read or write at the time of the 1850 census. These reformers pointed to the remarkable improvements in the last antebellum decade, noting that white Tennesseans’ rate of illiteracy had dropped to 19.7 percent by 1860. Imagine the further success, they seemed to imply, had there not been the terrible disruption of war and Reconstruction. American education reformers near the end of the nineteenth century found local community control of education the greatest hindrance to school reform. They, like their antebellum counterparts, urged increasingly formalized schooling in publicly funded schools under centralized bureaucratic control as the key to state unity and progress.

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30 Most of the histories of education in Tennessee have been written by the early generation of school reformers or their students. The two best examples of this genre are Robert Hiram White, *Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, 1796–1929*, (Kingsport, Tenn.: Southern Publishers Inc., 1929) and Andrew David Holt, *The Struggle for a State System of Public Schools in Tennessee, 1903–1936* Teachers College Contributions to Education, no. 753, (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938). As a result,
As reformers sought to formalize education, the public common school was transformed from a “voluntary and incidental institution” to the expected normal training ground for children.\textsuperscript{31} The continuing complaints of school officials about low and infrequent attendance suggest that parents did not automatically subscribe to the officials’ visions of a formal education and its importance. Many Tennessee parents, community leaders, and ministers initially distrusted the public schools as threats to their traditional social authority and responsibilities for educating the rising generation. Parents’ begrudging acceptance of public schools meant to some extent a delegation of parental, religious, and local community authority to an unwieldy bureaucracy of school directors, county courts, county superintendents, and a state superintendent of public instruction, but this delegation of authority did not come easily. Increasingly distanced from direct control of the children’s education as formal public education systems expanded, these informal parental and community educational networks more and more turned to organized efforts to influence the formal systems. Casual ad hoc relationships sufficient in the nineteenth century turned into legislative lobbying efforts in the twentieth as they have assumed the common school and the centralized state bureaucracy as a triumph for a state school system. They have seen formal education in schools as the goal and have tended to denigrate opponents as ignorant or otherwise politically motivated. It was only with the social history revolution of the 1960s that educational history began to break such shackles, but even this has been slow to filter into state studies, especially so in the South. Probably the best effort to reevaluate southern educational history in its broad cultural context focuses on the North Carolina educational reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but is in many ways applicable to Tennessee and other southern states. See James L. Leloudis, \textit{Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880–1920}, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Two Tennessee researchers who have made significant advances in situating public education and reform within the society and culture of the New South are Mary S. Hoffschwelle, \textit{Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900–1930} (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998); and Jeanette Keith, \textit{Country People in the New South: Tennessee’s Upper Cumberland} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

\textsuperscript{31} Tyack, “The Tribe and the Common School,” 6.
various groups sought to control the education of youth, and through the school, to
determine the future tenor of society.

Formal instruction in publicly owned school houses funded by taxation had
developed slowly in antebellum Tennessee as in most of the South. Most of the formal
educational opportunities were confined to academies, local subscription schools, and
"colleges" or "seminaries" loosely affiliated with various religious denominations.\footnote{White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization; Buford C. Utley, "The Early Academies of West Tennessee," West Tennessee Historical Society Papers, 8 (1954), 5–38.}
Despite frequent efforts by some antebellum statesmen to provide for common schools
like those in the northeastern states, state funding remained very limited, taxation was
practically non-existent, and popular support was divided by class and region.

The earliest schools in Tennessee (some even predating statehood), were
connected at least informally with religious bodies. Presbyterian minister Samuel Doak,
a graduate of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), simultaneously founded
congregations and schools as one of the first settlers of the eastern parts of what would
the most prominent among them being Union University in Murfreesboro in 1841, Mossy
Creek Baptist Seminary in Mossy Creek (the town was later renamed Jefferson City and
the school Carson College) in 1851, and the Tennessee Baptist Female Institute (formally
rechartered as Mary Sharp College in 1857) in Winchester in 1851. In addition to these
central institutions, Baptist leaders encouraged local churches and associations to sponsor
male and female academics. Denominations and ministers created several schools in the
late antebellum era, most of them "mainly offering educational opportunities on primary
and secondary levels with a limited attempt at college work." In the 1820s Tennessee
Methodists cooperated in the establishment of "colleges" in nearby Kentucky (Bethel
Academy) and north Alabama (La Grange in 1828). In the later antebellum period, they
increased their efforts to found schools for both men and women, but few of the schools
were under the direct control or ownership of the denomination. Some were directly
linked to Methodism in name—Tennessee Conference Female Institute in Jackson and
the Tennessee Conference Male High School in Spring Hill for example—but most, like
the Nashville Female Academy, were linked to the church through their choice of
managers and placement of advertising. Collins D. Elliott, a Methodist minister who
would long remain active in Tennessee's postwar educational debates, taught at the
Methodists' La Grange College in northern Alabama before joining the Nashville girls'
school in 1839 and managing it from 1844 until 1866.36

Such religious academies were usually frequented by wealthier Tennesseans who
could afford tuition. From his analysis of the surveys completed by Tennessee
Confederate Veterans, Fred A. Bailey has determined that "academy attendance was

34 Wardin Jr., Tennessee Baptists, 170–74; and 170 (quotation).
35 Smith, Cross and Flame, 77. Mid-state Methodists also attempted to found a larger college in
Nashville in the late antebellum period, but they only succeeded in gaining a charter for the
Central University in 1858 and never began classes (Smith, 132). For more on this failed college
and its revival in the 1870s as Vanderbilt University, see Chapter III, below.
36 Smith, Cross and Flame, 136–37; and J. E. Windrow, "Collins D. Elliott and the Nashville
The Nashville College for Young Ladies, although not specifically designated as a Methodist
school, had an exchange program with Vanderbilt for many years in the 1880s and attracted a
large number of Methodist girls, as witnessed by Principal G. W. Price's 1889 report to his Board
of Trustees: "the moral and religious tone of the college has been good. A very large percentage
of our pupils is composed of professing Christians, the larger portion of them Methodist."
Nashville College for Young Ladies, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1881–1900, location 1-A-
4, acc. 164, Box 2, TSLA.
concentrated in those sections of the state with slaves and affluence.”

Antebellum education in Tennessee reflected and perpetuated the class divisions of the state. Parents who could afford to do so sent their children to academies, hired private tutors, or banded together with other neighbors to pay for private subscription schools. Early legislative votes on public funds for education usually divided along sectional lines, with upcountry East Tennesseans usually favoring the common schools while Middle and West Tennesseans, who were more likely to own slaves, usually opposed the increased taxation. Although some variety of semi-formal public schooling existed in most of the populated parts of the state by the 1850s, they operated for only short periods of time, in usually abysmal buildings, and were taught by often less-than-inspiring teachers. Many students attended school in a “Sorry little log hut and poorly furnished” for only “a month or so,” and were confronted by “Verry [sic] common and Sorry Teachers.” In part, the lack of educational opportunities reflected the penurious nature of the antebellum Tennessee political culture’s unwillingness to expend (and thus have to gather) great amounts of tax revenue. On the other hand, it was mostly in keeping with the realities of the predominantly rural society, in which farmer parents were reluctant or unable to spare their children’s labor. A Bedford county veteran observed that children “were not made to go [to school], besides there was work to do”; another noted that his father allowed him to attend school only about a month a year when “not making crops.”

37 Bailey, “Caste and the Classroom,” 44.
38 Whitaker, “The Public School System of Tennessee,” 7–8. In Tennessee as elsewhere tax burdens fell on property assessments, and since slaves counted as taxable property, large slaveholders did not want to be taxed for educational services for other peoples’ children.
39 Bailey, “Caste and the Classroom,” 42.
There was no specific provision for public education in Tennessee’s 1796 constitution and little funding before the last antebellum years. A portion of proceeds from Federal land sales after 1806 were supposed to be dedicated to education. Only a small percentage of the anticipated funds materialized, and they were dedicated to supporting semi-private, tuition-charging, secondary academies. After the War of 1812, the legislature made efforts to support more widespread education, but their wording of the act targeted the funding for “those poor orphans who have no property to support and educate them, and whose fathers were killed or have died in the service of their country in the late war.”\textsuperscript{41} Whatever the good intentions of the legislators, their identification of the public schools with poor relief unfortunately branded the new institutions as pauper schools and thus to be avoided by any self-respecting Jacksonian individualist. The revised constitution of 1834 reassigned the land sale monies as a Common School Fund, and the succeeding sessions of the General Assembly created a board of Common School Commissioners (in 1836) on the state level and district school commissioners (in 1838) on the local level. Unfortunately, the financial downturn of the period, combined with confusingly overlapping land claims, meant that the new school fund amounted to far less than was first anticipated. Allegations of embezzlement and financial mismanagement of the funds by the first state superintendent further derailed efforts to establish common schools in the state and left a lingering distrust of state bureaucratic involvement in education.\textsuperscript{42} Though some cities were able to establish common schools systems in this period, state funding remained limited, even after Governor Andrew Johnson successfully


\textsuperscript{42} Whitaker, “The Public School System of Tennessee,” 11–12.
convinced the legislature to provide at least some public funds for the schools out of tax revenue in 1854.\textsuperscript{43}

Educational historian Robert White summarized the antebellum development of public education in the state in these satirically optimistic terms: “Without adequate funds, deprived of any centralized supervising authority, subjected to the economic and social handicaps imposed by slavery, and bereft of any militant public sentiment, the challenging fact was that the common schools were able to be even in existence at all at the advent of the Civil War.” The disruptions of 1861–65 were not likely to ameliorate this situation. In fact, no school funds were paid during the war. The legislature, when it could meet, focused exclusively on items of immediate importance to the war effort. The school funds, which had been deposited in the Bank of Tennessee, disappeared by the end of the war when the bank dissolved, leaving the state with only a fictional “permanent school fund” on which the General Assembly promised to pay 6 percent interest annually.\textsuperscript{44}

Tennessee remained occupied territory for much of the war, with former Governor Andrew Johnson serving as military governor before giving way to Republican civilian governor William G. “Parson” Brownlow when Johnson moved to Washington to become Lincoln’s Vice President in 1865. Despite some early opposition to the great expense involved and the inability of war-torn Tennesseans to afford them, Brownlow’s Republican-controlled General Assembly, after disfranchising anyone with Confederate

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 21–24. Funds distributed in 1839 amounted to $0.56 for every white child age 6–16 in the state and rose to $0.75 by 1859, but, as a committee of the legislature remarked, the financial resources of the struggling schools had been “time after time plundered by a thousand hands.” White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, 49 and 75.

\textsuperscript{44} White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, 77 and 79–80.
sympathies, passed new school legislation providing for all of the centralization, funding, and control that school supporters could not get before the war.\textsuperscript{45} The Reconstruction government appropriated taxes for the schools and appointed General John Eaton to survey and organize the school system of the state. But Brownlow’s unabashed disgust for the former rebels, provision of schools and social services for blacks, and appointment of a northerner and former Freedman’s Bureau official as state superintendent of schools meant the school system would have trouble once conservative Tennesseans regained control of the government in 1870. The “Redeemer” legislature quickly dismantled much of the state school system, eliminating the position of state superintendent and leaving only a fifty cent poll tax for education.\textsuperscript{46}

An 1873 survey of public education in Tennessee, paid for by concerned teachers with support of the Peabody Education fund, revealed that less than 20 percent of Tennessee’s school age population had access to schools, “nor were there any efforts being made by the citizens to remedy the deficiency.”\textsuperscript{47} Joseph B. Killebrew, a prominent Tennessee New South visionary, authored the report and pronounced more wide-spread public schooling a panacea for many of the state’s present and future problems. He ended his second report with these predictions:

\textsuperscript{45} Legislative supporters proclaimed that “the common schools of Tennessee should be declared as free as the air we breathe, to every child of the proper age to participate in their benefits, and their support should be made a charge upon the whole property of the state.” But a conservative Senator from Shelby County warned that “the bill levies enormous taxes to pay a swarm of new and unheard of officers, and … the people are ill prepared to submit to onerous taxes, when they have just emerged from a long and desolate war.” Such legislation, though it may bring some temporary blessings, “eventually will end in ruin, destruction, and a subversion of the rights and liberties of the people.” Ibid., 82–83.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 104–106. The legislature even went so far as to investigate former State Superintendent of Public Instruction John Eaton, criticizing him for the needless expenses in producing his 1869 annual report.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 117.
It is also believed that a large amount can be saved from what is now expended for the prosecution of crime; that a considerable portion can be realized by increasing the productive capacity of the people, by education; that greater security will be given to life and property; that society will be elevated, improved and dignified; that intelligent men and women will be attracted to the State by making the State attractive with public schools; that the price of property will be increased; that a steady development of our native resources will be assured; that our industries and products will be greatly diversified; and that the State of Tennessee, so glorious in the memories of the past, will rise from her depressed condition, and take her place among the galaxy of States, shining with no uncertain splendor in the light of knowledge, truth, civilization and patriotism.  

Following Killebrew's report and the intensive lobbying efforts of the State Teachers Association, the Tennessee General Assembly in 1873 reenacted virtually the same school legislation of 1867 that had been repealed in 1870. The supporters proclaimed that the new school system, with adequate funding from state and county sources and with professional supervision and instruction on the local, county and state levels, would reduce crime, aid in industrial development, and restore the state to her presumed antebellum glory.

Passing school legislation was not easy, but funding and putting into operation the newly created system of schools proved even more difficult in a Tennessee still

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48 J. B. Killebrew, "Second Annual Report (January 22, 1873)" in *Tennessee State Teachers Association Proceedings 1871–1873* (Nashville), 22. The same meeting of the TSTA that endorsed the call for a reenactment of state funding for education had several ministers listed as members, namely C. D. Elliott, W. Shelton, D. Rutledge, H. S. Bennett, R. A. Mason, J. Braden, R. D. Black, T. T. Eaton. Of these, Elliott was formerly principal of a Methodist-affiliated school for women in Nashville and Eaton was formerly principal of the Baptists' Union University in Murfreesboro and would sit on the board of the new Southwestern Baptist University. Elliott would be a constant activist in public education, but was often at odds with his fellow educators on the extent to which state organization and control of the schools was desirable.
struggling to readjust to the dramatic changes in society, economics, and government following the Civil War. The 1873 school legislation passed as Tennessee was enjoying a brief financial recovery; that fall the state and country fell into a deep financial panic that lasted the better part of the next decade. Funding for the schools remained slight and many schools shortened their terms, or, as one county superintendent reported in 1885, “the most of our school districts have not opened this year on account of money being short.” State Superintendent Leon Trousdale recorded the reluctance of many rural parents to spare the labor of their children, even for the short school term: “The financial pressure prevented many from enrollment who would otherwise have attended. The short crop of 1873 created an absolute necessity for every available hand on the farms in the subsequent year. Absolute poverty and want thus cut off attendance.”  

The financial problems of the country exacerbated Tennessee’s post-war financial crisis and politicians and taxpayers seemed leery to further encumber the tax system.

The initial Common School Fund had been created out of federal land sales, and many Tennesseans continued to look for outside assistance for the schools. The Peabody Education Fund actually underwrote the survey and report of Joseph Killebrew in the 1870s that led to the passage of the 1873 school laws. Peabody continued to pour money into Tennessee education, funding schools and teacher training institutes, and eventually a large scale Normal School in Nashville in the early twentieth century. Other northern philanthropies donated funds to improve education for both white and black Tennesseans as Tennessee’s mounting debt continued to overshadow its educational expenditures. As

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late as 1899, the state was paying over $540,000 in interest annually—more than three times the amount of state funds for education! State funding efforts for education were in part kept down by the anticipation of not just philanthropic money but also new federal funds for public schools.

The prospects of federal funding for public education seemed inviting to many public school advocates in the state, but conservatism and racial politics eventually derailed any opportunity to secure federal funds for Tennessee schools. Opponents feared federal dictation of school policy. Specifically, they believed federally controlled education would require school integration, something Tennessee’s Reconstruction and Redeemer governments had both opposed and something prohibited by Tennessee’s 1870 Constitution. In the 1870s and 1880s various congressmen attempted to appropriate federal funds for state schools, including Tennessee Republican Representative William F. Prosser who offered a bill in 1870 to create a national system of education. Prosser

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50 Holt, The Struggle for a State System, 11. In that year, the state paid out $157,245.98 to the counties for schools. Tennessee School Report, 1899, p. 23, quoted in Ibid., 11. The large state debt was a divisive issue in Tennessee politics throughout the 1870s and 1880s, as competing political interests battle over whether to repudiate it, repay it only in part, or pay in full to protect the credit of the state. Divisions on the issue split the Democratic party, ushering in Republican Governor Alvin Hawkins in 1880. No matter what side politicians took in the state debt controversy, most knew it was at best impolitic to suggest any great increase in the state tax burden, even for public education. For more on the state debt controversy and its effect on state politics, see Robert B. Jones, Tennessee at the Crossroads: The State Debt Controversy, 1870–1883 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977) and Roger L. Hart, Redeemers, Bourbons, and Populists: Tennessee, 1870–1896 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975).

51 Whereas the ante bellum schools were socially undesirable because they were first created as “pauper schools,” the stigma of being created for blacks, even if segregated into separate schools, was an even more difficult legacy for the postwar schools to overcome. Many Tennesseans vehemently objected to providing schools for the former slaves: some county school officials reported being threatened at gunpoint not to include blacks in the school census and Superintendent Eaton recorded 67 African-American schools burnt between 1865 and 1869. White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, 87 and Eaton, quoted in Ward M. McAfee, Religion, Race, and Reconstruction: The Public School in the Politics of the 1870s, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 88.
was defeated for reelection the same year he offered the bill. The problem with Prosser's bill, as well as a similar offering by Massachusetts Republican George Hoar, was that many conservatives feared both the expense and the new opportunities for political patronage and corruption. But the real opposition to such bills—strongest in the South but by no means absent in the North—arose from fears of racially integrated schools. While Congress debated bills to aid in funding state schools, Senator Charles Sumner was openly arguing for racially integrated schools in the District of Columbia. Although Sumner's bill was defeated, "from then on, mixed schools and federal involvement in public education were inseparably linked." Later efforts for federal funding, most notably the Blair Bill in the 1880s, though they got caught up in other local political controversies, eventually foundered because opponents could always raise the "bogey man of mixed schools."  

52 McAfee, Religion, Race, and Reconstruction, 105–22, (first quotation) 112, and (second quotation) 113. McAfee suggests that the outspoken support for Sumner's campaign for integrated public education—support that came largely through an 1874 convention in Nashville led by black Tennessee Republican Edward Shaw who worked to defeat any Republican not pledged to integration—was largely to blame for the loss of black voting power in the state. See pp. 141–67. For a more nuanced account of the rise and fall of black political power in Tennessee, see Joseph H. Cartwright, The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976). The Blair Education Bill, first proposed by a New Hampshire senator in 1883 and resubmitted for several terms thereafter, proposed to appropriate $15 million (and a decreasing amount for nine following years) to states in proportion to their illiteracy rate, became quite a divisive issue in Tennessee politics. Bourbons opposed the bill because it was a Republican measure, because it contradicted their limited-construction theory of the constitution, and because it would give the GOP an excuse to continue the high protective tariff. New South Democrats supported the bill as a means to improve education in the state while potentially lowering state taxes. Populists tended to favor the bill as well, hoping to improve education without raising taxes. Hart, Redeemers, Bourbons, and Populists, 92–94. Joseph C. Kiger has noted the divided opinions of rural newspaper editors on the Blair bill in "Social Thought as Voiced in Middle Tennessee Newspapers, 1878–1898," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, 9 (June 1950), 142. The real problem with the agitation over the Blair bill, remarked progressive educational reformer Andrew Holt, was that the continued possibility of federal funding kept agitation centered on the merits of federal aid and kept education supporters from being able to raise money within Tennessee for the state schools. Holt, Struggle for a State System, 17.
Early postbellum Tennessee school superintendents realized that the racial integration of the state’s public schools would result in “the almost instantaneous death of the present school system.” Tennessee citizens, explained Superintendent Jno. Fleming in an 1874 protest against the pending Federal Civil Rights Bill’s potential consequences for the state’s system of segregated schools, “could not be brought to regard schools as merely civil organizations, subject only to political government; the school is too close to the family circle not to be subject in a great degree to social laws and influences.”

Beyond his and the states’ white citizens’ racial fears, Flemming’s comments offer an important clue about why Tennesseans of all races, religions, and political affiliations became so interested in the creation, operation, and control of the public schools. Much of the previously informal educational efforts were picked up by the new public school—not just instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also an emphasis on morality and citizenship—thus, to a degree, formalizing the process of education. But on the other hand, the school house—which by its existence limited the effects of previous sources of largely informal education—would increasingly play a profound role in shaping the future of the state and its citizens. Cultural transmission—previously diffused through families, churches, and communities—would now be controlled and centralized in the public school house. Therefore, people and groups with differing conceptions of what kind of culture they thought important to continue or change began to recognize the public schools and curriculum as a most powerful ally or enemy to their plans.

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Evangelical Opposition to Public Education in Tennessee

In April 1873 southern Methodist minister and educator W. G. F. Cunnynungham wrote a series of three articles for the Nashville Christian Advocate titled “Thoughts on Education.” Cunnynungham was at the time a professor at Martha Washington College in Abingdon, Virginia, and a frequent contributor of articles and book reviews for the religious newspaper. In his first article, Cunnyungham made a case to his co-religionists for the importance of popular, even tax-supported education and the necessity of the southern Methodist church being involved in its control. Stipulating first that “mind governs the world” and reasoning that “education forms the mind,” Cunnyungham argued that “no scheme which proposes permanently to reform the world can succeed unless it is able to control the education of mankind.” His argument was that Methodism—in its most popular forms a religion of the heart aiming to reform individual souls—should also concentrate on education as a means to both sow the seeds for future converts and “permanently... reform the world.”

Cunnyungham’s proscriptions that his fellow Methodists be diligent about educating their children reveal something of the importance nineteenth-century Tennesseans—religious or otherwise—placed on education. Children would eventually grow to be adults and would usually as adults reflect how they had been educated while they were young. East Tennessee Baptists, meeting in 1876, predicted that “in a few years from to-day this great country, with all it contains... will be in the possession, and under the control of those who are now children. Whether these children and their

descendents be religious, moral, industrious, and benevolent—or irreligious, immoral, intemperate, profane and Godless, depends much upon what Christianity does” about the religious education of the children.\textsuperscript{55} At the same time, other proponents of educating children could see similar, but more secular goals. Schoolmaster G. R. Shields of Rittenhouse Academy in Kingston, Tennessee, argued to his fellow teachers that “the citizens of today is \textit{sic} the child of yesterday, and that a school is another name for shaping, what tomorrow, will be society, and state.”\textsuperscript{56} Shields also looked to the future state of society, but unlike the other more openly evangelical writers who saw better citizens as a byproduct of creating better church members, Shields was more interested in first creating better citizens.

Tennesseans of the 1870s, whether particularly religious or not, recognized that education was a process of broad cultural transmission that extended beyond the few weeks of formal schooling each year. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Leon Trousdale subscribed to Shield’s theory that today’s children are tomorrow’s adult citizens, but even he recognized that what children became as adults depended on more than just what they learned in the school house. The “character” of an adult, Trousdale explained, “has been impressed on him by minute, continued and elaborate manipulations of masters, tutors, philosophers, parents and pastors, in the family, the church and the school, exercised during the period when the mind is most easily formed and bent.”\textsuperscript{57} Likewise, Methodist educator Collins D. Elliott argued that children are not formed by


\textsuperscript{57} Leon Trousdale, “A Plea for Universal Education,” 2.
the school alone, but were instead “something else, below, above, and within all” the influences from family, church, and community.\(^{58}\) Children were, in Trousdale’s words, “human clay” waiting to be molded by various influences.\(^{59}\)

If children were clay to be formed into cultured adults and citizens through education, then control of that education would mean, to some degree, control of the future of society. “Those who educate the present generation of children in these United States will hold the reins of power when they are grown,” argued Methodist minister and educator O. P. Fitzgerald. He continued, warning the readers of the Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate} that “If we turn over the education of our children to others, we renounce our hold upon the future.”\(^{60}\) In part, Fitzgerald was concerned about training children in the specific theological tenets of the southern Methodist church. “The battle for the future of the Church,” he explained, “is with the children of the Church.”\(^{61}\) In a similar manner Tennessee Baptists, convinced that they were the “possessors of the truth as it is in Christ,” argued that they had “the deepest interest in the education of the masses.”\(^{62}\) But

\(^{58}\) Collins D. Elliott, “Blair Bill” (speech by Elliott) [n.d., n.p.] Microfilm acc. 802, reel 1, Collins D. Elliott Papers, 1810–1899, TSLA.

\(^{59}\) Trousdale, “A Plea for Universal Education,” 2. In his exploration of Republicans, Catholics, nativism, and the public school in the 1870s, Ward McAfee has reached a similar conclusion about the importance of the public school and children as the battleground in which social, political, and religious groups fought their campaigns. As Ward explains, “A common concern for the children of America defined the debate—not as ends in themselves but as the malleable clay of a future national culture.” Southern evangelicals of the late nineteenth century still saw their mission as a redeemer nation to include maintaining their version of Christianity to at some point further reform the national culture. Southern evangelicals could not join in the religiously cloaked school campaigns of the national Republican party in the 1870s—despite their anti-Catholic appeal—because the presence of Senator Charles Sumner seemed always to promise racially integrated schooling. McAfee, \textit{Religion, Race, and Reconstruction}, p. 7 (quotation) and 50.

\(^{60}\) Fitzgerald, Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, July 17, 1880, p. 8.


\(^{62}\) Tennessee Baptist Convention, \textit{Minutes} 1888, p. 33. Microfilm publication number 239, reel 1, SBHLA.
Fitzgerald's larger concern, one that he shared with many of his fellow evangelical leaders, was that the rapidly expanding system of public education, if not closely monitored and influenced by religious groups, threatened to estrange the children from the faith and culture of their Methodist or Baptist parents. Removing the primary responsibility for educating children from the realm of parents and churches to the impersonal state school machinery seemed a shift filled with danger.

In the spring of 1873, just weeks after the Tennessee General Assembly had resurrected the state school system dismantled by the Redeemer legislators in 1870, W. G. F. Cunyngham pessimistically warned his fellow Methodists that "If we surrender the education of our children to the Government, we surrender the power to train them up for God. ... However well instructed they may be on the Sabbath, it will avail little if the influences of the daily school are adverse."63 Over the next decade, however, Tennessee Baptists and Methodists would gradually grow to accept public schools for the elementary education of children in the state. They would, by the 1880s, begin to see public schools as an ally in their mission to Christianize the South. But before Tennesseans could accept the growth of public education, parents, school boosters, and religious leaders would hotly debate just what was to be the object of public education in Tennessee.

Public school advocates and religious leaders, though they agreed on the necessity of education for children, could not agree on its object or specific curricula. Some school boosters saw purely secular and material aims for the schools, arguing that expanded education would make more lawful citizens, reduce poverty, and build up southern

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63 Cunyngham, "Thoughts on Education," 6.
industry and wealth. They saw education’s highest aim to strengthen the state itself. Some religious leaders feared that such education, if divorced from religious influences, could actually increase crime and weaken the influence of religion as children were taught to prioritize material knowledge, wealth, and responsibility. Education, they argued, should be both moral and material and should strengthen the children, church, and state at the same time.

The great expansion of suffrage to the Freedmen following the Civil War, complicated by the existing high rate of illiteracy among white Tennesseans, made a powerful argument for the necessity of better popular education in the 1870s. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Leon Trousdale, speaking to the Alumni Association of East Tennessee University in 1875, titled his address “A Plea for Universal Education by the State, As the Correlative of Citizenship.” It was “the whole business of the State,” argued Trousdale, “to educate its citizens and thus prevent crime.” Crime resulted from “the want of proper training or education,” he argued, and instead of spending so much on prisons and punishing crime, the state should educate children to read and understand the law and not to transgress it.¹⁶⁴ As another school reformer argued, educators should “put into the child” today what they wanted to see in the state tomorrow. The public schools, once properly arranged, would “make broad-minded, industri[ous], thorough and self-thinking citizens.”¹⁶⁵ Additionally, Trousdale and many other public school advocates saw in state education “the sure preventative of pauperism [and] bankruptcy.” Stating that “industry and education are handmaidens,” Trousdale argued that money

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¹⁶⁴ Trousdale, A Plea for Universal Education, 5 and 4.
spent on education would be returned manifold through the growth of southern
industry.66 Describing children as “resources” to fuel the state’s economic and industrial
growth, another school booster urged public schools because “education increases the
wealth-producing power of a people.”67 The largely secular aims represented by such
spokesmen for expanded popular education worried other Tennesseans who prioritized
religious objectives for education.

Edward S. Joynes, a member of the original faculty of the Methodist’s Vanderbilt
University in 1875 before moving on to the University of Tennessee, wrote an essay for
the Southern Literary Messenger during the Civil War in which he speculated on the state
of “Education after the War.” He predicted that the war would encourage the late
antebellum trend toward expanding education, but he feared that one “effect of the war”
would be an emphasis on “materialism” in that education. “The greatest enemy” of
religion, morality, and proper education “is the spirit of utilitarianism” likely to be
engendered by the war and postwar efforts to rebuild. Methodist minister Collins D.
Elliott, writing a few years after the war, criticized the aims of the new public school
system and its leaders who “assume in educating children that the chief end of man is to
get money and that which money may buy for him.” Elliott called on his fellow southern
Protestants to unite in “opposition to this merely and only this Worldism of this New
England System” of education. He believed that religious southerners were still God’s
chosen people, set apart for a special work of preserving a culture free from the

67 Charles W. Dabney, "As is Education So is Production," Southwestern School Journal, 5 [7?] (January 1901), 19–21. Dabney at the time was the president of the University of Tennessee, founder of the Summer School of the South, research director for the Southern Education Bureau, and a long-time campaigner for improved public schools in Tennessee and the South.
materialism and infidelity of the rest of the world. As Joynes had argued in his wartime essay, the “safety and future glory of our country” lay in “a right and wise education” that focused more on religion and morality than on material aims. ⁶⁸

State school boosters did not necessarily argue to exclude religion from the public schools, but in their emphasis on the material advantages of education they made some religious leaders fear that Tennessee’s schools would be too one-sided. The first reaction of many Baptists and Methodists to the establishment of public schools was to denounce them as necessarily “godless” institutions. In the 1860s when General Eaton was in

⁶⁸ E. S. Joynes, “Education after the War,” Southern Literary Messenger (August 1863), pp. 487–88; Collins D. Elliott, The Eagle Wing vs. The Mayflower, or, Familyism in Education vs. Stateism, or, Tennessee vs. Massachusetts in Schools (Columbia, Tenn., 1886), 16 (first quotation) and 15 (second quotation); and Ulric, “Southern Culture,” Nashville Christian Advocate, December 4, 1875, p. 3. Elliott’s pamphlet, here dated 1886, is of a speech and a theme that he repeated often from at least as early as 1866 until nearly the time of his death in 1899. Several speech outlines similar to this printed pamphlet appear throughout Elliott’s personal papers. Born in Ohio but moving South at an early age, he never gave up his belief in a distinctive and correct southern culture. On the occasion of his funeral, the Nashville American reported that “For the past fifteen years Dr. Elliott had in one corner of his room an old Confederate flag, in which, by his own direction, his body will be wrapped in his coffin. Thus in his death he will typify his devotion to the ‘Lost Cause’ by being shrouded in the emblem of the Confederate States.” Even in his death, Elliott emphasized his faith in his adopted South, an idealized vision that he thought so hard to keep alive in the minds and institutions of the New South. “Dr. C. D. Elliott Passes Away,” Nashville American, July 29, 1899. In Collins D. Elliott Papers, 1810–1899; mf. 802: reel 1, TSLA.

Much has been written on the Lost Cause disapproval of the industrial aims of the New South movement. Prominent southern clergymen lined up both to support efforts to rebuild the region, but also to warn that by adopting the industrial aims of the northern victors, the South threatened to lose its supposed moral and religious superiority. Rev. John C. Calhoun Newton warned his fellow Methodists in The New South and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Baltimore: King Brothers, 1887) to resist the “tide of groveling mammonism” he saw infecting the region. Quoted in Shattuck Jr., “Appomattox as a Day of Blessing,” 13. Nashville Presbyterian minister James H. McNeilly remained, until his death in 1922, a constant voice of praise of the Old South and nothing but opprobrium for “the whole race of sneering, money-seeking, materialistic apostles of the ‘new’ South.” Quoted in Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 95. Charles Reagan Wilson has suggested a generational explanation for southern ministerial opposition to New South industrialism, arguing that older ministers who lived through the war and were active defenders of the South during the antebellum period were not likely to embrace the industrial innovations, while younger ministers, though still willing to attack excessive materialism, were at least open to the utility of wealth and new business methods in spreading the Gospel and enlarging the churches. Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 95–96.
charge of Tennessee schools, Collins Elliott denounced the effort to force upon the state a "godless system" of public schools. Bishop Holland McTyeire, the first president of the Methodist Vanderbilt University in Nashville, worried that the "ultimate tendency" of a "a public-school system . . . will be a godless institution." In part, religious leaders were motivated by a desire to protect the struggling denominational institutions of learning that were just beginning to rebuild from the Civil War. Despite their ominous language, however, few religious leaders believed that the public schools would necessarily be "godless," but neither did they expect that many public schools would teach denominationally specific religion. Stating that "good citizenship, in a legal sense, not in the high Christian sense, is the object" of state schools, E. S. Smith urged Methodist parents to patronize denominational schools in which the students would be trained in the specific theology of their parents. In a religious marketplace crowded with competing evangelical denominations, Baptist and Methodist leaders feared losing any opportunity to impress the faith on any member of the rising generation.

To a large extent, white evangelical Tennesseans' fears that religion would be banned from the public schools was a reaction to controversies elsewhere in the country.

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70 Bishop Holland McTyeire, "A Plea for Denominational Education," Nashville Christian Advocate, December 7, 1872, p. 6. The "godless" label was freely and often applied to the schools by Tennessee Methodists during the late nineteenth century. See for example Nashville Christian Advocate, May 11, 1878, pp. 4–5; March 3, 1883, p. 1; June 6, 1889, p. 1; February 8, 1890, p. 3; and August 5, 1897, p. 8.
71 Farish, Circuit Rider Dismounts, 243, argues that different Methodist annual conferences attempted to create District High Schools (which would include elementary schools) in each presiding elder district of the Holston Conference that included eastern Tennessee (as well as parts of Virginia and North Carolina).
72 E. S. Smith, "Methodist Schools: Their Advantages over Secular Schools," Nashville Christian Advocate, November 2, 1872, p. 6 (quotation); and Smith, "Denominational Education," Nashville Christian Advocate, October 12, 1872, p. 7.
State religious newspapers carried stories from Boston, New York, Cincinnati, and other parts of the country where Catholics and Protestants were locking horns over the place of the Bible in the public school. The so-called Cincinnati Bible War, arising from Catholic charges that public schools favored Protestant faiths and that they could not send their children to schools where the Protestant Bible was read and Protestant hymns were sung regularly, caught the attention of Tennesseans of the early 1870s. The case ended with the Ohio Supreme Court upholding the Cincinnati School Board’s decision to ban Bible reading in the city schools, a decision that set in motion waves of fear and anger of a supposed Catholic conspiracy to either destroy public education or make it unpalatably irreligious.\(^{73}\) Though Tennessee was overwhelmingly Protestant and not likely to be subject to similar opposition from Catholics, Jews, or other non-evangelical Christians, many Baptists and Methodists nonetheless feared a future secularization of Tennessee’s public schools. Indeed, opposition to religion in the public schools was not unheard of: during the debates in the Tennessee General Assembly over the school bill of 1873, a representative had introduced an amendment forbidding the use of any religious text in

\(^{73}\) On the Cincinnati Bible War’s place in Reconstruction politics and the role of nativism, see McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction*, 28–54. For Tennessee religious journals’ coverage of Bible reading cases in other places, as well as their attribution of such controversies to a Catholic conspiracy, see B. R. Womack, “The Bible Question,” Memphis Baptist, November 20, 1875, pp. 3–4; T. L. Fulbright, “The Bible in the Schools,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, June 26, 1890, p. 7; [Fitzgerald], “Vigilance not Intolerance,” Nashville Christian Advocate, February 11, 1888; [Fitzgerald], “The Spectator,” Nashville Christian Advocate, June 6, 1889, p. 1; [E. E. Hoss], “Around the World,” Nashville Christian Advocate, December 21, 1893, p. 2; and [Hoss], “Around the World,” Nashville Christian Advocate, June 28, 1894, p. 2. Tennessee religious leaders would become increasingly interested in the place of the Bible in the public school rooms at the end of the nineteenth century, eventually going so far as to seek a state law requiring school to be opened with Bible readings daily. The position of Tennessee Baptists and Methodists on the Bible in the public school will be discussed in the next section of this chapter as well as in Chapter V below.
the public schools of the state. William Witcher asked his fellow Methodists: "May we not look next for the legislature to be asked to forbid religious exercises in the opening of schools?" Baptists and Methodists in Tennessee would disagree with each other and among themselves about the propriety of using the Bible in the public school, but they could both agree on the importance of sound religion and morality being proper subjects for education.

An anonymous contributor to the Memphis Baptist, one of the most influential Baptist papers in Tennessee and the Southwest, joined the debate on religion and public education in a November 1875 essay titled "A Live Issue." He warned school officials that "religion is so interwoven with morality, and morality so essential to good citizenship, that Christian people will never consent to exclude the ethics of religion from the public schools." Other Tennessee evangelicals agreed, arguing that "schools are not for the sharpening of intellect alone." Rather, "hands, head, and heart ... all have righteous demand on the services of education." Tennessee Baptists proclaimed that

75 Wm. Witcher, "Educate Head and Heart," Nashville Christian Advocate, January 17, 1880, p. 7.
76 "A Live Issue," Memphis Baptist, November 13, 1875, p. 470.
77 Prof. Winchell, "Religious Essentials in Education," Memphis Baptist, March 22, 1879, p. 74. Similar arguments were made by several religious leaders in the state. Methodist W. G. F. Cunyngham argued "Education is not mere intellectual training, but the cultivation of all the powers, both of body and mind. ... The education which fits a man for usefulness in society, is moral and religious, as well as intellectual." Cunyngham, "Thoughts on Education II," Nashville Christian Advocate, April 12, 1873, p. 6. See also [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate March 3, 1883, p. 1; and October 13, 1883, p. 8.
education could not be "separated from religion." As Robert Louis Dabney had written in his opposition to the creation of public schools in Virginia in the 1860s, school teachers needed to "add the awakening and elevating force of Christian principles" in order to have "a true education—a hundredfold more true, more suitable, more useful, than the communication of certain literary arts." Tennessee religious leaders were not opposed to education, but they did fear that public schooling devoid of the religious influence that had permeated previous sources of informal education could only end in disaster for the society.

Tennessee evangelicals questioned the claims of public school boosters that expanded common school education would by itself lower crime. While public education advocates suggested that widespread education would reduce vice, some Tennessee evangelicals countered that education in the "three R's" alone would be insufficient to prevent crime. W. P. Harrison asked through the pages of the *Christian Advocate*: "Does any man believe that crime would disappear from the United States if every person over

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79 Robert Louis Dabney, quoted in Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936; rpt. New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969), I: 156–57. Dabney, a Presbyterian minister and prolific defender of the Lost Cause, conducted a long and acrimonious debate with Virginia School Superintendent William Henry Ruffner in the 1860s. Many of his complaints about the public schools came not just from his abhorrence of education devoid of religion—a point on which he won wide support from Tennessee evangelicals—but also from his rather aristocratic bias against popular education. Though several Tennessee religious leaders were similarly inclined to defend the church academies and colleges from the encroachments of public high schools and colleges, most of them recognized that increased common school education would actually increase the number of students qualified to enter the church schools. Dabney instead held on to a fear of popular education as potentially dismantling the rigid class structure of the Old South. Dabney’s trickle-down theory of education was based on his motto that "influence descends." As he explained: "Hence if you would permeate the whole popular mass with any wholesale influence, the wisest plan is to place the element of good at the top, that it may percolate downwards. The truly philanthropic model for elevating the lower classes of society is to provide for the rise of the superior class" (p. I: 157).
ten years of age could read and write?" J. Wofford Tucker warned that "Education is no panacea for crime and sin. There is no necessary relation between mere knowledge and moral goodness." In fact, warned editor Oscar Fitzgerald, "godless education" or the "mere sharpening of the intellect without moral culture, will only result in making its recipients more powerful agents for evil." Collins Elliott was so convinced of the necessity of religion in education that he even admitted that the state’s current informal systems of education left more children illiterate. But by comparing literacy, crime, and poverty statistics from Tennessee and Massachusetts, the supposed epitome of common school education, Elliott argued that "fewer of our illiterates will be in the poor-house and in the prison, than of the literates" of the New England common school system. He claimed that his statistics proved that with the religious influence of Tennessee education, "Tennessee illiterates" were "better citizens than Massachusetts’ literates." More widespread public education, Tennessee evangelicals argued, could nonetheless be a powerful agent in elevating society, if only it were infused with religion and morality.

Believing as they did that the state public school system would necessarily be "godless," many evangelicals saw no option but to keep their children in schools under

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80 He continued his question: "Does the experience of other countries prove that in proportion to the increase of educational facilities there is a decrease in the number of offenses against the person and property? The answer is not encouraging to the enthusiastic advocates of education as a cure for vice and crime." Harrison, "Illiteracy in the South," Nashville Christian Advocate, January 13, 1883, p. 4. Harrison concluded his article by citing statistics to show how the growth of public education in England actually coincided with an increase in crime.


82 [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, March 1, 1879, p. 8.

83 Collins D. Elliott, "Family-Craft; or, the Scotch-Irish in Education: Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee, from 1780 to 1880" [pamphlet] (Nashville: Geo. B. Stadden & Co., 1880), 24 (first quotation). This pamphlet was released in response to an address by US Commissioner of Education John Eaton at the 1880 Centennial Celebration of the founding of Nashville. Elliott papers, TSLA. Elliott, The Eagle Wing vs. the Mayflower, 13 (second quotation).
the control of the church. Because they believed, as Methodist editor Thomas Summers Sr. put it so succinctly, that “there can be no education without religion,” they felt Christian parents had no option but to eschew public schools for those under the control of the church. Summers would rather have church members “pay our taxes to the Church, and let her manage the business” of education. “We would have some control over it then.” Methodists and Baptists alike planned and opened many local church schools as “the only antidote to that godless feature in the public schools which ignores the Holy Scriptures in the training of youth.” If the public schools were to concentrate on training of the head or hands alone, Tennessee evangelicals could see no recourse but to found schools of their own where they could train both the head and the heart.

Yet Tennessee school boosters did not necessarily argue that public education had to be devoid of moral and religious teachings. State superintendent Leon Trousdale in 1875 said that the “only firm and lasting base” of security for the state “can be the virtue and intelligence of the people” secured through the broad education of all citizens. Claude Bell, editor of a teacher’s magazine in Tennessee, similarly concluded that “Vitality and morality are two great ends to be accomplished by common school education.” The vast majority of public school officials were not irreligious; like most Tennessee evangelicals, they saw the necessity of a moral component in education. The State Teachers Association convention in 1873 called for teachers in the public schools who have “religion free from degrading superstition on the one hand, and from the evils

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87 Trousdale, A Plea for Universal Education, 8.
of excessive sectarianism on the other. 89 Despite their mutual misgivings about the aims of education, religious leaders and education boosters seemed to agree with Oscar Fitzgerald that "learning and religion must go hand in hand on their beneficent mission to the millions" of American children. 90 Believing that theirs was a "Christian nation," both groups could agree that public education in Tennessee should and would be at least broadly religious. 91 But their apparent agreement on the aims of education masked a second question that would trouble parents, school superintendents, legislators, and religious leaders for the next fifty years and beyond. Who exactly would be in charge of children, the schools, and their curriculum?

For the most part, questions about the control of public schools and curriculum were left to be resolved at the local level. Although Collins D. Elliott denounced Republican proposals to appropriate as much as $15 million a year to the southern states as a "theological abomination," many other Tennesseans of the 1870s and 1880s supported the idea of federal money for southern education while rejecting any

89 Wharton S. Jones, "President's Address" Tennessee State Teachers Association, Proceedings, 1873, p. 25. Similarly, many school systems called for screening teachers for morality, but made them pledge to avoid sectarian teaching. The Nashville Board of Education, reconstituted after the Civil War, required the Superintendent and Principals to sign an obligation with the Board that "I will during my incumbency devote my Exclusive time and attention to the duties of my office and abstain Entirely from all public participation in partisan politics. I will also discountenance in Assistant teachers, and discourage in the general conduct of the Schools Everything calculated to impress a political Sectional or Sectarian bias on the minds of pupils." Similarly, the Board in its 1879 rules for teachers ordered that "No teacher shall introduce into the schools sectarian views in religion ... under penalty of removal." Nashville Board of Education Minutes, July 5, 1866 and August 11, 1879, p. 250. Reel 17, Box 25, folder 1 of J. Emerick Nagy Collection Addition, microfilm acc. 1136, TSLA. Similarly, the Jackson City School regulations stated in its rules for teachers: "7. No teacher will be permitted to introduce into school any sectarian views as regards religion, or partisan or sectional views as regards politics." J. C. Brooks, First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools of the City of Jackson for the Scholastic Year 1879-80. (Jackson: D. L. Balch, 1880), 29. Reports are in the Tennessee Room of the Jackson-Madison County Library, Jackson, Tennessee.
90 [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, June 4, 1887, p. 8.
91 [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, May 21, 1881, p. 8.
suggestion of consequent federal control.\textsuperscript{92} Methodists Oscar Fitzgerald and Atticus Haygood even signed an 1883 petition (which Fitzgerald reprinted in the Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}) memorializing Congress to apportion aid to the states on a basis of their illiteracy rates, but with the condition that the money was to be distributed through existing systems of education.\textsuperscript{93} Opposition to federal control of education was based in a large part on lingering post-Reconstruction southern sensitivity that federally funded schools would have to be racially integrated institutions. But there was also a further fear that an educational system controlled from far-away Washington or even from Nashville could threaten the ability of families and churches to direct the education of their children as parents saw most appropriate.

Antebellum Tennessee's lack of public schools left the education of children primarily in the hands of individual families. Though the new public schools promised to provide opportunities for more children, some parents and religious leaders feared that the new state systems would supplant family authority over their children. The advantage of the antebellum Tennessee system of education, argued Collins Elliott, was that it recognized "the family is the chief power, and thus the family educates."\textsuperscript{94} According to the 1834 Constitution, Elliott explained, the role of the state in education was to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[92] Collins D. Elliott, "Blair Bill" notes of a speech, reel 1, Collins D. Elliott Papers, TSLA. Oscar Fitzgerald editorialized that "Whatever differences of opinion may exist as to the proposition to appropriate money from the national treasury in aid of education in the several States, there will be general agreement on one point, namely: that if such appropriation shall be made, the money should be disbursed by State authority." Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, January 20, 1883, p. 8. Atticus G. Haygood, "General Government Aid to Education in the States," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, September 15, 1883, p. 16.
\item[93] [Fitzgerald], "National Aid to Education," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, September 29, 1883, p. 8.
\item[94] Elliott, "Family-Craft," 2.
\end{footnotes}
“promote” and “encourage” and “foster” and “thus to help the ‘Family.’”\textsuperscript{95} Even as it moved to support an expansion of public education in the 1880s, the Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate} warned school officials not to push aside the “divine institution” of the family in public school matters. The family, it argued, “is the basis of all social, civil, moral, and religious institutions. Destroy the integrity and purity of the family, and social order, civil government, public morality, civilization, and Christianity will be alike impossible.”\textsuperscript{96} Despite their original concern over state-provided education as necessarily secular and therefore harmful, Tennessee religious leaders gradually moved towards an acceptance of public elementary schools in the late 1870s and 1880s, increasingly arguing that such schools would not have to be irreligious only non-sectarian, and further, that students would still receive moral and religious training contemporaneously in the home, Sunday School, and church.

\textbf{“THE PRINCIPLE OF HOME RULE”: EVANGELICAL ACCOMMODATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION}

Soon after the Tennessee General Assembly of 1873 passed the sweeping education bill that laid the legal groundwork for a state-funded system of common schools, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, declared that they “regard the education of the young as one of the leading functions of the Church” and warned

\textsuperscript{95} Elliott, \textit{The Eagle Wing vs. the Mayflower}, 12 and 8.
\textsuperscript{96} Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, July 1, 1882, p. 1. Many of these questions of the proper relationship of the family, state, and church to the public school will be discussed in Chapters V and VI below.
"that she cannot abdicate in favor of the State without infidelity to her trust and irreparable damage to society." 97 Apparently the southern Methodist leadership, though perhaps more outspoken than many common citizens who protested by simply not sending their children to the schools, were not alone in their opposition to the new state role in education. Dr. Barnas Sears noted in his 1874 report to the directors of the Peabody Education Fund that at best "only about one-third of the population [of Tennessee] are decidedly friendly to free schools." 98

However, the traditional Protestant emphasis on the importance of the individual believer being able to read, interpret, and accept the Scriptures gave Tennessee evangelical leaders little standing from which to criticize efforts to provide education and promote literacy. 99 State Baptists and Methodists routinely criticized Catholic attacks on the Bible in the public schools as proof of the Papist and clerical tyranny over individual believers. 100 How then could Protestants oppose state efforts to increase literacy? As one

98 Sears in Proceedings. Peabody Education Fund, 1874, Vol. II, 408, quoted in Holt, Struggle for a State System of Public Schools, 19. Holt details several of the "forces retarding educational growth" (pp. 3–30), including economic disorganization (namely the large state debt crisis), politics, apathy, and general public mistrust of the government, but does not list Church or religious opposition.
99 Focusing mostly on evangelical higher education, Beth Barton Schweiger argues that the evangelical emphasis on education in part represented a desire for social advancement on the part of Virginia ministers. But she, along with Daniel Stowell, Paul Harvey, and others, recognizes the importance of a religious print culture in spreading the Gospel and building up a denominational structure among the evangelical churches. Schweiger, The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 55–75; Stowell, Rebuilding Zion, 100–113; and Harvey, Redeeming the South, 138–52. Without widespread literacy, the print culture would have been at best limited to an upper class already attracted to more highbrow denominations such as the Presbyterians and Episcopalians, and would not have been able to continue the spread of the church among its numerous rural constituents.
writer asked, "if we do not open the doors of the school houses, and keep them open the year round, how can we suffer the children to come unto God?"  

J. C. Brooks, the Jackson city school superintendent, criticized opponents of public education, asking "how any person claiming to be a christian can in any way oppose the great humanitarian and elevating principle of public education. It must go hand in hand with christianity, and second to it, only, in the elevation of mankind. ..."  

The General Association of Baptists of East Tennessee recognized the growing public interest in education and urged the ministry to take an interest in the movement and "to march in the front ranks, that they may more efficiently interest, instruct, and lead" in the education of the state's youth.  

Even as they continued to maintain that they were "fully persuaded that the salt of religious truth alone can preserve education from abuse and mischievous results," Tennessee evangelicals quickly began to realize that the churches and families, unaided would not be able to educate the great numbers of children—white and black—then coming of age.  

"It is absolutely hopeless," concluded Atticus Haygood; "the Church cannot run the common schools" because it "has not the money." Realistic assessments such as Haygood's forced other state evangelicals to abandon their oppositional stance on public education and search for a way to work with and through the state's growing educational system. East Tennessee Baptist minister G. P. Faw urged his fellow evangelicals to recognize the enormity of the task ahead of them.

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103 General Association of Baptists of East Tennessee Minutes, 1873, pp. 15–16.  
104 "Address of the Bishops to the General Conference [1874]," pp. 2–3.
I am a friend of our denominational institutions of learning, but when it is remembered that there are not enough Schools under Baptist control in the United States to accommodate the children of East Tennessee, nor enough such schools in the whole South to accommodate the scholastic population of Washington County, Tennessee, the question arises, what shall Baptists do to supply the pressing demands of the rising generation for an education[?] To my mind the only solution is, for us to foster the public schools of the country.\textsuperscript{105}

From the middle 1870s, Tennessee Baptists and Methodists began a process of a religious accommodation with state-supported education, so that by the late 1880s a leading Methodist could concede that “the public schools system furnishes the amplest opportunities for primary education, so that it is needless for the Church to attempt” to duplicate its efforts.\textsuperscript{106}

Thomas O. Summers Sr., an aging English-born Methodist and editor of the Methodist’s influential Nashville Christian Advocate, had been one of the chief religious critics of the new public schools in Tennessee during the 1860s, going so far in November 1872 as to argue that “the State has no business with education.”\textsuperscript{107}

Summers’s gradual recognition of the impossibility of individual churches or denominations providing sufficient educational opportunities is a good example of the transition in thought of many Tennessee religious leaders.\textsuperscript{108} Even more telling,

\textsuperscript{105} Holston Baptist Association, Minutes, 1886, p. 11, SBHLA.
\textsuperscript{108} Summers gradually increased his notices of public school activities, but he remained adamant that public education had to remain morally and religiously safe, and that the state had no business with any more than elementary schools. [Summers], “Compulsory Education,” Nashville Christian Advocate, December 14, 1872, p. 8; “Religious Education,” Ibid., February 15, 1873, p. 7; “The Bible in the Schools,” Ibid., October 30, 1875, p. 9; “Teachers in Council,”
however, is the General Conference's choice of his editorial successor. In 1878 when Summers moved a few blocks up Broadway from the Nashville Publishing House to join the faculty of Vanderbilt University full time as a professor of systematic theology (he had been acting as both editor and professor since 1875), the southern Methodists replaced him with Oscar P. Fitzgerald. A native of Virginia, Fitzgerald was a well-traveled minister and educator in North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia even before he went to California as a missionary in 1855. Once in California, Fitzgerald became the state superintendent of public instruction, edited a teachers' journal in San Francisco, and then assumed the presidency of Pacific Methodist College in 1875.¹⁰⁹

From the very start of his tenure at the *Christian Advocate*, O. P. Fitzgerald utilized his editorship as a bully pulpit to promote education by both the church and the state. A former college president, Fitzgerald fast became an adamant supporter of the nascent Vanderbilt University and all other educational endeavors of the southern Methodist church. In the first week of Fitzgerald's editorship, he added a regular column on education in the *Christian Advocate* and even recruited Tennessee's State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Leon Trousdale, as a contributing editor of the column (Trousdale shared the duty with John W. Paulett of Nashville and Nathaniel T. Lupton, professor of chemistry at Vanderbilt University). As had occurred with Fitzgerald in California, many Tennessee evangelical laymen and ministers became local, county, and state school officials. When the Jackson city schools needed a building and

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¹⁰⁹ [Summers], "The Rev. Dr. Fitzgerald," Nashville *Christian Advocate*, June 1, 1878, p. 8.
teachers for its male students in 1875 and 1876, it turned to the teachers and facilities of the Baptists' Southwestern Baptist University to supply their need.\textsuperscript{110}

In the winter of 1882 Fitzgerald printed a very pointed front-page editorial in the \textit{Christian Advocate} in which he sought to clarify the relationship between the church and the growing public schools of the state. Fitzgerald delineated the roles of parents, churches, and school directors in building up public schools funded by taxation and subject to the control of local communities as well as church schools under denominational supervision and support for the good of both church and society. Titled simply "Education," the editorial began with the argument that popular democracy—especially in light of the recent "sudden and enormous extension of the suffrage"—required "popular education." Fitzgerald then called for a truce between "those who deny altogether that education is a function of the State" and "those who would turn over its whole management to state authority." Arguing that proponents of both opinions would "have to make concessions or quarrel indefinitely," Fitzgerald proposed a compromise. The state could provide elementary education for all citizens but should leave any further schooling to parents and the churches. Fitzgerald's plan not only brokered a compromise on the question of who was in charge of children's education, but also provided a blueprint for church, state, and family responsibilities for the proper training of the next generation. Churches should, therefore, concentrate on building up their secondary schools and colleges and otherwise assist parents in the religious education of children in the home and Sunday School.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110} Southwestern Baptist University Board of Trust, \textit{Minutes}, I: 38–39 (June 1, 1876).
Fitzgerald’s compromise plan provided an educational division of labor for Tennessee that provided an avenue out of the constant bickering between partisans of education under exclusive church or state control. He wrote:

Let the State provide for the elements of an English education, and leave the rest to individual enterprise and to the Church. When a boy can 'read, write, and cipher' he has the tools with which to work his way onward, and is equipped for the ordinary duties of citizenship. State control of education will, we think, be confined within this limit.\(^{112}\)

Most Tennessee evangelical leaders seemed to approve Fitzgerald’s compromise and agreed, as did Bishop Holland McTyeire and "not a few thoughtful persons [who] take the ground that States and municipal corporations should confine their work to common-school education, and that with colleges and universities they properly have nothing to do."\(^{113}\) Tennessee Baptists agreed, resolving that "The State for her own preservation must provide a system of education; but there is a limit beyond which she cannot safely tread. She must stop with the citizen. She cannot enter the holy domain of the Christian."\(^{114}\) The state could and should provide elementary education for all citizens, Tennessee Baptists and Methodists agreed, but it should stay out of the higher branches of education.

Religious leaders' arguments that the state should stay out of higher education were in part motivated by their desires to protect denominational colleges from competition with tax-funded institutions. Taking notice of controversies in North and

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\(^{112}\) Ibid.


South Carolina during the 1880s over state plans to offer free tuition to public universities, Fitzgerald sounded “a warning note” against similar state encroachment in Tennessee.115 “With all its resources,” asked Bishop McTyeire about South Carolina’s plan to provide free tuition, “cannot the State compete on equal terms with the colleges chartered by it, and which deserve to be protected and encouraged rather than crippled by its hand?”116 Tennessee’s denominational academies and colleges had only a precarious existence in the 1880s; they mostly lived off small endowments and low tuition payments and seemed unlikely to survive any stiff competition from state high schools or universities. Denominational leaders recognized that the growth of public elementary education would actually help the denominational colleges, providing a larger pool of students qualified for and eager to continue their education.117 Baptist minister G. P. Faw did not want to leave anything to chance and urged Baptists “to qualify themselves for Teachers, and then go out into the country and seek positions in the public schools.” The influence of Baptist teachers would help the public schools while at the same time make those schools “feeders of [Baptist] Colleges and High Schools under denominational control.”118

To stem the growth of state-supported higher education, Tennessee evangelical leaders also tapped into the populist anti-elitism that was growing in the state. Support

115 [Fitzgerald], “A Warning Note on Education,” Nashville Christian Advocate, November 17, 1883, p. 8. See his similar complaints about the free tuition controversy in North Carolina in “Let them Speak Out,” Ibid., March 14, 1885, pp. 8–9; and “The Primer or the Classics?”, Ibid., March 21, 1885, p. 8.
117 Southwestern Baptist University Board of Trust Minutes, June 1, 1881, p. 124; W. D. Corkran, The Sumner County Educator (Gallatin, Tenn., July 1879), 2.
118 Holston Baptist Association, Minutes, 1886, p. 11.
for the public schools fit the democratic tendencies of the evangelical denominations’ emphasis on the religion of the common man. To their minds, “what is necessary for all should be free for all”; therefore Tennessee evangelical leaders could support popular elementary education funded by the state because it gave everyone “the keys to get to the starting line on equal footing.” Religious leaders painted state universities as elitist institutions and the practice of granting free tuition as a “perversion of the public funds.” Furthering his charges of elitism with an apt gastronomical metaphor, Methodist Holland McTyeire argued that though the “people must not starve” nonetheless “the public purse may not be drawn upon to feed them on turtle-soup and plum-pudding.”\(^ {119} \)

As their most powerful argument for why the state should stay out of the business of higher education, Tennessee evangelicals argued that church academies and colleges were the only hope for the future morality of the individual students as well as the future prosperity of the church, the state, and the South. Just before the school term of 1880 began, the *Christian Advocate* presented what it claimed should be “the question of the hour for every parent.” Calling readers’ attention to the advertisements for denominational schools in the paper, editor Fitzgerald instructed parents to ask themselves, “Who shall educate my children?” As he explained, “it is a question that involves their interest for both worlds, and ought to be decided with reference to both.”\(^ {120} \)

Church schools, Tennessee evangelicals argued, would not just educate the intellect, but

\(^ {119} \)McTyeire, “Letter from Bishop McTyeire,” Nashville *Christian Advocate*, February 7, 1885, p. 7; and [Fitzgerald], “A Warning Note on Education,” 8. Some citizens in Jackson protested public education that sought to teach children higher branches like Latin and Greek. “Let the people pay for the fancy education, not the public. Some citizens think it is as much the job of the community to educate a man’s children as it is to vote a tax to clothe them. Brooks, *First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools of the City of Jackson for the Scholastic Year 1879–80*, p. 3.

\(^ {120} \)Nashville *Christian Advocate*, September 11, 1880, p. 1.
would work actively to educate the character and lead a student toward conversion.

Fitzgerald encouraged "Southern Methodists [to] . . . put more thought, labor, money, and prayer into denominational education" because, he warned, "the Church that turns over its children to be educated by others gives a mortgage upon them with a strong probability of foreclosure."\(^{121}\) Though willing to accommodate public elementary schools, most Tennessee evangelicals remained adamant in their contentions that higher education should remain the exclusive province of the churches.

Church leaders urged laymen and ministers to establish and strengthen denominational schools to pick up where the state elementary schools left off. Methodists and Baptists alike called for a network of denominational high schools and colleges that would both provide the moral education lacking in the public schools and prepare students to enter the denominational colleges. Noting that state "schools do not and cannot meet all the needs of education in our country," Baptists and Methodists called for members to support denominational education.\(^{122}\) But the church would also benefit from the education of children in denominational schools. Not only were children educated in denominational schools far more likely to stay in the religion of their parents,

but the church also needed trained and intelligent leaders in both the pulpit and pew. As Atticus Haygood asserted, "the Church cannot get on and do her work without educated men and women."\textsuperscript{123}

In the absence of explicit religious control of elementary education, church leaders argued that the only security for the state was a strong system of denominational colleges that could educate heart and head together. "The greatest danger to the Church and State," warned W. T. Bolling in 1884, "may be found in the tendency to rest in the superficial education of the people." Only with the moral leaven of Christian higher education, denominational leaders argued, could more widespread popular education be turned for the good of society. Sharpening the intellect alone only increased an individual's capacity for crime, they suggested; moral higher education would be the security of both individual and society. Only in Christian institutions of higher education could students safely explore the relationship between true science and true religion, proving the unity of one divine truth. As W. G. F. Cunyngham warned, "If such men as Darwin, Huxley, Tyndal & Co., have the training of our young men, it requires no prophetic ken to foresee what will be the moral and religious character of our educated men in the next generation."\textsuperscript{124} Finally, religious higher education had the utmost importance for the future of Tennessee and southern society in general. Tennessee evangelicals celebrated the fact that they had maintained a society free from the materialism and infidelity of the North.\textsuperscript{125} In building denominational colleges and

\textsuperscript{123} Atticus Haygood, "One thing that is Certain," Nashville Christian Advocate, March 26, 1887, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{124} Cunyngham, "Thoughts on Education," Nashville Christian Advocate, April 5, 1873, p. 6. For more on the denominational colleges and teachings of science and religion, see Chapters III and VI below.
\textsuperscript{125} Ulric, "Southern Culture," Nashville Christian Advocate, December 4, 1875, p. 3.
educating children they were "laying the foundations" of a New South, and "what it will be a hundred years hence . . . depends on the nature and character of the foundations. If the foundations are laid in the general education and Christianization of the people . . . we may expect the future to produce a civilization unsurpassed in other lands." ¹²⁶ Christian control of education was important because the South "is to belong to those who educate its children. A godless education will turn it over to Satan as surely as effect follows cause. A Christian education is necessary to secure and perpetuate the blessings of a Christian civilization." ¹²⁷

Evangelical leaders, while arguing for the necessity of religious higher education, were still unwilling to disclaim totally any role for religion in the public elementary schools. Few Baptist or Methodist state leaders desired to legally require religious teaching in public schools, but both anticipated that individual schools would reflect the moral and religious background of their surrounding communities. Specifically, on the issue that had been convulsing the nation for the past decade—the role of the Bible in the public school classroom—Baptists and Methodists divided among themselves over the propriety of using the Scriptures in the public classrooms. ¹²⁸ Some argued that the use of

¹²⁸ The issue of legal efforts to include or forbid the use of the Bible in public school classrooms, and the opinions of Tennessee Baptists and Methodists will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter V below. Though there was dissent within each denomination, in general, Tennessee Methodists of the nineteenth century were much more adamant in their arguments that the Bible should be read in the public school classrooms, though they were reticent about legally requiring its usage. Southern Baptists, holding more loyally to their dissenter heritage and memories of the dangers of Church-State union, tended to oppose any formal efforts to include the Bible in the public school curriculum, although they too seemed to endorse the efforts of pious, Christian teachers to include Biblical lessons whenever possible. Both Baptists and Methodists, as well as the great majority of Tennesseans, seemed to endorse Oscar Fitzgerald’s “home rule” plan discussed below, as the wisest and most practical solution to the thorny issue of the role of the Bible in the public school.
the Bible in the classroom would constitute an unconstitutional endorsement of religion by the state. Others worried that the practice of non-Christian or immoral teachers reading from the Bible in the public school would be more harmful than excluding it altogether. Still others worried, however, that banning the Bible from the school would suggest to impressionable children that it was somehow a dangerous book that should be avoided.

Oscar Fitzgerald again stepped into the fray, offering a compromise to supporters and opponents of the Bible in the public school, and in the process further accommodating Tennessee evangelicals to the existence of public elementary schools in general. "The solution" to the question of the Bible in the public school, Fitzgerald argued, "seems to be plain enough on the principle of home rule. Let the State keep hands off. No legislation is called for one way or the other." Fitzgerald, along with most Tennessee evangelicals, was clearly in favor of some level of religious content in the public schools of the state. But he also recognized that there was a diversity of opinion within the various religious communities of Tennessee on the use of the Bible in the schools, and he could foresee that great "discord ... would result from the compulsory use of the Bible in the public schools" in some communities. Though he did not state it explicitly, Fitzgerald seemed to recognize that passing a state law requiring Bible reading in the schools, besides being controversial among some Protestants, would possibly be unconstitutional and would certainly draw protests from the state's minority of non-

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129 Agreeing with many critics of Bible-reading in the public schools, Fitzgerald suggested that "to force the Bible into all the public schools would be folly." Picking up on arguments already circulated among Tennessee evangelicals, Fitzgerald warned that "no Christian parent would want any Bible-teaching of his child" by any "infidel" teachers: "such a use as they would make of the Bible would in most cases be sacrilegious rather than religious." [Fitzgerald], "Education," Nashville Christian Advocate, February 4, 1882, p. 1.
Protestants. Believing as he did that the Bible was already widely used in most of the public schools of the state, Fitzgerald feared that overt legislation could incite an adverse legal ruling putting an end to the practice. But he called on local communities—which he assumed would be almost universally sympathetic to Protestant aims—to take an active part in the public schools and ensure a respect for religion and morality in them: "A wrong bias will surely be given to the education of this country unless Christian men and women put their labor, their prayers, and their money into it."\textsuperscript{130}

In spite of his apparent respect for the authority of the state constitution (if not its intent), Fitzgerald's argument for home rule relied on the Protestant hegemony within state religious circles to guarantee that religious education in public schools would reflect the religion of the majority of the state's inhabitants. " Surely every community may be left to settle the question itself. Ought it not have the right to do so?" he asked rhetorically. Fitzgerald assumed that most communities in the state, except perhaps for a few pockets in the larger cities, were predominantly Protestant and would desire to continue the use of the Bible in their schools. Tennessee evangelicals agreed with another essayist who suggested that although the public schools could not teach denominational religion as each church might prefer, there were nonetheless "fundamental principles of morality and fundamental doctrines of Christianity upon which all Protestant Churches agree." Lessons, readings, and even textbooks based on this non-sectarian Protestantism "would be unobjectionable to the Christian people of the State and ... might be thoroughly taught in our public schools."\textsuperscript{131} Evangelical leaders

\textsuperscript{130} Fitzgerald, Nashville Christian Advocate, August 6, 1881, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{131} W. M. Leftwich, "Religion and Public Education," Nashville Christian Advocate, February 22, 1890, p. 2.
either ignored or blatantly dismissed the beliefs of the minority of Jews and Catholics in
the state in their arguments that non-sectarian religion would not be objectionable in the
schools.

Although his editorial had been written in response to the specific issue of the use
of the Bible in the public schools, Fitzgerald's stress on the principle of "home rule"
would be critical to Protestants' acceptance of a public elementary school system in
Tennessee. Tennessee evangelicals recognized that children were influenced by many
forces—families, churches, communities, as well as public schools—and that the child
was "something else, below, above, and within all these...[something] the state school
does not ever promise to give him and certainly cannot give him."132 The character of a
child "is usually the result of mixed forces operating silently, unobserved by the masses,
[and] not the work of legislation or convention" or public common school education
alone.133 Public schools close to every home and under the supervision of local
communities would be better for young children who were easily impressionable and
only just beginning to form their character. With schools close to home, young children
would "remain under the SPECIAL GUIDANCE AND PROTECTION of their parents."134
Methodist and Baptist educators used this emphasis on the important role to be played by
parents, and especially mothers, in supervising the moral and religious education of
children, to justify their support for denominational schools and colleges for women.135

132 Elliott, "Blair Bill."
133 Cunyngham, "Thoughts on Education, II," Nashville Christian Advocate, April 12, 1873, p. 6.
134 Superintendent W. D. Corkran, in The Sumner County Educator (Gallatin, Tenn., July 1879), 5.
135 Tennessee Baptist Convention, Minutes, 1890, p. 31; [Fitzgerald], "Do This Also," Nashville Christian Advocate, March 12, 1881, p. 8; Nashville Christian Advocate, April 23, 1881, p. 1; and "The Education of Women," Nashville Christian Advocate, November 1, 1884, p. 1.
Finally, a Sunday School operating in every church would further guarantee that children’s education in the public elementary school would be supplemented with denominational religious teaching. Not only would predominantly evangelical Protestant communities guarantee that public elementary schools taught a common “non-Sectarian” religion and morality; parents, churches, and communities would supervise the totality of a child’s education and impress upon them the religion of their parents.

Tennessee evangelical leaders, who in the 1860s and early 1870s had opposed the expansion of public education as a challenge to their cultural authority, were by the end of the nineteenth century some of its strongest advocates. Elijah E. Hoss, who took over editing the Nashville Christian Advocate when Oscar Fitzgerald was elected bishop, wrote this pointed defense of state common schools in the spring of 1897:

> Once in awhile we hear a belated protest against popular education. It is generally based upon the fact that some boy or girl, after enjoying the advantage of the public schools, has turned out to be worthless. The only reply that needs to be made is that one swallow does not make a summer. Knowledge is better than ignorance. Even a limited and superficial discipline is to be preferred to none at all. The State provides for the instruction of all its citizens in self-defense. Without an open schoolhouse in every community, universal suffrage is a farce. Intelligence is the basis of free government. The pleas that it is not just to tax one man to educate another man's children may properly be met by the counter statement that there is no other method of guaranteeing the safety of society.

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137 [Hoss], Nashville Christian Advocate, April 8, 1897, p. 1.
Noticeably absent is any mention of religion, or the lack of it, in the public common schools of Tennessee. Hoss would argue elsewhere that the public schools “stand on a good moral basis,” and “though not distinctively religious, our public schools are not anti-religious.” Operating under Fitzgerald’s “principle of home rule” to allow general religious teaching in most public schools and relying on parents, Sunday Schools, and denominational colleges to provide denominationally specific supplemental education, Tennessee evangelicals at the turn of the century could endorse the public schools wholeheartedly as allies of the church in their efforts to bring up children to honor the religion and region of their parents.

“LAY UP KNOWLEDGE”: PUBLIC EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY

In the fall of 1898, inspired by the impending opening of a new school year, Baptist minister and long-time denominational leader John Boardman Hawthorne announced to his congregation in Nashville’s First Baptist Church his text for the day’s sermon. Quoting from the book of Proverbs, Hawthorne began with the couplet:

Wise men lay up knowledge,
but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.\(^{139}\)

Hawthorne proceeded to explicate his chosen text, using Solomon’s maxim as justification for his, and he hoped his whole church’s, support for a widely disseminated

\(^{138}\) [Hoss], “Religion vs. the Public School,” Nashville Christian Advocate, November 11, 1897, p. 8.

\(^{139}\) Proverbs X: 14 (KJV).
education. His explicit goal, he told his congregation, was to "stimulate [them] to a more earnest and practical support of the educational systems of our country."\textsuperscript{140}

His sermon is a far cry from the opposition of a Robert Louis Dabney or Collins D. Elliott encountered earlier in this chapter. Not that the objections of Dabney and Elliott had been completely driven from the field, but Hawthorne, a thirty year veteran of the Baptist ministry and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, was preaching from the pulpit of the largest Baptist church in the middle of Nashville, the organizational center of southern Baptism.\textsuperscript{141} His sermon was silent on the role of the state in higher education, but Hawthorne was unequivocal in his ringing endorsement of the growing system of public elementary and secondary schools. Recognizing Baptist roots among the common, rural people of the South, Hawthorne added a populist coloring to his plea that "We must put the means of procuring an education within the reach of every family."

Hawthorne's congregation at First Baptist counted among its number some of the wealthiest and most influential of Nashville's citizens, and he wisely balanced any populist intonations he may have uttered with explicit reasons for education that sounded more like the old-time noblesse oblige. His suggestions to help the population as a whole were supported by reasons calculated to appeal to his congregation. Expanded education,

\textsuperscript{140} Unless otherwise noted, all of the following quotations are from J. B. Hawthorne, "Lay Up Knowledge," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, October 13, 1898, pp. 3–4.
\textsuperscript{141} Hawthorne was an accomplished veteran of the pulpit and denominational organization, a former Confederate officer, minister to congregations on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line, and "for many years . . . the acknowledged orator of the Southern Baptist Convention." He came to First Baptist in Nashville already 59 years old, and retired because of poor health in 1899. Lynn E. May Jr., The First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee, 1820–1970 (Nashville: First Baptist Church, 1970), 166.
he argued, would decrease poverty, improve morality, clean up politics, and generally strengthen the South.

Noting that "where education is general, poverty is the exception and not the rule," Hawthorne asked rhetorically "is it desirable to lift the burden of poverty from a community?" Hawthorne's concern for the poor was by no means a radical departure for the church; charity had long been recognized as a legitimate function of religious organizations. But Hawthorne was speaking of more than simple charity for church members down on their luck or even the more systematic visiting of the city's poor. His endorsement of education as a means "to lift the burden of poverty" sounds more like a plan to teach fishing than to pass out fish to the hungry. Speaking to a congregation that counted among its number some of the more generous members of Nashville society, Hawthorne attacked their sense of contentment. Answering his previous rhetorical question with another, Hawthorne asked "how can any man who claims to be a Christian or a philanthropist withhold his sympathy and support from the cause of general education?" With this implicit criticism of class-based opposition to public education, Hawthorne attempted to remind his congregation of the Baptists' historical position as a church of the common people and of the necessity of moving the whole society forward at once. "Ignorance" not poverty, he argued, was "the insuperable social barrier" keeping many Baptists from success in this world.

As a further endorsement of education, Hawthorne praised the public school as essential for promoting "morality, law, and order in society." It would be "the ally of religion" he argued, and would aid "in reducing vice and crime." He was not arguing that education could act alone, and he cautioned that personal religion was still the foremost
determinant of individual behavior. But proper education, Hawthorne proclaimed, would be infused with religion and morality and therefore should be widely spread to all people of the city, the state, and the South.

Hawthorne then turned to politics in his arsenal of arguments for expanding public education. In the post–Civil War era that combined an expanded electorate with only limited educational opportunities, southern politics was ripe with opportunities for manipulation by resourceful politicians capable of mobilizing voters under various banners. Like other southern states, Tennessee had drastically restricted suffrage in an effort to disenfranchise blacks and poor whites, but Hawthorne’s congregation were no doubt still chagrined at the political machinations of certain ethnic politicians in the state’s capital city. Persistent efforts by local ministers and reforming laymen to banish alcohol from the city and further instill public morality through legislation had all come to naught at the opposition of the local political machines. In response, Nashvillians even elected William McCarthy, an avowed anti-Catholic and prohibitionist running on the ticket of the American Protective Association, as mayor in 1895. McCarthy’s power was short-lived, however, as the city’s Irish banded together to support the successful candidacy of Richard Houston Dudley in 1897.

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proclaimed that education was the solution to their political problems: "the only way to dethrone the demagogue, either in politics or religion, is to banish ignorance." A morally and religiously sound education spread widely among all citizens, Hawthorne assumed, would elevate the principles of the electorate and sweep new, and presumably less objectionable, leaders into public office.

Finally, Hawthorne proclaimed that education would strengthen the nation as a whole. Looking back over the world conflicts of the previous half century, he surmised that, as a rule, the better educated nation wins wars. Eschewing references to the American Civil War (though some implicit connections may have been drawn by his congregation), Hawthorne credited France's defeat by Germany not to "any lack of valor in the men who fought for her flag," but "because the superior intellectual culture of Germany had given her a better discipline for the rugged business of war." Likewise, the recent defeat of the Spanish fleet proclaimed "to the world the incomparable superiority of a nation where education is the rule, over a nation where illiteracy is practically universal." 145

In addition to such material endorsements of expanded education, Hawthorne explained to his congregation that there were also great spiritual and religious gains to be made. In opposition to some nay-sayers who warned that continued education would eventually lead to a loss of faith, Hawthorne argued the exact opposite: "every step that a man takes in intellectual progress prepares him for a loftier appreciation of the Christian religion." He was unconcerned that schools would necessarily be "godless," arguing

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145 Hawthorne, "Lay up Knowledge," 4. Such endorsements of German education would change drastically in the early 20th century, as the Prussian educational system and German militarism was accused of leaving Germany without a moral compass and leading to their supposed guilt in causing the World War I.
instead that education would aid in the spread of religion. Hawthorne’s argument made sense in an evangelical Protestant culture such as the Baptists’ that emphasized the importance of the individual believer to read and comprehend the Scriptures as the only guide for a godly life. Popular education, especially if infused with the religious values of local communities, would greatly aid in the spread of religion. Indeed, Hawthorne even seemed to suggest wide-spread education as a pre-millennial requirement, proclaiming his belief “that before that day when ‘the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ,’ and when righteousness reigns from shore to shore and from pole to pole, education will be universal.”

Hawthorne was not making a radical departure from his fellow Tennessee Baptists, who as early as 1876 had recognized the importance of properly religious education for shaping the future of society:

> It is a work of such vital import to the future of the children themselves, to the future of society, Christianity and the world, that our hands, heads, hearts, tongues and pens should be earnestly, judiciously, and wisely employed in carrying out the injunction of Scripture to ‘bring up the

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146 Hawthorne, “Lay up Knowledge,” 4. Christians should support education, Hawthorne explained, because “it is perfectly compatible with the commission of the Christian ministry to befriend and foster every institution, agency and influence, that promotes man’s progress and hastens the coming of the glorious consummation to which Christian prophesy is ever directing human thought and aspiration.” *Ibid.*, 3. Methodist editor O. P. Fitzgerald, in his speech before the convention of County School Superintendents in 1887, criticized the schools for being insufficiently spread amongst the people. In making suggestions for legislative improvements for the schools, Fitzgerald argued: “You will not be satisfied until something is done to insure a more equal distribution of the benefits of common school education. If the State is the educational unit in a State school system then all the children of the State should be treated as nearly alike as possible. She should not make children of some and only step-children of others. She should not give university education to a few and deny the rudiments of English to the many. Let all the children have their bread and milk before you give pound-cake and plum-pudding to any. …” [Fitzgerald]. “Welcome Address,” 5.
children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. ... If we would Christianize the world, we must begin with children.\textsuperscript{147}

Hawthorne and his evangelical co-religionists argued that religious training in the home and church could be supplemented by training in the schools. A more educated citizenry, they believed, would be a more religious citizenry.

An experienced orator, Hawthorne sought to answer any potential objections even before they were raised. Predicting the usual objection from theological conservatives that anything beyond a goal of individual conversion and salvation was outside the mission of the church, Hawthorne described education as instrumental to that goal. Interjecting a voice of opposition, Hawthorne asked himself rhetorically, “Do you not teach that Christianity is the great regenerator and elevator of society?” Seeking to reassure his audience, he professed his wholehearted agreement with such a summary of evangelical theology. But he then opened the door a bit wider to recognize a social mission of Christianity, arguing that “Christianity, in regenerating society, acts in concert with a thousand other helpful agencies and influences.” Conspicuous among such agencies, Hawthorne suggested, education was the chief “ally of religion” in its earthly mission.

Note that Hawthorne referred explicitly to “regenerating society,” not simply individuals. In his sermon, he sought to greatly expand what Samuel S. Hill has described as the limitations of the traditionally overriding concern of southern

\textsuperscript{147} “Report on the Religious Training of Children,” General Association of the Baptists of East Tennessee, \textit{Minutes} 1876, p. 9. The East Tennessee Baptists further resolved in their 1883 meeting that “the future prosperity of church and state, as well as the advancement of Christ's Kingdom is dependent upon the Christian education of the youth of our land.” \textit{Minutes} 1883, p. 25.
Protestantism: "the salvation of the individual." Traditional southern Protestantism, Hill has explained, concerned itself primarily with the vertical relationship between man and God, focusing on the plight of converting the individual sinner. But Hawthorne's address on the importance of education belies a different focus for at least some southern evangelicals. After announcing his sermon text, Hawthorne began his sermon with the explicit proclamation that "Christianity concerns itself with everything that concerns the welfare of mankind." It was certainly no departure from Hill's "Central theme" of southern evangelical individualism for Hawthorne to proclaim Christianity's mission to prepare man "for blessedness and glory in the limitless hereafter." What is most striking in Hawthorne's address, however, was his focus on the improvement of individuals and society on this earth. The purpose of Christianity, Hawthorne proclaimed, was "to promote man's development and progress, to prepare him for a career of usefulness, honor and happiness here" in this lifetime, as well as in the next.  

Hawthorne cited education specifically as one of the agencies the church should endorse as furthering its earthly and heavenly mission. "Conspicuous among the influences which contribute to the welfare of men and advance the world towards the ideal state revealed in the sacred Scriptures," he proclaimed, "is education." Hawthorne's endorsement of the importance of education was nothing new for Tennessee evangelicals. Methodist minister and educator W. G. F. Cunyngham had argued as early as 1873 that "no scheme which proposes permanently to reform the world can succeed unless it is able to control the education of mankind."  

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150 Cunyngham, "Thoughts on Education," Nashville Christian Advocate, April 5, 1873, p. 6.
not to be opposed as undermining the church, nor was it to be ignored as outside the concerns of the church; rather, it was vital to both the churches’ earthly and eternal missions.

Not all Tennessee evangelicals would necessarily have endorsed Hawthorne’s explicit linkage of public education with an expanded mission of social Christianity, but their widespread acceptance and endorsement of state-funded elementary education by the end of the nineteenth century suggests a growing social concern by white evangelicals centered on the public school. Concerns about the religious content of public education—present in the nineteenth but growing greatly in the twentieth century—suggest an evangelical acknowledgement of the role of the school in shaping the future southern society and a desire to influence that society for both temporal and eternal aims. Whether or not they recognized present social—as opposed to individual and spiritual—reformation as a legitimate goal of religion, most of Tennessee’s evangelical leaders could agree with Hawthorne’s concluding endorsement of education: “I am proud of our public school system. As the years go by and we advance in material wealth, let us enlarge it and improve it, until every American boy and girl can find, at a convenient distance from home, a comfortable school house and a competent school teacher.”
CONCLUSION

At their 1899 annual meeting, the Tennessee Baptist Convention committee on education adopted a resolution expressing, in effect, their general concurrence with the themes and argument of Hawthorne’s sermon. Noting first that “the church is not an institution that flourishes in the ignorance and superstition of people” and further observing the Biblical admonition for “people to get wisdom, to submit to instruction and gain knowledge,” the Baptists declared that education was “a handmaid to Christianity.”

That education would come in many forms—from parents, the pulpit, and professors in denominational colleges. But the most important source of education, and, increasingly, the one most accessible to nearly every child, was the state’s public school system.

Tennessee evangelicals had originally opposed the growth of public schools but by 1900 could admit that “It seems that the common school system has come to stay. It is imbedded in State constitutions and entrenched in the convictions of the people. Nothing is gained by descanting against it.” Instead of complaining about the public schools, religious leaders realized they should embrace them, support them, and subtly assert some control over them. “The day-schools,” they argued, “must be supplied with Christian teachers,” and the teachers ought to be trained in the denominational colleges. Furthermore, public school education under Christian teachers must be utilized “in connection with distinctively Christian instrumentalities” such as “Christian instruction in

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151 Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes, 1899, p. 12.
the home and in Sunday schools” followed by higher education in denominational
colleges if it were to aid in the salvation of society.152

In accommodating themselves to the public common schools, denominational
leaders left a heavy burden upon parents, teachers, local churches, and denominational
colleges. They accepted the non-sectarian character of public schools but warned they
could not be irreligious. They accepted state responsibility for elementary instruction as
long as schools were staffed with Christian teachers and as long as parents and churches
supplemented them with moral and Christian teachings in the home. They delegated the
ultimate decision on the role of the Bible in the classroom to local communities,
believing that most would guarantee an honored place for the Scriptures in the public
schools. Finally, they expected Sunday Schools and then church colleges to formally
unite the education of heart and head, teach youths the particular tenets of the
denomination, and provide a legion of educated and converted ministers and laymen to
lead the expansion of the church throughout the state, South, nation, and world. If any of
these groups failed to live up to their expectations—if parents did not teach their children
to read the Bible and pray, if Sunday School attendance fell, if immoral teachers ran the
schools, if local communities lost control of the schools to a rigid state bureaucracy, if
church colleges strayed from the denominations that founded them, or if the public
schools were to move from religious neutrality to an anti-religious posture—how then
could Tennessee evangelicals continue to endorse the public schools?

Events in the early twentieth century suggested to many Tennessee evangelicals
that all of these groups were failing in their obligations and that Fitzgerald’s “home rule”

compromise would no longer be sufficient. Increasingly alarmed over what they perceived to be the alienation of education from their own moral and cultural standards, evangelical leaders escalated campaigns to legislate their beliefs into the schools and thus into the future generations of Tennesseans. With the eclipse or at least weakening of previous informal means of education, Tennesseans of the early twentieth century struggled for control of the curriculum and management of formalized education in the public schools.
CHAPTER III

“The hope of our Zion”: Denominational Higher Education in Tennessee, 1875–1925

At the time of the Great Revival of the early nineteenth century, most Tennessee evangelicals perceived themselves as members of separate, spiritual communities, concerned primarily with their own individual salvation. A sense of evangelical mission combined with a certainty that theirs was the correct interpretation of the plan of salvation led the growing denominations into a fierce competition for the conversion and allegiance of their fellow Tennesseans. Although Baptists and Methodists harbored misgivings about the necessity of theological education for ministers, both also shared in the Reformation heritage of the necessity of the believer’s ability to read and interpret Scripture as a keystone of religious faith. Denominations needed to replicate in their ministers and children the particular tenets of their faith, and therefore aided in the establishment of local educational institutions. But beyond their perception of a divine mission of denominational self-preservation, many Tennessee evangelicals recognized a responsibility to human society as a whole. Education—both popular and denominational—would be the “hand-maid to religion” and would aid in the spread of religion and morality throughout the state, South, and nation. ¹

Education was not just another endeavor of the church; some leaders considered it vital to the church’s earthly mission. Although southern Protestants have been largely

¹ Clarence Dannelly, “The Development of Collegiate Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1846–1902,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1933), 1.
criticized as focusing on individual salvation to the exclusion of human social relations, the Baptist and Methodist emphasis on education suggests a broader interpretation of theology than has generally been recognized by scholars. As the committee on education of the Central Baptist Association proclaimed, "Inasmuch as the Church is commissioned not only to save but to develop all of human life, education falls within the scope of the church’s divine work among men."\(^2\)

Looking through the lens of the history of Vanderbilt University and Southwestern Baptist (renamed Union in 1907) University, this chapter examines the role of education in both denominational self-preservation and efforts to evangelize the surrounding society. The rise of state control of public education in the late nineteenth century threatened the extent to which denominations could directly control the formal education of younger students. But both Methodists and Baptists took refuge in a belief that religious deficiencies in the common schools could be overcome by proper religious training in the home and Sunday School during the elementary years. After that, denominational institutions of higher education would provide safe learning environments for students forced to leave home to secure an education. Further, such schools would provide leaders for the denomination and society as well as add a certain moral leaven to the affairs of the state. They were, as a Baptist educator explained, "The hope of our Zion." But their continued uncertain existence and competition with the state universities by the 1920s only increased the concerns of many evangelical Tennesseans about the content and direction of the public schools.\(^3\)


\(^3\) H. E. Watters, "A New Era in the History of Union University," Nashville *Baptist and Reflector*, July 4, 1918, p. 2.
FOUNDING AND EARLY PURPOSES OF DENOMINATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Tennessee Baptists and Methodists emerged from the Civil War with a history of numerous small, local educational institutions roughly connected to the churches but with few resources, financial or intellectual. With their evangelical roots, neither denomination had an institutional tradition stressing higher education to the extent of the Presbyterians or Episcopalians, but both had fostered several academies and so-called colleges during the antebellum period. Most of these schools were barely distinguishable from other subscription schools, except perhaps for their explicit endorsement of a particular denomination in the hopes of thereby securing more student patronage. Few were well-endowed, if at all, and they mostly depended upon tuition to pay salaries and all expenses.

The roots of both Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist/Union stretch into antebellum Tennessee, but neither existed in its present location or charter until the 1870s. After some discussion in church papers and at the quadrennial General Conference held at Nashville in 1858, the southern Methodists had gone so far as to secure the charter for the Central University of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in January 1859. Little became of this endeavor before the Civil War disrupted the church and the South. The Tennessee Annual Conference of

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4 Wilbur F. Tillett, *Methodism and Higher Education in Tennessee* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1913), p. 18. Tillett was dean of the Biblical School of Vanderbilt University at this time and prepared this address for the Tennessee Conference of the MECS at its centennial session held October 12–14, 1912, in Nashville. Though an officer of the university, Tillett was strongly in favor of continued close ties between Vanderbilt and the church as is made clear by his history of church colleges and his role in the Vanderbilt Bishops' Suit discussed below. On the disruption of church colleges by the war, see also Hunter Dickinson Farish, *The Circuit Rider Dismounts: A Social History of Southern Methodism, 1865–1900*.
1871 adopted a resolution calling for the cooperation with several neighboring annual conferences in "the establishment and endowment of a Methodist university of high grade and large endowment."\textsuperscript{5} Largely through the efforts of Bishop Holland N. McTyeire, the school received a donation of $500,000 from Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, a New York shipping and railroad tycoon whose wife was a Methodist and a distant relative of the Bishop. The board of trust quickly accepted the gift, changed the name of the school to Vanderbilt University, and thus secured a great advantage over many other southern denominational schools of the period: a stable and productive endowment.\textsuperscript{6} Though it would take many decades for the school to live into the idealistic hopes of some of its earliest proponents, the dividends from the endowment (supplemented by further gifts from the Vanderbilt family) gave the board a steady, if yet limited, income to facilitate the growth of the school.

Similar to their Methodist brethren, antebellum Tennessee Baptists recognized "that it is the duty of the Baptists of Tennessee no longer to remain supine on the subject of general education, but that we owe it to ourselves, to our State and the Cause, to take the place which our numbers and position in society assign us in the education of the rising generation."\textsuperscript{7} As a result of such resolutions and the tireless efforts of Rev. Joseph Eaton and others, they established Union University (not much more than an academy, really) at Murfreesboro in 1848. Like many similar institutions, it was nearly devastated

\textsuperscript{5} Tillett, \textit{Methodism and Higher Education in Tennessee}, 18.
\textsuperscript{6} Paul K. Conkin, \textit{Gone With the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University}, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 16.
by the Civil War; its buildings were occupied by Federal troops and its meager
endowment was rendered practically worthless by the financial disruptions that followed.
It struggled to reopen after the war, only to be forced to close in 1873 from a lack of
finances and the crippling blow of a cholera epidemic in the region.⁸

Plans for a new university grew out of a desire to unite all of the Baptists in
Tennessee into a single state convention. Tennessee Baptists in 1870 were still divided
by geography into general associations in the eastern, middle, and western portions of the
state. In an 1874 conference in Murfreesboro, Baptists from all three sections of the state
resolved to combine their efforts because “it is of vital importance to the denominational
interests of the Baptists of the State, to establish within or near the borders of Tennessee,
a well-endowed thoroughly equipped University, of the highest order, with an interest-
bearing endowment, at least, of three hundred thousand dollars.”⁹ Meeting to discuss
denominational unity in the state, the Baptist leaders believed the new university would
be a potent symbol of their united purpose and a training ground for their future leaders.
Tennessee Baptists elected to locate the new university in Jackson, in the west-central
section of the state, accepting the offer of the buildings and endowment ($40,000 in state
bonds) of the West Tennessee College, provided they could raise an additional $300,000
in ten years.

Denominational leaders who advocated higher education by the church urged it as
an irreplaceable part in their efforts to Christianize society by providing for trained
leaders (both lay and ministerial). Individual salvation would still be of the utmost

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school was chartered in 1842, but did not open until 1848 (p. 188).
⁹ Tennessee Baptist Convention, Minutes, 1874. Microfilm publication number 239, Southern
Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee (Hereafter SBHLA).
importance, but the church needed messengers to spread the word as widely and as well as possible. Church colleges were valuable tools in the competition between denominations, providing for a replication of each denomination’s peculiar theological tenets in the next generation as well as a prestige that could attract new members. Finally, denominational education was to be the answer to certain secularizing trends in modern education, reassuring believers of the truth of Divine Revelation even in the wake of Biblical criticism and scientific naturalism.

Some of the strongest support for both Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist came from advocates of ministerial education. Tennessee in the nineteenth century was overwhelmingly Protestant and evangelical, but nonetheless home to many competing denominations. In addition to Baptist and Methodist competition with each other, both faced rivals within their own theological traditions. The Baptists were constantly having to counter the splintering effects of Alexander Campbell’s Christian restorationist movement and the anti-mission Baptists who remained particularly strong in some of the rural and northern parts of the state as well as in Kentucky. The Methodists frequently battled northern Methodists, particularly in east Tennessee, as well as the divisive influences of believers in entire sanctification and the Holiness movement. Furthermore, both southern Baptists and Methodists saw theological threats lurking around every corner: from the growth of the Cumberland Presbyterians, the persistence of Presbyterians and Episcopalians, and the supposed machinations of Catholics and Mormons. The answer to all of these threats, some believers asserted, was a better trained ministry, strongly versed in the peculiar tenets of the denomination and armed with sufficiently trained intellect to refute the erroneous claims of other orders. As a
committee of East Tennessee Baptists reported to their 1873 convention, “Other
denominations are educating more thoroughly than heretofore their ministry .... Such a
course is commendable and worthy of imitation. Romanism in various forms is making
inroads upon us, and unless we do more for the education and support of our ministry, the
consequences may be disastrous.”¹⁰ West Tennessee Baptists answered in like fashion,
urging better ministerial education “To cope with the champions of rival denominations”
and “To repel the attacks of speculative philosophy and answer the criticism of physical
science.”¹¹

Appeals for a better educated ministry did not always elicit unanimous consent,
however. Both Methodists and Baptists placed a premium on the divine call to ministry
and warned that only God could make ministers; they merely intended to make ministers
better in their divinely ordained calling. As southern Methodist Bishop Holland
McTyeire explained in January 1872, the goal of ministerial education was “not to make
preachers, or to anticipate the Lord in making them, but to ‘improve the junior
preachers’—not to educate men for the ministry, but in the ministry.”¹² Southern
Methodists had a particularly acrimonious debate on the issue in the decades leading up
to the founding of Vanderbilt University. Debates over establishing a theological school
were prominent in the 1866 and 1870 quadrennial conventions of the church, with much
of the debate in the interim spilling into the Nashville Christian Advocate and other
denominational papers. David Campbell Kelley, who would soon become secretary of

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¹⁰ General Association of the Baptist of East Tennessee, Minutes, 1873, pp. 15–16. Microfilm publication number 420, SBHLA.
¹¹ Big Hatchie Baptist Association Minutes 1878, p. 13 (emphasis in the original). Microfilm publication number 836, SBHLA.
¹² Bishop Holland M’Tyeire, “Origin and Plan of Theological Education Among the British
the Vanderbilt Board of Trust, wrote a series of articles in 1867 against a required system of ministerial education, warning that such training would result in a "rigid, fixed, and forbidding formalism" antithetic to the traditionally enthusiastic Methodist style of preaching.13 Landon C. Garland, who would become the first chancellor of Vanderbilt, answered Kelley, arguing for the necessity of a trained ministry to meet the growing secular education of the day.14

This debate reached a new level when it was joined by two of the bishops of the church, with the elder George F. Pierce publicly confronting Bishop Holland N. McTyeire—educational advocate and first president of the Vanderbilt board of trust—through the pages of the Nashville Christian Advocate in the spring of 1872. Reasoning that "Gaining knowledge is a good thing—saving souls is better," Bishop Pierce argued that "Our greatest preachers, intellectually considered, are not our most useful men. We are beginning, I fear, to deify talent, and talk too much about the 'age' and 'progress' and the demand of the times, for the simplicity of our faith, or the safety of the Church."15 McTyeire was quick to point out that he did not believe a theological education could replace a divine call to the ministry, but he nonetheless argued for a more up to date Methodism that could appeal to both the masses and to the better educated members of southern society.16 David Kelley, though still a vigorous opponent of required theological education, nonetheless saw a grand opportunity for the church to

shape its native South through university education. Now clearly behind the proposed Central University, he came to McTyeire's aid in the discussion, arguing that "questions are on us now which were unknown to Wesley and Watson" and therefore "to attempt to confine our theological culture to the standards prepared more than a half century ago, is blindness extreme." Kelly realized southern society was changing. If Methodism wanted to establish itself in the growing cities and among the wealthier citizens of the region, he implied, it would need more educated and cultured ministers for its urban pulpits. Kelley reminded readers of his original opposition to theological education, and reiterated that if a theological education were to become a requirement for the ministry, he would object most strenuously of all people.\(^{17}\)

Despite some early opposition, ministerial education would prove to be one of the most cited reasons why Baptists and Methodists should support their respective schools. Both Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist offered free tuition to ministerial students while both denominations made efforts to support their living expenses. In its reports to the Tennessee Conference Board of Education, Vanderbilt officials usually calculated the amount of aid (in terms of lost tuition fees) given by the school for ministerial education.\(^{18}\) In later years, both schools would boast of the number of ministers supported by the schools. Wilbur Tillett, Dean of the Biblical Department of Vanderbilt University, estimated that the school trained 950 or 1000 ministers during its nearly forty

\(^{17}\) D. C. Kelley, "Central University," Nashville Christian Advocate, May 18, 1872, p. 5.
\(^{18}\) See for example the report to the 1895 meeting of the Board of Education, at which D. C. Kelley estimated that Vanderbilt had given over $10,000 in the past 20 years. Tennessee Conference Board of Education minutes are in a bound record book at the depository of the Commission on Archives and History, Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church, Nashville, Tennessee. Beginning in 1895 and continuing through 1914, reports on Education to the Tennessee Annual Conference cite the amounts contributed for the education of ministers or the children of ministers by the schools.
year connection with the southern Methodist Church (1875–1914).\textsuperscript{19} Southwestern Baptist/Union University supporters reported on the activities of the ministerial students, even using a full page advertisement in the Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector} to document 1523 conversions and 1186 baptisms performed by the school’s minister-students during 1917.\textsuperscript{20} Financially, ministerial education would prove to be both a benefit and hindrance to the two schools. Efforts to educate young preachers usually elicited the support, however small, of denominational adherents. But in an age when schools depended so much on tuition fees to meet expenses, tuition-free ministers proved a heavy burden on already strained budgets.

In its first year of operation, the Biblical Department of Vanderbilt University offered training in systematic theology, hermeneutics, homiletics, and pastoral theology, but the vast majority of the ministerial students were in such need of a literary education that many theological discussions passed well over their heads. As a committee reported to the Vanderbilt Board of Trust in 1885, “a considerable proportion” of the ministerial students who had been accepted into the school “have been totally unfit for the work assigned them.” Complaining that they lacked even the “rudiments of a common English education” and were “without any training of the mental faculties … and without the knowledge of what study is,” the committee asked “what but failure could attend such a policy?” Many students in the department were forced to withdraw, but they nonetheless were reported to their Annual Conferences as former students of Vanderbilt. Such poor

\textsuperscript{19} Wilbur Fiske Tillett to Paul N. Garber, August 22, 1931. Wilbur Fiske Tillett Papers, Box 1, File 3. University Archives/Special Collections, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter VUSC).
\textsuperscript{20} Rufus W. Weaver, “Union University Religious Work,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, December 6, 1917, p. 16.
advertising of Vanderbilt was a matter of great concern to the board of trust: “Expectation is thus raised; and in their subsequent career they are watched and criticised [sic] as students of the Biblical Department. … And as failure, in a greater or less degree, has continued to mark the career of such after their connection with the Annual Conference, the lowering of the Department in public estimation has been an inevitable result.” 21 Resolving that “a literary training without the theological is better than a theological without the literary,” the Board changed the admission standards for the Department, requiring at least the same entrance standards as to the other departments of the university. 22 Southwestern Baptist University had similar problems. Its executive committee in May 1880 expressed concern about the large number of students claiming free tuition as licentiate ministers in training, and even more distress about the students who only stayed for a few months or a couple of years, yet went “forth as students of the university to the discredit of their teachers and of the institution.” 23

Both Baptists and Methodists had a reputation as churches of the common and rural population, but they also harbored aspirations of ministering to more affluent and

21 “Report on Reorganization of the Biblical Department,” Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, II, p. 421. David Kelley gave some explanation of the controversies of the early Biblical Department in an 1890 article in a Nashville literary magazine. Kelley asserted that Rev. Thomas O. Summers Sr., the Dean of the Department, though highly intelligent, was self-educated, and thought all preachers could profit from his learned lectures. The truth, Kelley believed, was that ministerial students needed a literary and academic course first, and then the theological. It was apparently a great struggle to change the system, the change only coming, he asserted, after the press started reporting on the number of ministers who could not pass the examinations of the annual conferences, and thus the Board of Trust appointed the committee on reorganization. Kelley, “Story of Vanderbilt University,” The Round Table, May 3, 1890. Photocopy of article in RG 101, Box 29, File: “Divinity School—Students,” VUSC.
23 Southwestern Baptist University, Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 12 (June 2, 1880). Minutes in Special Collections, Emma Watters Summar Library, Union University, Jackson, Tennessee.
worldly urban dwellers as well. Rising standards of public education threatened the position of the ministry as the most educated class in any community and both denominations urged improved ministerial education as a necessity for keeping present members and expanding into other parts of the cities: “An educated membership demands an educated ministry; and it is very doubtful whether an educated laity would long remain in a Church that should be served by an uneducated ministry.” Improved opportunities for common school education would eventually mean potential ministers would begin with a better educational foundation, but in the short term it meant the old frontier exhorter would have an increasingly difficult time gathering new members to the flock. As a committee of the Big Hatchie Baptist Association (in West Tennessee, including Memphis) resolved: “General education is being disseminated throughout the land. Important country communities and all towns and cities are rapidly attaining to a standard of culture which renders a considerable fund of general information necessary upon the part of him who would preach to their edification. It is necessary.” Methodist editor Elijah E. Hoss warned that “No Church can exist, much less prosper, in this age

25 **, “Ministerial Education,” Nashville Christian Advocate, March 21, 1885, p. 6. Noting that times have changed, the unnamed author argued that ministers still needed a divine call, but that the church could be better served by delaying the minister's immediate entry into the field of labor with time for educational preparation. He does go further than Kelley would probably be comfortable with, however, in his suggestion to require some level of theological training for full ordination. One could suppose he would still allow licensing exhorters or local preachers but he does argue that Methodism must keep up with the changing society: “An uneducated ministry cannot possibly do the work in the coming century which it was easily possible for them to do in the past. If, then, Methodism would hold its own in the coming century, and grow in the future as it has in the past, it must advance with the times, and meet the demand of the times for an increasingly well-trained and educated ministry.”
26 Big Hatchie Baptist Association, Minutes 1878, p. 13. Microfilm publication number 836, SBHLA.
that is not constantly seeking to improve the intellectual status of its ministry and laity.\textsuperscript{27}

The Vanderbilt trustees noted “an increased desire and demand for educational advantages on the part of young preachers,” in an early call for support of the school.\textsuperscript{28}

Arguments for denominational education extended far beyond the training of ministers, and both Baptists and Methodists urged the importance of educating the laity as a means of reproducing the denomination in the rising generation. As early supporters of what would become Vanderbilt University reported in August 1872,

For lack of the university we are contemplating, scores and even hundreds of our young men are now attending institutions of learning not connected with our church, but with other churches, Protestant and Catholic, and with the State and other secular organizations, and the impressions made on their minds are not favorable to Methodism, and in many instances are altogether inimical to it—thus gradually alienating our sons with all their influence from the communion of our church.\textsuperscript{29}

The Baptist editor and steadfast promoter of Southwestern Baptist University James R. Graves echoed these sentiments, noting that “we owe it to our sons” to provide for a school under Baptist control. Rejecting the possibility of “keep[ing] them in ignorance at home, which our duty to them will not allow us to do,” Graves presented two options: “We must secure a first-class school for our sons, or send them away from home to be subjected to influences unfriendly to the faith of their fathers.”\textsuperscript{30}

Schooling at home or in the local community could be closely watched and the religious training of children

\textsuperscript{27} [Hoss], “A Great Gift—and its Suggestions,” Nashville Christian Advocate, September 13, 1900, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{28} Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 11 (August 22, 1872).

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{30} [Graves], “The Southwestern Baptist University,” Memphis Baptist, May 25, 1878, p. 405.
would remain under the careful supervision of parents and the local church or Sunday School. Once children exhausted the educational opportunities of the local schools, however, evangelical leaders worried that exposure to other faiths could train the children away from the denomination.

In the early years of both Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist, most educators and church leaders assumed that “Christian education means denominational education.” Although this would later become a more contentious issue, evangelical leaders of the late nineteenth century agreed on the importance of strict denominational control of higher education. As the Methodist editor (and later Bishop and supporter of Vanderbilt University) Oscar P. Fitzgerald explained, “Christianity that is not denominational in this country is hard to find, and when found does not amount to much.”31 Tennessee Baptists, especially under the leadership of J. R. Graves, believed that theirs was the uniquely correct understanding of Christianity. As the Big Hatchie Association explained, “But the great necessity and importance of education in this respect will appear more strictly perhaps when it is remembered that to us as the church of Christ has been delivered the glorious and blessed truth and gospel of God to be kept in its purity, to be defended against its enemies, and to be given to every creature.”32

Neither denomination argued against improved education for the general citizenry; but both remained constantly concerned about the content and control of both public and private education. George Griffin, a west Tennessee Baptist minister and financial agent (travelling fundraiser) for Southwestern Baptist University, argued that

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32 Big Hatchie Baptist Association, Minutes 1879, p. 6.
education for the ministry would trickle down through the society, suggesting that “the learning of the ministry in a great measure determines for good or evil the character of the whole education, public and private, of a State.” Leaders in both denominations understood that ministers were key components of the informal education networks of the society and saw their institutions both as means for educating their own sons as well as for improving the general intellectual and moral tone of the whole southern society. They saw the new institutions as missionary endeavors and great evangelistic tools. As another supporter of Southwestern Baptist put it:

Make the University what it ought to be, and in twenty-five or fifty years, its alumni will be filling the most responsible positions in society. The ministers, the lawyers, the judges, physicians, teachers, presidents of colleges, merchant princes, and successful farmers will prize the University as their alma mater, and will be the friends and supporters of the denomination whose foresight and liberality provided generously for their education and advancement. Baptists should think of these things. Their future is identified with their institutions of learning.34

One of the further purposes of establishing denominational schools for higher education, their founders believed, was the need for a Christian answer to the growing skepticism of late nineteenth century America. As the Vanderbilt board stated in their announcement of the first term of the University, “they desire to make it a bulwark for the defense of Truth, in every department of human knowledge. In its maintenance of the truth, they expect it to vindicate the existence of a perfect harmony between a sound

34 “Our Educational Work,” Memphis Baptist, February 8, 1879, p. 774.
philosophy and a true religion." As the Methodist educator and naturalist John Darby wrote to Vanderbilt's President McTyeire, "The manifestations of the Deity in creation and Revelation are harmonious and should, it seems to me, be alike impressed upon the minds of our young men." Noting his advanced age, Darby explained that he would "like to end my labors in this world ... teaching the young the wonders their Maker has displayed in fitting up their habitation, and showing the wonderful accordance of the facts and pervading spirits of Nature and Revelation." He urged the importance of the church schools including courses in natural history, warning that "It is here that infidelity takes the field and it is here she will make partial triumphs so long as the church leaves it uncultivated ground. It should be the stronghold of the Bible and it will be."

When one considers the spectacle of the Scopes trial of 1925 with its billing as a battle of science and religion, the attitudes of the Vanderbilt founders may seem out of place; but they were in fact far more common throughout the half century preceding the trial. Most Protestant evangelical intellectuals, even in the supposedly fundamentalist South, embraced some form of theistic evolution. They argued that either science or theology was imperfectly understood. There could only be one truth, they believed; science and theology were merely different paths leading to the same Creator. Methodist educator John Darby proclaimed that "God's truth must be in accord, whether in creation, revelation, or providence." God, Darby explained, "has left on the rocks hieroglyphics that are easily translated, giving the same account of creation as is found in the Bible."

35 Vanderbilt University Register 1875, p. 9, VUSC.
36 John Darby to Bishop Holland N. McTyeire, September 11, 1873. Landon C. Garland Papers (unprocessed), File 3, VUSC.
37 Darby, "The Cosmogony of Moses," Nashville Christian Advocate, January 25, 1873, p. 3 (first quotation), and February 1, 1873, p. 3 (second quotation). See also Thomas O. Summers Jr., "The Conflict Between Religion and Science," Nashville Christian Advocate, January 16, 1875,
They believed that Christian institutions like Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist would provide a safe environment to find the harmonious meeting place of science and religion. "There can be no conflict" argued Wilbur Tillett of Vanderbilt's Biblical Department, "between true science and true theology." 38

Some Baptist supporters of denominational education were a bit more militant in their imagery, proclaiming Southwestern Baptist University and the other denominational institutions "the bulwarks of our city, behind which the forces are to be drilled, ammunition made; and thence we sally forth to meet error." The problem, they feared, was that "the State schools both in the United States and in Europe are hotbeds of skepticism and infidelity," and therefore the only hope for society was the continuation and improvement of the denominational colleges. 39

Having founded colleges with a goal of replicating the faith of the fathers in the next generation, many Baptists and Methodists objected to competition from a state-funded and endorsed university. After some early opposition to public education in

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39 J. M. Robertson, comments on the report on education, Central Baptist Association (Tennessee), Minutes 1884, p. 9. Southwestern Baptist University was in Jackson, Tennessee, at the heart of the Central Baptist Association, and many of the university officers were prominent members of the association. Consequently, the Central usually paid especially close attention to the affairs and prospects of the school.
general, evangelical religious leaders of the late nineteenth century continued to criticize state efforts to provide academy and college education. Admitting that "Primary education is the duty of the State," they reasoned that the state could and should "teach the three R's, 'reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic" because "Every citizen ought to be able to read his ballot and a civil warrant." In addition to moral arguments, some religious leaders presented materialist arguments against state higher education, objecting to state efforts "to tax citizens who have property for the expenses of teaching Latin, and Greek, and modern languages to other people's children."\(^4\)

As long as children stayed near home, informal moral and cultural education from the family and church would be sufficient supplements for the secular education of the public common schools. E. E. Hoss explained that "under existing conditions the primary education of our children must be obtained in the public schools, which, though not anti-religious, never give religious instruction. This lack is supplied by Sunday

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\(^4\) Fitzgerald. "A Warning Note on Education," Nashville Christian Advocate, November 17, 1883, p. 8. Fitzgerald was an avid booster of state common education. He was at one time the Superintendent of Public school for California, and the Christian Advocate under his leadership is filled with articles on education both in church and state. He often emphasized the moral peril of state higher education, but many of his arguments took on the populist rhetoric of materialistic class warfare. Take for example his argument about "A Vicious and Oppressive Policy," Nashville Christian Advocate, June 4, 1887, p. 1:

What right has the State to tax the poor, and the religious people who prefer religious schools, in order to provide colleges and universities for the children of rich men who are too godless to patronize a religious institution, and too stingy to establish schools of their own. If those gentlemen are too broad-minded to educate their aristocratic offspring at denominational colleges, why do they not unite in the establishment of broad, liberalistic institutions? Most of the people who patronize colleges in this country have been able to found schools for themselves have paid taxes to sustain schools for our privileged classes besides. Surely the men whose culture overlies all sectarian bounds, are able to erect institutions to their liking. That they do not do so, but depend upon the State to provide such institutions for them, is a shame. It is educational mendicancy. That the State bestows this charity upon them is a crime. It is robbing the poor to give advantages to the rich. It is unRepublican in every part. It belongs to monarchs to patronize learning and pander to the whims of the privileged classes by exacting tribute of the common people.
school and home instruction.” But sending children away to state colleges—away from the supposed moral safety net of the home and local religious community—could result in moral disaster. Methodist educator and editor O. P. Fitzgerald warned “Christian parents” that they could not “afford to take the risk on the piety of their children which education by State schools inevitably involves.” Fitzgerald’s was only one of the many voices of religious educators repeating the charges that state higher education, “however complete, when it shall have reached perfection or its ultimate tendency, will be a godless institution.” Thus McTyeire, Fitzgerald, and numerous other religious leaders constantly called for better support of denominational higher education as the only possible answer to the threat of “godless education.”

It is important to keep in mind that at their earliest founding, denominational schools were not really competing with state institutions of higher education, but were at least equal competitors in a wide-open field. There was only limited state funding for higher education in nineteenth-century Tennessee, and East Tennessee University (later the University of Tennessee, Knoxville) existed largely on funds secured under the federal Morrill land grant act. State legislators were unconvinced of the state’s role in providing more than a common school education for citizens, especially while Tennessee was burdened by an imposing State debt contracted during the war and Reconstruction.

41 [Hoss], “The Main Object in View,” Nashville Christian Advocate, April 19, 1900, p. 8.
44 [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, March 1, 1879, p. 8; See also further examples on May 21, 1881; March 3, 1883; June 16, 1883; June 23, 1883; June 4, 1887; June 6, 1889.
Supporters of denominational education would often criticize state efforts at higher education in their efforts to garner more patronage for church schools, but in the early 1870s at least, it was an even fight for visibility, student patronage, and financial support.

Detractors continued to malign the school in Knoxville, one even suggesting “the quickest way to prepare a boy for a ‘Devilish life . . . was by [way of] College Hill’.”

Despite such protests to the contrary, the early state university was not a so-called godless institution: East Tennessee University was guided by minister-presidents and required students to attend university chapel with regularity. Nevertheless, it differed markedly from the church schools, however, in its lack of affiliation with or oversight from any particular denomination. As E. E. Hoss explained in 1900, state universities were not “godless in themselves, but because they are so circumscribed that, notwithstanding the personal piety of professors and tutors, they cannot in their capacity as teachers take any active part in religious instruction in the school-room.”

Hoss took a surprisingly moderate tone by not arguing that such schools were anti-religious. The problem, he asserted, was that since the instruction could not be denominational, it could not serve any useful function for Methodists. Many of the earliest officers and professors of what would become the University of Tennessee were Presbyterians, and by the 1870s there were still a large percentage of Presbyterians and Episcopalians represented on the faculty. Baptist editor and controversialist J. R. Graves printed a revealing editorial in December 1879 in which he criticized the University for not choosing its faculty to reflect the denominational affiliations of the state:

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47 [Hoss], “The Main Object in View,” Nashville Christian Advocate, April 19, 1900, p. 8.
A correspondent informs us of the fact, that although the Baptist have a membership of about 120,000 in the State, and the Episcopalians only about 4000, the State University is completely under the control of the Episcopalians. There is not a Baptist Professor connected with the Faculty. Every important Chair in the University is occupied by an Episcopalian. The President, Professors of Mathematics, Chemistry, Ancient Languages, Belles-lettres, Agriculture, Modern Languages, and English Literature, are all Episcopalians. Now, it does seem to me that Baptists should remonstrate against this monstrous abuse of State patronage by the smallest and most objectionable denomination, except the Roman Catholics, in the State.\(^{48}\)

Unconcerned with modern conceptions of academic qualifications for the positions, Graves apparently viewed professorships in Knoxville as yet another form of political patronage to be distributed evenly among the representative population of the state.

There were scattered complaints by religious leaders about state higher education, but the opposition in Tennessee in the 1870s and 1880s was not anywhere close to the bitter wrangling in neighboring North Carolina during the period.\(^{49}\) It was only in the twentieth century as state funding for the University of Tennessee increased and financial resources for denominational colleges became more scarce that the Knoxville school would become the target of religious criticism.

\(^{48}\) [Graves], “Our State University,” Memphis Baptist, December 6, 1879, p. 408.

Moral and Religious Standards of the Church College

Though their later history would find Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist/Union Universities on vastly different trajectories, both at first aspired to become full-scale universities encompassing undergraduate, professional, and theological education. But both schools began with college and preparatory courses little different from most other colleges of the time period. With a lack of public high schools outside of the largest cities and only a few preparatory schools or academies of high grade, there was simply a lack of sufficiently trained students to fill the early collegiate classes of either school. From the beginning, both schools stressed their importance as Christian and denominational institutions—Southwestern Baptist by its name and Vanderbilt by its original name of the Central University of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

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50 Bishop McTyeire, the first president of the board of Vanderbilt, wrote to his relative Frank Vanderbilt while he was visiting the German university at Heidelberg, confidently predicting “The Vanderbilt University, before it is half so old, will have done greater work, I dare believe and be more famous for its work.” McTyeire to Frank, August 25, 1881. John J. Tigert IV Collection, Box 1, Folder 8, VUSC.

51 Vanderbilt was able to begin operation with law and medical programs inherited from an earlier institution, while Southwestern Baptist proposed such departments several times but with little success. The medical school was to open in Memphis in 1878 but was postponed because of the terrible yellow fever epidemic in the city that year. The law department was proposed several times, and should have been successful because of the city of Jackson’s position of having state and federal courts within its bounds, yet often discussed plans never bore fruit.

52 Chancellor Garland of Vanderbilt reported on this problem to the Board of Trust in 1876, noting the poor level of preparation of most of the students and suggesting that “if we had stood firmly by our rules, we should have rejected fully two thirds of those that presented themselves for matriculation.” As a result, they formed “sub-collegiate classes” but this [p. 67] “introduced a large element of a boyish character into the University, which invariably tends to the deterioration of manners and scholarship.” Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, pp. 66–67 (June 17, 1876). See references to a similar situation in Jackson: Southwestern Baptist University Minutes, Volume I, p. 111 (June 2, 1880).

53 Interestingly, even the earliest catalogs of Vanderbilt list Commodore Vanderbilt as the founder of the University, making no mention of the role of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. See for example, Vanderbilt University, Semi-Annual Announcement [1876?], VUSC.
Although state higher education was as yet only a distant threat to the prosperity of these schools, supporters of denominational education tried to enunciate what made them different and better from the beginning. "In the first place," Landon Garland stressed in his inaugural address as first Chancellor of Vanderbilt, "this is a Xn.[Christian] Institution." Garland expanded on this explanation fifteen years later in his annual report to the Board of Trust, reporting that "We never cease to impress upon students the fact that the great object of education is the formation of a high moral character based upon an acceptance of the principles of Christianity—and that without this, mere intellectual culture is as patent for evil as for good."

Proper education, Baptist and Methodist educators agreed, involved the training of both heart and mind, spirit and intellect. In their efforts to persuade parents and denominational leaders to trust them with their children, presidents and boards of the schools took great pains in the selection of faculty members and in attempting to guard the moral, religious, and social atmosphere of their institutions. The lengthy correspondence between Chancellor Landon Garland and board president Bishop Holland McTyeire laying the plans for Vanderbilt's campus, faculty, and curriculum reveal their aspirations for academic respectability but also their even greater determination to remain morally and theologically safe. "Above all things," urged Garland in February 1874, "let us secure modest Christian gentlemen of fine capacity, good foundation and laborious

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54 Notes for speech at opening exercises of Vanderbilt University [October 1875]. Landon C. Garland Papers (unprocessed), Box 1, file 9. Garland's handwriting is hard to read, but a summary of parts of this address was reprinted in "Synopsis of Addresses on the Inauguration of Vanderbilt University," Nashville Christian Advocate, October 16, 1875, p. 9.
55 Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume II, p. 5 (June 1890).
habits of business.”

Rev. George Jarman, in recommending an instructor for Southwestern Baptist, noted in the candidate’s favor that “he is roundly commended for exalted moral and Christian worth.”

The early faculties of both schools were notoriously underpaid and overworked, often teaching far afield of whatever their academic “specialty” at short notice and holding many responsibilities outside of the lecture rooms. The Board of Trust of Carson-Newman College, a Baptist school in East Tennessee, ordered its faculty to spend at least one month of each summer in the field canvassing for the school. Faculty, and in particular the school presidents, were instrumental in presenting the interests of the school to the denominations in the hope of securing student patronage and financial assistance. “The future life and financial prosperity of the University,” recorded the trustees of Southwestern Baptist, “depends upon the election by your Board of an able and competent President whose character and reputation will command the confidence and respect of the whole denomination.” Southwestern Baptist had perennial difficulties meeting the promised salaries of officers and instructors, and in 1881 the Board finally codified what had been their position from the beginning, clarifying that if the funds from the limited endowment “together with fees of tuition is not sufficient to pay the [promised] amounts, then the amount of money received is to be prorated in proportion to each salary and it is further understood that this is all the money they are to

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56 Garland to McTyeire, February 2, 1874. John J. Tigert IV Collection, Box 2, Folder 10. As Paul Conkin comments on the early faculty, despite efforts to balance academic respectability and moral and theological soundness, the “university’s opening profile” was nonetheless one “of age, order, stability, and propriety.” Conkin, Gone With the Ivy, 53.
57 Southwestern Baptist University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 83 (June 4, 1878).
58 S. E. Jones, “My Trip to Middle Tennessee,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, August 1, 1901, p. 4.
59 Southwestern Baptist University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 111 (June 2, 1880).
receive and further that this Board of Trustees are not to be held liable for any deficiency whatever.”

Two examples may illustrate the varied duties of the early faculty members. The first is George W. Griffin, a Baptist minister from West Tennessee, who was one of the early boosters of Southwestern Baptist University. In the winter of 1877–78, Griffin began travelling the territory of the Big Hatchie Baptist Association in West Tennessee collecting cash and pledges to endow a chair for Southwestern Baptist. After Griffin had worked in this capacity for the better part of a year, traveling constantly and writing several articles for the Memphis Baptist, the Southwestern Baptist trustees elected him to fill that very same chair as soon as they felt there was money enough to pay his salary. Although the board reasoned that it was “wise economy to use his services in the University at such seasons as are unpropitious for his agency work,” Griffin apparently did no teaching during the 1878–79 academic year. At its annual meeting in July 1879 the board reported that it did not have the money to pay Griffin and thus had not employed him in the classroom because he could not raise money in the field if he were

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60 Southwestern Baptist University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 122 (June 2, 1880). The issue of faculty salary would remain a seemingly insurmountable problem as long as Southwestern Baptist/Union operated with only a small endowment, a large debt, and limited annual contributions from Tennessee Baptists. The Board minutes reveal frequent references to the shortfall in income and necessity to either reduce faculty salary or borrow funds in order to pay them. In 1927, President H. E. Watters, in an effort to secure accreditation for the school with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, suggested that since “they were not being paid a full salary they were really donating so much to Christian Education and he would like to follow this plan if they would be pleased with it—that is—list them at full salary, debiting their accounts each month with that amount, and crediting with the amount above which they had been receiving and listing it as a gift to Christian Education.” Union University Minutes, Volume III, pp. 47–48 (May 16, 1927) as quoted in Richard Hiram Ward, A History of Union University (Jackson, Tenn.: Union University Press, 1975), 89.

busy occupying the chair. The next day, however, the finance committee recommended that Griffin assume the chair of “Logic and Moral Philosophy” and draw the salary of $800 for ten months. The catch was that this salary was “to be paid out of the interest accruing on the notes, bonds and subscriptions subscribed for the endowment of the Chair of Philosophy or by donations for his salary and Dr. Griffin is to look to this source alone for his salary.”62 Thus Griffin was left hoping that the subscriptions he had secured to fund his chair were collectable.

If the account of Griffin’s predicament of being forced to take to the field to raise his own salary is somewhat comedic, the situation of Edward Joynes’s dismissal from Vanderbilt is considerably more tragic yet nonetheless revealing of professional standards and expectations of the early church universities. Joynes, a graduate of the Universities of Virginia and Berlin, was elected to the chair of modern languages of the original faculty. Although he “proved the most popular professor at the early Vanderbilt,” Joynes ran afoul of the strict moral standards of the University—a victim of Vanderbilt officials’ concern to secure the confidence of their southern Methodist constituency.63 An Episcopalian in a Methodist school, Joynes’s troubles began in his first year as rumors surfaced that he was not a total stranger to the bottle. With its general emphasis on personal piety and strong temperance tradition, the southern Methodist church frowned on even casual or social drinking. As McTyeire later explained, “From Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and elsewhere we learned that it was being said—The Vanderbilt

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62 Southwestern Baptist University Minutes, Volume I, p. 88 (June 5, 1878); p. 99 (July 2, 1879); quotation on p. 105 (July 3, 1879).
63 Conkin, Gone With the Ivy, 52 (quotation). See also Conkin’s account of the Joynes dismissal, which he puts in the context of Bishop McTyeire’s tightening grip on the university, Ibid., 59–60.
University had a drunken professor in one of the principal chairs.64 After hearing such rumors, the Board of Trust had apparently in 1876 received a pledge from Joynes "in the future [to] abstain from such injurious practice and unbecoming and disastrous example."65 Expressing concern in 1877 that the rumors of Joynes's indiscretion had not subsided and reiterating that "every Professor and instructor connected with the University ought to be an example to the students in moral conduct," the board considered dismissing Joynes but postponed action with the hope that he would soon resign of his own accord.66 When Joynes's resignation was not forthcoming following the school year, McTyeire had the board move to vacate his chair. McTyeire then wrote Joynes, who refused to go quietly, justifying his termination because "The Church and the public look to us not only for able teachers, in all departments of learning, but we are, if possible, under a still higher pledge—that no immoral influence shall be installed or sanctioned here." Furthermore, McTyeire explained, "no brilliancy of talent, no personal popularity of a professor can be allowed to condone for practices or habits or principles that would corrupt or mislead the youth who are entrusted to our care."67 By all accounts

64 McTyeire to S. E. Joynes, June 3, 1878. John J. Tigert IV Collection, Box 1, File 7.
65 Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 123 (June 22, 1877).
66 Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 123 (June 22, 1877). The board expressed some doubt as to whether Joynes had violated his pledge and voted to keep its resolutions as to the cause of their disfavor with Joynes a secret, "unless necessary to vindicate the action of the Board."
67 McTyeire to S. E. Joynes, June 3, 1878. John J. Tigert IV Collection, Box 1, File 7. The controversial nature of Joynes's dismissal was soon lost amid the larger national agitation that accompanied another dismissal from Vanderbilt, that of naturalist Alexander Winchell. Winchell's case is similar to Joynes's in that the decision to dismiss was largely an effort to avoid alienating the majority of southern Methodist patrons of Vanderbilt University. The Nashville Christian Advocate, ("A Right Judgment," August 10, 1878, p. 8) edited by Vanderbilt supporter O. P. Fitzgerald, approvingly copied articles from southern newspapers supporting the dismissal of Winchell, including this from the South Carolina Christian Neighbor: "The determination of the powers that rule in Vanderbilt to keep only the right kind of teachers is a certain security of the confidence of the people far and near. Adherence to this conservative line of management will doubtless secure that increasing prosperity and usefulness which the institution already
Joynes was an able professor and would find future academic success at the state university in Knoxville. But his drinking—real or rumored, it did not really matter to McTyeire and the board—was harmful to the university’s aspiration to attract the patronage of southern Methodists. University officials, mindful of the need to clearly distinguish church from secular schools, emphasized the moral soundness of their campus and governance.

**THE CHURCH COLLEGE IN A CHANGING WORLD**

Having laid foundations in the 1870s for educational institutions to serve both their respective denominations and the South, Tennessee Baptists and Methodists anticipated increasing influence and respectability. Confidently predicting in 1875 that theirs would be an institution to serve the whole southwest, denominational leaders’ faith was tested constantly throughout the ensuing quarter century as both schools struggled to live into the grand expectations of their founders. In the process of creating great universities, educational leaders stretched the old conceptions of the denominational college and precipitated a debate within the church about the role of the church in higher

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69 Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 108 (June 18, 1877); Union University Board of Trust Minutes Volume I, p. 5.
education. It was "the age of the University"; what then was the fate of the denominational college?

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed sweeping changes nationally in academic standards for colleges and universities; these changes were slowly but nonetheless surely infiltrating the South and even her church colleges. Although both Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist refused to bend on moral standards for the faculty, they found from the beginning a shortage within their denominations of officers who were fully qualified academically. As Vanderbilt’s Chancellor Garland lamented even before the school opened, "It will not be possible to bring large experience and wide reputation into all our chairs. The Ch[urch] has not the men."\(^{70}\) From its opening Vanderbilt had non-Methodists on the faculty, and Chancellor Garland hoped to strike a delicate balance of avoiding charges of narrow sectarianism while not alienating southern Methodists.\(^{71}\) Southwestern Baptist adhered more closely than Vanderbilt to a strict denominational test for officers, but both schools increasingly recognized the need to elevate academic standards to compete with other schools in attracting students. In making his annual recommendations to the Board to fill faculty vacancies, Southwestern Baptist’s Chairman of the Faculty (President in all but title) George Jarman strongly

\(^{70}\) Garland to McTyeire, February 2, 1874. John J. Tigert IV Collection, Box 2, file 10.

\(^{71}\) Concerning a faculty appointment, Garland wrote the McTyeire: "We have non-Methodist element enough in our Faculty to silence the cry of sectarianism—and if we are again to go outside for a man, I had rather have a moral and discreet man." August 26, 1887. John J. Tigert IV Collection, Box 2, folder 13. At the same time, there were Methodists concerned about any number of non-Methodists in the church schools. A writer identifying himself only by the penname "Methodist" complained: "We humbly submit that (1) If the Methodist Church, with all her boasted talent, cannot furnish teachers for her own schools, it is time to turn her children over to the State or other Churches to be educated. (2) If a Methodist has not sufficient zeal to attend the services of the Methodist Church and assist in her work he is not fit to teach in her schools." Methodist, "Church Schools," Nashville Christian Advocate, January 28, 1882, p. 7.
urged the candidacy of a Mr. J. W. Gore for the chair of Natural Science. Jarman gave both academic and character references for Gore, citing his education at Richmond College (a Baptist school) and the University of Virginia and further noting that he was "a Fellow of two years standing in the John Hopkins University" and "has the endorsement of some of the most distinguished educators of the land." But such academic qualifications would not be enough, so Jarman concluded in Gore's favor that "besides his very superior educational advantages, he is roundly commended for exalted moral and Christian worth."\(^{72}\)

In late nineteenth century Tennessee, Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist did not face nearly as much competition from the languishing state university as they did from the multitude of small and local "colleges" throughout the state. The executive committee of Southwestern Baptist elaborated on the problem of competition with local schools of low grade, reporting to the Board of Trust in 1881 that such schools "satisfy the expectation and ambition of local intelligence, pride and prejudice." The committee believed that their "University in its character and aims ought to rise far above all such competitors, but yet where society is in its formative state and general culture is limited to a few, the higher institutions are not appreciated and the common showy school will secure the preference."\(^{73}\) Contributions of cash and children overwhelmingly favored local schools that could be more easily monitored by parents and churches. Methodist editor E. E. Hoss likewise complained about high schools pretending to be colleges and colleges pretending to be universities. Hoss excoriated local boosters "who confuse the

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\(^{72}\) Union University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 83 (June 4, 1878). Jarman noted that Gore had testimonials from among others, President Gilman of Hopkins, Rev. Dr. Curry of Richmond, and Rev. Dr. Lupton of Vanderbilt.

\(^{73}\) Southwestern Baptist University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 124 (June 1, 1881).
people by calling a high-school [a college [and] college [a] university. It is shoddy, it is sham, it is false, and immeasurably harmful. What is the use of endowing a real college when we have a hundred schools called ‘colleges’ that the people are assiduously persuaded are ‘equal to the best in the land’?"74

Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist both worked tirelessly to elevate the educational standards of the region in the late nineteenth century. Vanderbilt has often been credited with elevating the standards for college admission and several early officers of the school were instrumental in the organization of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the South (later the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools).75 Within the first decade of Vanderbilt’s existence, Chancellor Garland warily observed the growing number of preparatory students at the school. As a remedy, he suggested that higher standards of admission at the university would raise the standards of the preparatory schools: “the University can exert a powerful influence upon the Schools of the country, elevating or breaking down worthless ones, and establishing the reputation of such as are worthy of patronage.”76 James Hampton Kirkland, a German-trained Ph.D. who succeeded Garland as Chancellor of Vanderbilt in 1893, spoke out often against sham degrees and in favor of setting rigid standards for degree-granting

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76 Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 286 (May 1882).
institutions. In his inaugural address he argued that "In educational institutions what we need now above all things is not quantity, but quality."

Efforts to improve public schools gradually met with some success in the cities and in some of the more progressive counties of Tennessee by the end of the nineteenth century. Elevated standards for both public education and college admission, however, would cut into both Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist's preparatory departments which had, especially during the early years, served a large percentage of their student populations. As the Jackson city schools improved, the Southwestern Baptist trustees noted that the "Preparatory department has been most serious[ly] affected." Although they suggested this was only "a temporary inconvenience, and that in the years to come the public school will be a constant feeder to the University," they were still concerned because "at present, the loss of home patronage from this cause is embarrassing in a financial point of view, and also in the appearance of diminished numbers in our catalogue."
Modern college and university instruction required not only instructors and students, but increasingly, it also required scientific apparatus, books and journals, and dedicated laboratory rooms and buildings. With the generous gift from the Commodore, the Vanderbilt trustees were able to send an instructor to Europe to purchase $7000 worth of scientific equipment (which Bishop McTyeire estimated would have cost $10,000 to $12,000 if bought in the United States) and commissioned an English bibliophile to acquire a library of "about 5000 volumes, at a cost of nearly $3500."\textsuperscript{80} Southwestern Baptist was not nearly so fortunate, inheriting the deteriorating buildings of the old West Tennessee College. A memorial from the faculty in 1878, citing "the poorly furnished condition of our chemical and philosophical laboratory," asked the board to build a new science building. They continued: "Our entire outfit in this department is not worth one hundred and fifty dollars. ... [W]e are not furnished with apparatus necessary for preparing the most trifling experiments."\textsuperscript{81} Apparently these conditions did not soon improve, for as one student from the early 1880s later recalled, "The equipment was practically nil."\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{80} Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 45 (May 3, 1875); Volume I, p. 40 (September 30, 1874).
\textsuperscript{81} Southwestern Baptist University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume I, p. 86 (June 4, 1878). The previous year the executive committee had praised the efforts of the faculty while complaining that it was nearly impossible to ask them to "make bricks without straw" and urging the board to purchase apparatus "for the illustration of Natural Philosophy and the Physical Sciences, Maps, Charts, and globes of the earth and the heavens. Cabinets of specimens of Geology, Mineralogy, Botany, Physiology and Natural History and a good library of standard books of reference and of general reading. These are the needs of the present hour. We cannot wait years for them and do justice to those who fill our recitation rooms." p. 52 (May 30, 1877).
\textsuperscript{82}Plautus Iberus Lipsey, "Memories of His Early Life (1865–1888)." Diaries, Memoirs, etc. Collection—Lipsey, Plautus Iberus, 1865–1888; acc. II-H-4, Box 6 Folder 8, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville (hereafter TSLA).
All of these conditions—the elevation of academic standards for faculty and students, the growth of public education, the increased expectation of scientific apparatus and library holdings—kept coming back to the same basic need of colleges and aspiring universities: money. Vanderbilt certainly had an edge over Southwestern Baptist because of the continued patronage of the Vanderbilt family, but both schools looked to their denominations for financial assistance and students. Despite the gifts of over one million dollars from the Vanderbilts, the Methodist school remained concerned about finances. The early history of Southwestern Baptist reveals honest efforts by dedicated officers and agents, but nonetheless a long series of financial blunders and embarrassments. The school was unfortunate in that it had to compete with other Baptist schools throughout the state—Carson-Newman remained the favorite of East Tennessee Baptists while Hall-Moody Institute in nearby Martin competed for students and financial assistance—and with the Memphis Conference Female Institute, a Methodist’s women’s school in Jackson which later became Lambuth University.83 They also had to compete with the numerous local academies claiming to be colleges. The problem with such “shams and frauds,” explained E. E. Hoss, was that when the presidents of real colleges appealed to the state conventions for money to increase the endowments, “the delegates would often only give small sums, having been convinced that the glorified high-schools in their

83 These conditions were relieved to some extent when Carson-Newman and Union decided to split the state, no longer competing with each other for support. This avoided antagonism but did not supply more money. The rivalry with Hall-Moody lasted much longer, leading in 1917 to an agreement to stop duplicating programs, though this appears to have been ignored or violated from the beginning and formally annulled in 1919. See Union University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume II, p. 330 (August 8, 1917) and p. 350–53 (April 1, 1919). See also Ward, A History of Union University, 74–86.
districts really [were] colleges, and thus there [was] no need to support the far-off institution.”

In addition to competition from other schools, the deteriorating conditions of West Tennessee agriculture in the late nineteenth century made it hard for school agents to secure financial pledges and even harder to collect on them. The executive committee reported in 1879 that “Our experience in agency work is not encouraging. ... To employ an agent to obtain subscriptions and another to collect them, consumes the whole and leaves nothing for the treasury.” The board followed up this understatement the following year by again noting the financial straits they were in: “The Financial Problem thus far remains unsolved. Every attempted solution has failed. And yet this is the question of questions. It is the question of life or death. It is endowment or no university. This is the only alternative.”

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81 [Hoss], “John Smith, President of Blow-Hard College,” 1.
82 Southwestern Baptist University Minutes Volume I, p. 97 (July 2, 1879). Some of the problems they brought on themselves, such as when they meant to fire the first president Wm. Shelton, but “In order that he might not be thrown entirely out of employment he was made financial agent of the University.” George Jarman reported to trustee Thomas T. Eaton who had missed the meeting that “to the astonishment of all he has accepted it. I admire Dr. S. as noble Christian brother, but it cannot be denied that he has proved a failure in every thing he has ever attempted in connection with a school.” At the same meeting in which he was appointed agent, Shelton had resisted the abolishment of his post as school president and had even threatened to open a rival school in the city to draw off patronage. He was nonetheless offered the job as financial agent, a job which, not surprisingly, ended in financial loss rather than gain to the University. The lengthy ordeal of getting Shelton to turn over pledges to the school and the school to come up with the money to pay his salary consumed much of the board’s time for the following few years. See Minutes, Volume I, pp. 40, 42–43, 65, 80, 97. Quotation is from Jarman to Eaton, June 5, 1876. Thomas T. Eaton Papers, reel 2. Microfilm publication number 1057, SBHLA.
83 Southwestern Baptist University Minutes Volume I, p. 110 (June 2, 1880).
DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE CRISIS YEARS, 1895–1914

Both schools appealed to their denominations for money constantly and made special efforts to solicit contributions to correspond with the opening of the twentieth century. These efforts to secure denominational aid instigated renewed efforts to justify church maintenance of schools. When denominational sources seemed unwilling or unable to support the schools, college officials began to look elsewhere for funding. But outside money, some denominational leaders worried, threatened to alienate school from church. It was this search for funds that ultimately led Vanderbilt and Southwestern Baptist/Union in very different directions, eventually including Vanderbilt’s acrimonious divorce from the southern Methodist church in 1914.

Church college leaders’ appeals for denominational support for higher education came at the same time that church editors and opinion shapers were muting their previous attacks on the state universities. Mostly picking up on accounts from other states, nineteenth century Methodist and Baptist editors had criticized state institutions as necessarily “Godless” places so dangerous to morality and faith that Christian parents could not afford to send their children. “Some State institutions in our country,” a Tennessee Methodist had warned, “are absolutely unsafe, from a moral and religious standpoint, for young men who are not thoroughly grounded in their faith in Christ.”  

Methodist editor E. E. Hoss kept up a seemingly constant barrage against state higher

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education through the early 1890s. But Tennessee evangelicals gradually softened their criticisms of the state university, noting in 1892 that “the condition of the religious life in the University of Tennessee is unquestionably far better than it was three years ago.” They made distinctions between southern state universities and those in other parts of the country, suggesting the Knoxville school was “better than ... a majority of the State institutions of the country. ... Its religious life will compare very favorably with that of the denominational colleges—in fact, with that of a majority of them.”

But this apparent approval of state higher education was unsettling for many in the denominations and raised a critical question: if state higher education in Tennessee was not morally and religiously threatening, why should the churches continue to support denominational institutions?

Tennessee evangelicals answered this question, eschewing criticisms of the state university, but making new appeals for the denominational colleges as superior to the state university. Noting that “the State School is here, and it is here to stay. We had as

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88 Hoss criticized the dances and social activities connected with the graduation of the University of Tennessee and warned parents that “Church schools under religion and denominational control are the only safeguards for the youth of the Church.” ([Hoss], Nashville Christian Advocate, June 30, 1892).

89 John P. Mott, quoted in Geo. T. Mellen, “Christian Advocate vs. State Schools,” Nashville Christian Advocate, August 11, 1892, p. 13. Bishop Charles Galloway, one of the more liberal of the southern Methodist bishops, went so far as to proclaim to an audience at Millsaps College in Mississippi that the Church’s “attitude to State education should be forever friendly. We enter the field not to engender strife in the ranks of educators, but to form with them a large offensive and defensive against ignorance, the greatest foe to the Church and the most dangerous enemy of the State. So long as the institutions of the State are not hostile to our Christian faith, on which all material and governmental prosperity depends, we will bid them Godspeed and extend a helping hand.” Galloway, “Dedication Address at Millsaps College,” Nashville Christian Advocate, August 17, 1893, p. 3. E. E. Hoss moderated his criticisms of the state university in the following years, stating in 1897: “Now we are very far from describing the schools of the State as godless. Some of them deserve that epithet, but many of them do not. In the South, at any rate, there is scarcely a State University but includes a number of earnest and fervent Christians in its Faculty.” “Why Should We Have Denominational Schools?” Nashville Christian Advocate, September 2, 1897, p. 1.
well recognize this fact, and adjust ourselves to it,” Bishop Murrah conceded that “I know of nothing vainer than a war waged against State schools. ... The State will educate, in a limited sense, but it will do it upon precisely the same principle that it makes cannon.” But such an education was only part of what was needed. Murrah and other advocates of denominational education repeated the claims of the founders of the church schools that only they could provide the necessary education for both heart and head.

“Abandon denominational colleges,” Murrah warned, “and you do away with education in its true and highest sense.” F. F. Hoss, who had been a prolific critic of the state university, moderated his tone somewhat, arguing that “Without taking up, therefore, an attitude of hostility to State schools, the Church is bound to educate in self-defense.” To continue denominational support for colleges, Hoss believed, educational leaders would have to prove that theirs were different and better than those provided by the state.

“Believing as she does that the end of all true education is not merely to furnish students a certain quantum of knowledge, nor to aid them in securing so much intellectual discipline, but also and chiefly to form their religious beliefs and their moral habits, she must see to it that well-equipped seats of learning are supplied for the youth under her control.”

J. W. Conger, the president of Union University, tried to convince Tennessee Baptists of the “fundamental” difference between schools run by the state and the church. “The secular school cannot have in its curriculum any courses that deal with religion as a primary object; the religious school must have such courses if it subserves the purpose of

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91 [Hoss], “Why Should We Have Denominational Schools?” Nashville Christian Advocate, September 2, 1897, p. 1.
its creation.” As discussed above, Southwestern Baptist/Union University was hampered in its fundraising efforts because it had to compete with a number of local, lower-grade church schools claiming to be colleges. Thus Conger’s appeal was calculating, but nevertheless revealed a central contradiction faced by leaders of denominational colleges. Conger argued that denominational loyalty should not be allowed to prop up a sham institution; rather the denominational school could only continue if it offered every bit as good an education intellectually as other schools and then went the extra, but necessary mile to provide real religious education. As he explained, “No amount of religious zeal can alone [compensate] for low standards of admission and graduation. There must be no substitute in the way of piety or religious conformity for low ideals of scholarship and broad culture.”92 At the same time, religious schools had to be decidedly religious, as S. E. Jones, president of the Baptist’s Carson-Newman college, explained: “A Baptist institution of learning ought to mean more than literary and arts courses under teachers who are Baptists.” Jones wanted denominationally specific courses of Bible study in all Baptist schools because “We want our people educated, it is true, in Latin and Greek and English and mathematics and so on, but it is vastly more important that they go out from our colleges well versed in the Holy Scriptures. Any thing short of that is hardly denominational education.”93

Despite the increasing efforts to better distinguish between state and church colleges, disagreement grew over the standards and criteria used in judging schools. As Tennessee evangelicals began to admit that education in the state university was broadly

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Christian, or at the very least not un-friendly to Christianity, there were renewed efforts to insure that church colleges were not just Christian, but, more importantly, denominational. E. E. Hoss argued that "It is not possible to defend the planting, endowing, and maintaining of Church schools upon any ground except this, that they are specially designed to foster the spirit of religion" and further the interests of the church which founded them.\textsuperscript{94} He urged Methodists to contribute money and students to the schools of the church, but warned college officials that the only way to deserve those gifts was to maintain an unswerving loyalty to the church. After soliciting money for Vanderbilt and urging Methodists to be loyal to the school, Hoss qualified his appeal: "In the same connection, and with equal emphasis, we wish to say that the authorities of the University must frankly keep themselves in perfect harmony with the Church."\textsuperscript{95}

As editor of the Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, Hoss had a large influence on the flow of information to and the thinking of southern Methodists. From his editor's desk just down the street from the Vanderbilt campus, he waged a lengthy battle with Chancellor Kirkland and the majority of the Board of Trust, criticizing them for a lack of denominational loyalty and for the public misbehavior of students. Following the 1897

\textsuperscript{94} [Hoss], "Religion in the Colleges," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, March 1, 1894, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{95} He continued, "The only justification for denominational institutions is found in the assumption that they will distinctly recognize religious instruction, not as something alien or merely incidental to education, but as of its very essence. In such institutions religion must be not only looked upon with mild tolerance and approval, but must be cordially and continuously held up as the supreme end of human life." Hoss, "Vanderbilt University," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, September 19, 1895, p. 1. Hoss's editorial did not pass unnoticed by the board, who adopted a resolution at a meeting of its executive committee on September 24, 1895, expressing "great regret" at the editorial which, they asserted, was "apparently written in the interest of Vanderbilt University, but calculated at the same time to do the University great damage." They concluded by instructing Bishop Hargrove to "respectfully invite the Editor of the Advocate to furnish the proof of the imputations in the hope that we may be able to show him that the same are not well founded." Vanderbilt University Board of Trust \textit{Minutes}, September 24, 1895, p. 47. See also [Hoss], "Our Denominational Schools," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, October 1, 1896, p. 1.
commencement he raised "A Question of Propriety" on page one of the Advocate, suggesting that "it is almost time the Faculty of Vanderbilt University were showing some sign of official respect for the clergy of the Church to which the institution is supposed to belong. If any Southern Methodist minister has been in a prominent place on its programmes for four years, we are not aware of the fact."  

This question of denominational loyalty of schools became an increasingly divisive issue in the southern Methodist church at the beginning of the twentieth century. Many educational leaders, J. H. Kirkland one of the most prominent among them, envisioned religious education as a broadly Christian endeavor. As he explained in his 1900 address commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Vanderbilt's opening, he proposed "to be forever true to our position as a Christian institution. We shall follow this high ideal in the same spirit that has controlled us in the past—a spirit of enlightened patriotism and broad Christianity."  

While Kirkland called for broad Christianity, 

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96 [Hoss], "A Question of Propriety," Nashville Christian Advocate, May 6, 1897, p. 1. Such complaints were commonly raised by critics of the university. See, for example, H. H. Hamill to W. F. Tillett, May 25, 1912. W. F. Tillett Papers, Box 1, file 9. Under Hoss's control, the Nashville Christian Advocate regularly criticized the school, bringing student (mis)behavior (dancing, attending the theater, playing football, for example) before the church readership constantly as proof of the atmosphere of the school. Hoss easily emerges from nearly every account of the Vanderbilt crisis as at worst a conniving, anti-intellectual, and manipulative politician, but he was, nonetheless the mouthpiece of a significant portion of the church membership who feared that non-denominational was only a very short step away from secular education. Paul Conkin takes great efforts to humanize Hoss, "the one most easily antihero" in most accounts of the Bishop's Suit. (Gone with the Ivy, 158–59). James Tunstead Burtchaell, while suggesting Hoss was correct in his interpretation of the situation, describes Hoss as "a strident, impassioned, and unattractive antagonist, who defined the issues in so anti-intellectual a way that he strengthened Kirkland's credibility among those who sought an institution of rigorous learning. ... Hoss was the very incarnation of that to which an ambitious company of scholars would not wish to be accountable." The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 848.

97 James H. Kirkland, "Twenty-Five Years of University Work," Nashville Christian Advocate, November 1, 1900, p. 5.
Methodist bishop and Vanderbilt board member Warren A. Candler introduced a resolution to the board’s 1901 annual meeting “that in filling the vacancies in the board of instruction . . . preference be given to Methodists, other things being equal.” Candler remained a thorn in Kirkland’s side, opposing an effort in 1904 to promote two non-Methodists within the faculty. Angered especially by the appointment of Dr. Frederick W. Moore, a devout Baptist, to Academic Dean, Candler presented a lengthy protest to the board. After counting up the number of non-Methodists in the faculty, Candler warned that “this is out of all proportion, and must necessarily tend to estrange the University from the Church and the Church from the University.” Candler, Hoss, and a large number of the Methodist rank and file who followed their lead feared that non-denominational “broad Christianity” was only a very short step away from completely secular education.

Thus by the first years of the twentieth century, some Methodist leaders argued that the only justification for church support of higher education was to further denominational goals. This, it must be noted, was not a departure from the ideas of many of the founders of the church colleges. But part of the problem, particularly in the case of Vanderbilt, was as Bishop Hendrix—trustee and avid supporter of the school and its policies—pointed out: rigid theological tests may be appropriate for the denominational college, but Vanderbilt was meant to be a university. The other problem was that the exact relationship between church and school had never really been legally clear. It had

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98 J. H. Kirkland, “Methodists and Non-Methodists in the Academic Faculty,” manuscript of brief in response to the complaint of the Bishops. RG 300, Box 103, File 55, Chancellor’s Office Papers, VUSC.
99 Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, 1904, p. 196.
100 Conkin, Gone with the Ivy, 154–55; Massengale, “Collegiate Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South,” 526.
required one northern millionaire to found the school and it would take another to bring
the lingering uncertainties to a head.

When Andrew Carnegie announced in 1905 the creation of a foundation to
provide pensions to college teachers, he raised the hopes of many southern
denominational and educational leaders for a firm financial footing for their schools.
They could attract better faculty through a promise of more comfortable compensation,
even in retirement. But those hopes were soon dashed as Dr. Henry Pritchett, the director
of the fund, explained that Carnegie's policy was not to aid any "sectarian" institutions.
Pritchett and the foundation made a close inspection of the manner of control of schools
applying for aid. The churches, in response, soon engaged in the same task, "namely, to
define closely and carefully its attitude toward educational institutions and determine
definite tests by which an institution should be recognized as under the control of the
church." 101 Methodists in Virginia and Maryland became especially agitated in 1908
over the acceptance of Randolph-Macon Woman's College by the Carnegie Foundation
into the pension program. Debates over the school's relationship to the church and to the
foundation filled denominational papers for nearly 5 years (1906-11). 102 The
repercussions of the controversy over church control of Randolph-Macon served as a
catalyst for the questions that had been swirling around Vanderbilt since the 1890s.
Certain denominational leaders—Hoss and Candler chief among them—were determined
to clarify the church's legal relationship to the Nashville university.

101 Kirkland to John J. Vertrees, October 14, 1911. Kirkland Papers, Box 1, file 5.
102 Massengale, "Collegiate Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 492-514.
Chancellor Kirkland was likewise interested in clearly defining Vanderbilt's relationship to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. From the beginning of his tenure at Vanderbilt he had ambitious plans for expansion—plans that would require a great increase in buildings, equipment, faculty, and, most important, funding. In his 1899 report to the board he urged greater contributions from "our own people and by our own church." He called for greater financial support for the school and especially the Biblical Department, from the southern Methodist church, and was encouraged when the General Conference authorized a drive for $300,000 for the department through its Twentieth Century Education Fund. Dean Wilbur F. Tillett of the Vanderbilt Biblical Department was head of the fundraising effort in the Tennessee Conference, but even with his tireless campaigning most contributions went to smaller, local aims and Vanderbilt received only a small percentage of the projected funds. Early in the twentieth century, Chancellor Kirkland reported to the board that "For two years past we have been looking especially to the 20th Century Movement to increase the endowment of

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103 Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume V, p. 53 (June 1901).
104 Tillett tried to shame readers into support for Vanderbilt, noting that the department had been almost exclusively funded, not by the MECS, but by an outsider to the faith and region. "We must answer that it is money given not by the Church itself, or by any of its members, but by a man who was not even a professing Christian. ... Is it not something of a reproach to Southern Methodism that it has done so little for the cause of higher ministerial education?" He continued, urging support to keep ministers from having to seek an education at northern seminaries, from which they rarely return: "No Church can afford to have its young ministers get their theological education at schools belonging to another Church: if so, they will be educated away from rather than for and into sympathy with their own Church. About 50 per cent. of the young Southern Methodist ministers who have gone to Northern Theological Seminaries during the last 20 years have left our Church for other communions. We could not expect it to be otherwise. It is the mission of the Biblical Department of Vanderbilt University to educate its students for, not away from, our Church and ministry; to educate them into love and sympathy with the peculiar doctrines and polity and traditions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South." Tillett, "Why Should the Biblical Department of Vanderbilt University Share in Our Twentieth Century Thank Offering?", North Carolina Christian Advocate, March 7, 1900, p. 6. W. F. Tillett Papers, Box 2; File 50.
the University and relieve us somewhat from our embarrassed position. It is with regret that I record such meagre results from this source up to the present time."\textsuperscript{105} This failure clarified any doubts in Kirkland's mind about the potential financial support from within the church and led him to increasingly cast a wider net in his search for funding.

Kirkland's efforts to secure greater funding for the university led him to downplay the relationship to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, except in the Biblical Department. His desires to make Vanderbilt a "genuine university, broad & liberal & free" attracted the interest of northern donors, including officials of the Carnegie Foundation, the Rockefellers' General Education Board, and the Peabody Fund. In a private 1904 letter to a potential source of funds, Kirkland avowed that "outside its Theological Department we do not wish it to be the exponent of any sect or any creed, save such as belongs to our common Christianity."\textsuperscript{106} Kirkland's efforts to promote a "broad & liberal" Vanderbilt that emphasized "common Christianity" ran directly counter to the thoughts of other factions of Methodists who could only justify church colleges as active promoters of specific denominational interests. Although E. E. Hoss had softened his criticisms of the state university after realizing that it was at least broadly Christian, he was left to wonder how Kirkland's plans for Vanderbilt were any different.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105} Vanderbilt University Board of Trust Minutes, Volume V, p. 53 (June 1901). In their court briefs to the Tennessee Supreme Court in 1914, attorneys for the university argued that the $25,000 spent by the MECS on the trial was greater than the sum of church contributions to the school in its first 25 years of existence. See Conkin, Gone with the Ivy, 181.

\textsuperscript{106} Kirkland to Daniel C. Gilman, October 31, 1904, James H. Kirkland Papers (personal), Box 1, file 1.

\textsuperscript{107} Both Massengale and Conkin recognize that the controversies over the Vanderbilt charter were far more complicated than a battle between the church and the school, but rather involved several factions within the church against each other and revealed growing rifts in the social and theological unity of the southern Methodist church. Massengale, "Collegiate Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," 526; Conkin, Gone with the Ivy, 150.
Questions about the relationship of Vanderbilt to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South moved from a discussion of broad themes about the purposes of higher education by the church to tightly contested legal battles over the specific powers of the church’s governing General Conference, the bishops, and the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust. As Chancellor Kirkland sought to emphasize Vanderbilt University’s espousal of a “broad & liberal … common Christianity,” he worried about the large and ever growing number of Methodist bishops on the Board of Trust. Through an 1895 by-law, the Vanderbilt board of trust made the bishops of the church ex-officio members of the board. The original measure had been calculated to increase Methodist interest in the school. When the 1902 General Conference increased the number of bishops to 13 and the 1906 General Conference seemed poised to vote for even more additions, Kirkland feared the bishops would soon have a commanding majority of the 33 member board. Wanting to remain connected to the church but not under the thumb of the Methodist

Elijah Embree Hoss, by 1905 a bishop of the church and therefore an ex-officio member of the Vanderbilt board, missed the June meetings because he was overseeing church affairs in Brazil. When he returned, he learned he was no longer considered a member of the board. As one of Kirkland’s longest-standing critics, he could only see the 1905 by-law changes as a subtle and underhanded scheme to remove him from the board. Hoss’s reaction was anything but subtle, and he immediately protested to Kirkland, his fellow bishops, and the southern Methodist church at large. He reacted, as Paul Conkin put it, “like a bull in a china shop,” and remained on the offensive against
Kirkland’s supposed machinations and usurpation for at least a decade following the 1905 meeting.\textsuperscript{108}

Bishop Hoss forced the question of the rights of the southern Methodist church to control the school—largely through the nomination or confirmation of Trustees and the supposed visitatorial rights of the bishops under the original charter. He put his editorial talents to work, stirring up opposition to Kirkland and the board and forcing the issue at the quadrennial General Conferences of 1906 and 1910. The 1906 Conference appointed a committee of lawyers to examine the charter and report on the exact relations between the church and the university. The report of this Vanderbilt Commission, issued in 1907, assigned powerful rights to the church. Arguing that an 1895 Tennessee statute provided religious bodies who established and were “maintaining and patronizing” educational institutions rights to appoint trustees and otherwise supervise them, the report became a powerful weapon in Hoss’s arsenal as he continued his defense of strict denominational control of Vanderbilt.\textsuperscript{109}

The 1910 General Conference acted on its newly discovered rights, and at the urging of Hoss and his partisans, elected three trustees to the Vanderbilt Board. Drawing the action of the church as an attempt to revert “his” Vanderbilt to a narrowly sectarian institution, Chancellor James H. Kirkland convinced a majority of the board to refuse to seat the “gentlemen” selected by the late General Conference and “claiming membership in this board.” In response, Hoss and his faction of the bishops sued in chancery court to

\textsuperscript{108} Conkin, \textit{Gone with the Ivy}, 158.
stop the board of Trust from seating three trustees of its own choosing and to force compliance with the findings of the Vanderbilt Commission. After a 1913 ruling favorable to the advocates of strict church control, the majority members of the Board of Trust appealed the case to the Tennessee Supreme Court.\textsuperscript{110}

The Tennessee Supreme Court ultimately decided in March 1914 that the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust could elect its own successors, but any elections would be subject to confirmation by the church. It was, more or less, the relationship that had been followed from the founding of the University, but Hoss and other opinion makers decried that the decision left them no real control over Vanderbilt and therefore they would be better off severing all connections and turning their attention to establishing schools under clear Methodist control. Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate} editor Thomas Ivey, who had consistently taken up the cudgel to marshal public opinion against the University declared that control left to the church practically meaningless and urged a total separation.\textsuperscript{111}

There were some scattered voices within the church, and especially in Tennessee, favoring a continued relationship with the school, but denominational leaders quickly turned their attention to new universities in Dallas and Atlanta. Vanderbilt supporters

\textsuperscript{110} Vanderbilt University Board of Trustees Minutes, Volume V, p. 183, (June 13, 1914). See also Conkin, \textit{Gone with the Ivy}, 174. The majority Trustees attempted to keep up with Hoss’s skillful propaganda, and had an able spokesman in the early years of the controversy in the much revered Bishop Hendrix, the president of the board and a strong supporter of Kirkland’s visions of the grand university. They published the arguments before the Chancery Court in a large pamphlet, \textit{In the Chancery Court of Davidson County, Tenn., October Term, 1910, State of Tennessee, on the Relation of A. W. Wilson and Others, Composing the College of Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Others, Complainants, against The Board of Trust of Vanderbilt University, Defendants}.

continued to laud its broadly Christian loyalty and its continued "opportunity to touch the intellectual development of the South with the religious spirit which no other church has." Continued affiliation with the school, they argued, was "a matter of vital concern for the entire religious life of the South." \(^{112}\) Dean Tillett of the Biblical Department expressed his fears that he could not "conceive of a more unwise act" than for the church to wholly abandon Vanderbilt, noting that the "itinerant ranks of the Southern Methodist Church to-day" are filled with "eight hundred and twenty-five former Vanderbilt students, more than one in every nine" of the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Tillett urged the church to hold on to the school of theology, even if not the whole university. \(^{113}\)

Such voices were not popular among denominational leaders and were only rarely allowed into official church papers. President R. E. Blackwell of Randolph-Macon wrote to Dean Tillett, complimenting him on his article in the Nashville Advocate and agreeing with Tillett's call for a continued relationship between the church and Vanderbilt. Blackwell hoped the article would elicit noise from a silent majority within the denomination "who have not bowed their intellects to the Episcopal boards." The problem, he explained, was that Hoss's minions had control of the denominational press; he wrote Tillett that he had received information from a "prominent minister in your part of the world who holds your views, but who writes me that he has made three attempts to get into the Advocate, but in vain." \(^{114}\)

\(^{112}\) S. F. Jewell, "Our Relation to Vanderbilt," Nashville Midland Methodist, May 6, 1914. W. F. Tillett Papers, Box 2; File 65.


\(^{114}\) Blackwell to Tillett, April 21, 1914. W. F. Tillett Papers. Box 1, File 6. There are numerous other letters of support for Tillett's argument in his papers, but few such arguments were aired in
The controversies over the interpretation of the Vanderbilt charter and its specific relationship to the southern Methodist church did not pass unnoticed by Tennessee’s Baptists.\(^{115}\) In truth, Southwestern Baptist/Union had never drifted far from most of the ideals of its founding denomination. Though blessed with fairly competent leadership, Southwestern had also been firmly under the direction of Baptist ministers and dedicated laymen.\(^{116}\) Money was also certainly important, and one could argue that Vanderbilt’s early wealth raised expectations and created a frequent and seemingly insatiable desire for expansion—growth that after the failure of the Twentieth Century Movement fund-drive seemed possible only with contributions garnered from outside of the church. Southwestern also had needs for funding—running as it did on only a small endowment and a large deficit—but it operated on a much lower financial scale and became accustomed to program maintenance rather than growth. Also, by the dawn of the new century, Southwestern Baptist trustees and school boosters recognized that their school was not necessarily the great southern university the founders had predicted.\(^{117}\) It was, however, clearly a church college and an arm of the denomination. When a fire destroyed the main buildings in January 1912, the Board addressed appeals to Baptist philanthropist John Rockefeller’s General Education Board, as well as to Andrew Carnegie, soliciting challenge grants to help them rebuild. These actions would have

\(^{115}\) Rufus W. Weaver, “The Vanderbilt Decision and Baptist Schools,” Nashville Christian Advocate, April 17, 1914, p. 9.

\(^{116}\) P. T. Hale, who led a successful revival at Southwestern Baptist in 1896 was elected president of the school in 1904. [Folk], “Revivals in Colleges,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, March 19, 1896, p. 8.

occasioned a firestorm of criticism from the sensitive Methodist press, but the state Baptist papers supported the fundraising and did not even mention the appeal to Carnegie.\footnote{Union University Board of Trust Minutes Volume II, pp. 199–200 (April 20, 1912).}

Perhaps the greatest difference between Union and Vanderbilt can be found in a broader comparison of ideologies of the two denominations. Whereas Bishops Hargrove, Hendrix, and Fitzgerald, and many of the other supporters of Kirkland and the majority of the Vanderbilt board's actions were actively engaged in and strong supporters of national and worldwide ecumenical movements, Tennessee Baptists still held to many Landmarkist principles.\footnote{On Landmarkism generally, see James E. Tull, “Landmark Movement,” in Samuel S. Hill, ed., Encyclopedia of Religion in the South (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1984), 399–401. On Landmarkism’s disruptions of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, see Wardin Jr., Tennessee Baptists, 176–90 and 377–91.} Reflecting the legacy of James R. Graves, one of the early and most prominent supporters of Southwestern Baptist University, most Tennessee Baptists inside and outside of the school could only consider it as a denominational agency. It was a college for training the lay and ministerial leaders of the church. “Our children are our future leaders,” explained Union President H. E. Watters in 1910. “They must be trained . . . in Baptist schools; therefore our schools must live.”\footnote{H. E. Watters, “What Has Become of It?” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, January 13, 1910, p. 2.} While Kirkland advocated a “broad Christianity” as the goal of religious education, Tennessee Baptist educators worried that ecumenically “Christian” education was inseparable from church unionism and the decline of distinctive Baptist beliefs: “‘Christian education’ will more and more entangle Baptists in the net of denominational affiliation which, if it means
anything, means the side-tracking of some vital doctrinal point or points, or a very unnecessary and unsafe mixing of the Truth with error.”

Tennessee Baptists also raised questions about the relationship of their schools to the denomination as the battles for the control of Vanderbilt intensified within Methodist circles. The Vanderbilt unrest raised doubts among some Baptists about the future of their own schools and, if left unanswered, could have retarded fundraising efforts for Southwestern Baptist/Union and Carson-Newman. Southwestern Baptist’s president P. T. Hale picked the opportune moment of the spring of 1906—just when E. E. Hoss was canvassing the states to stir up resentment against Vanderbilt and to call for greater church control of the school—to begin a new campaign for funding the Baptist school. Hale emphasized Southwestern Baptist’s close connection to the church, explaining that its trustees were elected by the Tennessee Baptist Convention and their actions were “reviewed by the controlling power, which is the denomination.” Baptist educational leaders attempted to use the agitation surrounding Vanderbilt to their benefit, taking the opportunity to reassure Baptists of the loyalty of their schools. Not willing to be left leaning only on historical ties or rhetorical pledges of affiliation, however, the Tennessee Baptist Convention appointed an educational committee in 1902 to clarify the relation of church and school. After the Vanderbilt case had gone to the courts, the TBC in 1911 resolved “that, in view of present litigation, involving the denominational control of educational institutions,” the committee was “authorized to take up seriously the question

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and work out a plan which will stand the test of the courts, so that all our educational institutions shall be for all time under organized Baptist control." They eventually created a chartered entity, the Education Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, which was to raise funds for all of the Baptist colleges in the state, making a contract with each school guaranteeing certain rights of supervision by the denomination and holding a first mortgage upon all property and endowment funds of the schools. If the schools ever deviated from denominational wishes, the Education Board, through the contract, could get back their investment with interest.

**Christian Education for Church and State**

The bitterness of Vanderbilt's split from the Methodist church had broader implications for not just Methodists, but all Tennessee Protestants. Tennessee Baptists paid close attention to the controversy over the control of Vanderbilt and took steps to bind their colleges more closely to the denomination. Methodists threw their support behind other church schools, pledging millions to support Emory and Southern Methodist.

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123 Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes, 1911, p. 18. While writing the charter for Tennessee College for Women, a Baptist school in Murfreesboro, the committee engaged the assistance of John Bell Keeble, one of the lawyers who had been involved in the early stages of the Vanderbilt Commission of 1906. With Keeble's assistance, "a committee of the commission watched over its preparation and incorporated into it every possible safeguard to secure the perpetuity of the institution as a Baptist school under the control of this Convention. ... All of the Trustees, according to the By-Laws, must be Baptists." Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes, 1906, p. 10.

124 Rufus Weaver, "The Legal Status of the Baptist Schools," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, January 11, 1917. See also, Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes, 1912, pp. 44-46. For a more detailed account of the efforts to secure denominational control over the Baptist schools, see Ward, "The Development of Baptist Higher Education in Tennessee," 93-118.
Universities. Neither denomination paused to question the continued place of the church in higher education; both continued to stress the importance of specifically denominational teaching at their schools. Nevertheless, the apparent “loss” of Vanderbilt undermined many Tennesseans’ faith in the permanence of church colleges and caused Evangelicals in the state to take a greater interest in the specific religious content of public education.

World War I would have a profound effect on higher education in the United States, both in church and state colleges. Military spending brought a wealth of students to both Vanderbilt and Union during the war years and greatly increased attendance in the years following. Conservative resurgence during and following the war led denominational leaders to both promote their own schools as vastly superior and morally safer than the state schools while at the same time arguing for greater oversight of the state schools. Methodist Bishop and first president of Emory University Warren Candler urged Methodist education as a missionary enterprise, explaining the unique position of the southern church and its responsibility to the nation and the world. “The degenerate forms of rationalistic religion have never been able to take root in our section. Southern Churches, therefore, can make evangelical institutions of learning more easily than can the Churches of other sections.” But, he cautioned, “it is impossible to have colleges and universities that will serve the needs of evangelical Christianity unless the Churches erect, endow, own, and control such institutions.” Candler had been one of the chief critics of the policies of the Vanderbilt Board of Trust, and as first president of the re-chartered Emory University, he made sure to advertise and safeguard the close relationship between the school and the church. As an early advertisement in the
Nashville *Christian Advocate* for Emory University proclaimed, the university was “AN
INSTITUTION FOUNDED, OWNED, AND CONTROLLED BY THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH. SOUTH.” It was only through such close denominational ties, Candler warned, that southern colleges could save the world from error.\(^{125}\)

America’s general wartime anti-German hysteria was quickly utilized by advocates of denominational education. Tennessee Baptists especially emphasized the relationship between German state systems of public education and the Prussian militarism that was sweeping Europe. Rufus Weaver, the secretary of the Baptist state Board of Education warned in a full page advertisement in the *Baptist and Reflector* that “The absence in the German Empire of Baptist, and other denominational colleges enjoying the freedom which these institutions possess in America, accounts for the present world war.”\(^{126}\) Editor Albert Bond of the *Baptist and Reflector* explained that “German kultur was produced through Prussian militarism, disassociated with the religious sanction for deeds, and became inwrought into the national life through the school system of the nation.” Bond suggested that this “should be a warning to American life lest we too forget the essential things that ought to be taught in our school system.”\(^{127}\) Methodist editor Thomas Ivey urged diligence and a “Counter ‘Watch on the Rhine’,” warning that

Christian thought is not yet free of the toils of the German schools. Every library in Europe and America is stored with the deadly output of these

schools. Too much care cannot be exercised by those in authority in selecting the books to be used and the men and women who are to teach in our schools and colleges. We must see that our educational systems are free from the poison of German rationalism and the German military spirit. 128

Both Baptists and Methodists inaugurated ambitious fundraising efforts in the aftermath of the war. Buoyed by the amount of support they saw poured out in sacrifice for the war effort, denominational fundraisers called for a similar show of "patriotism" for the church. At the end of the war, Baptists urged members to donate their Liberty Bonds to relieve the debt of the church's colleges. They followed this up with a massive campaign to raise $75 million over five years for education, missions, and other church causes. Methodist educators launched the Christian Education Movement to aid all levels of education by the church, but called for special assistance for church colleges. In January 1921, the leaders of the Christian Education Movement initiated a massive advertising campaign, utilizing a full-page on the back cover of each week's Nashville Christian Advocate. Warning that "The Church Must Educate or Die," one advertisement explained that Christian education was for the good of the denomination and the nation: "It means the saving of Methodist education to the nation and the production of those Christian leaders, now lacking, who alone can lead the blinded world aright. ... It ultimately means life or death for the M. E. Church, South; it means moral character and stable government for the nation." 129 Other advertisements promised parents

128 [Ivey], "A Counter 'Watch on the Rhine,'" Nashville Christian Advocate, August 1, 1919, pp. 6–7.
contemplating sending daughters to school that "She'll Be Safe at the Christian College." Still others reminded parents that "Christian Education is Complete Education," because it "trains head and heart together." Further, Christians could help "Banish the Bolshevik," by supporting Methodist colleges, because "the best protection against anarchy, Bolshevism, radicalism, I.W.W'ism, [and] red revolution is Christian Education. It lays the foundation of society upon the Rock of Ages—upon righteousness, law and order, cooperation and unselfishness."

Such advertising was meant to increase support for denominational schools, but there was also an increased effort on the part of Tennessee Evangelicals to supervise education by the state. There had been some discussion among Baptists and Methodists of the need to minister to students in the state universities, but the Vanderbilt controversy, combined with the nagging realization that church colleges simply could not keep up with the demands of the increasing numbers of people seeking a college education, gave new impetus to plans for ministering to students in the state schools and to exercise greater oversight of the entire public education system. Asserting that "considerably more than half of our Methodist young men and women who are in college are being educated in State colleges and universities," one writer urged parents, ministers, and local churches to take a greater interest in the students and faculty of the state universities.

Some writers urged the appointment of ministers to the students of the colleges while

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130 February 18, 1921, p. 32.
131 March 4, 1921, p. 32.
132 "Banish the Bolshevik," Nashville Christian Advocate, April 1, 1921, p. 32; "Moral Character or Steel Doors," Nashville Christian Advocate, April 29, 1921, p. 32.
133 The effects on public elementary and high schools will be discussed in Chapters V and VI.
134 J. B. Game, "State Colleges and the Church," Nashville Christian Advocate, January 18, 1906, pp. 7–9;
other writers called for more intrusive investigation of the officers and instruction of the state schools.\textsuperscript{135} "Ways and means will readily suggest themselves by which the Church, without any possibility of overstepping the proper bounds, may show a deep and sympathetic interest in the management of the State colleges and universities and in the life of the students while there. The outlay is small, and there are possibilities of a very large return."\textsuperscript{136}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Tennessee Governor John Calvin Brown, speaking at the laying of the cornerstone of Vanderbilt University in 1874, had praised the prospects of the Methodist university, which "dedicated to the living God . . . will send forth an army of evangelists, drilled, disciplined, and armed, to meet and overthrow the swelling bands of infidelity."\textsuperscript{137} But in the twentieth century, when questions arose about just what kind of "army" the Vanderbilt was producing, a great many Tennessee Protestants were called to the walls to defend the old faith. The "theft" of Vanderbilt served as a potent symbol for many Tennesseans of the encroachment of secular culture on their state. Fearing that denominational colleges would no longer be sufficient guarantee of piety and morality.

\textsuperscript{135} Rev. O. T. Gilmore, "The Church at Work in State Schools," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, March 28, 1924, pp. 8–9
\textsuperscript{136} Game, "State Colleges and the Church," pp. 7–9; Prof. Charles Foster Smith, "Religion in the State University," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, July 27, 1903, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{137} [Summers], "Laying the Corner-Stone of Vanderbilt University," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, May 9, 1874, p. 5.
within the state, many evangelicals would increasingly advocate greater religious oversight of public education on all levels.
CHAPTER IV

From Temperance to Prohibition: Tennessee Evangelicals and the Legislation of Morality

Addressing the readers of the Nashville Christian Advocate on the occasion of the first Fourth of July of the new twentieth century, Methodist editor and outspoken prohibition advocate Elijah E. Hoss crafted a lengthy editorial on the responsibility of the church and its members for the welfare of not just other church members but of the whole society. Noting that his denomination was represented "in almost every community from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, and from the Ohio River to Key West," Hoss challenged any "intelligent man [to] deny" that "the moral and religious welfare of these Southern States is largely committed into the hands of the Methodist Church." In part, Hoss was repeating the missionary charge that had first sent Methodist ministers out to such disparate points on the map, urging them to preach the gospel and call individual sinners to repentance. But Hoss also saw his and the church's mission to be societal as well as individual: "The future of great commonwealths, as well as the immortal destiny of millions of souls, depends on the manner in which we discharge the obligations that God has imposed upon us."¹

Tennessee Methodists and Baptists acted on this charge, taking an active interest in the education of youth as a means for individual conversion and salvation which would by extension shape the society and state of the future. Propelled by a missionary call to

¹ [Hoss], "To Our Own People," Nashville Christian Advocate, July 4, 1901, p. 1.
further Christianize the South and reassure southerners of their status as God's chosen people, Tennessee evangelicals of the late nineteenth century sought a voice in determining the curriculum and control of the state's growing public education system. This interest in public education in part paralleled, but also lagged behind a more prominent engagement of Tennessee evangelicals with their surrounding society: their battles to eradicate alcohol.

Prohibition and education intersect in several places in Tennessee history, so much so, in fact, that one historian has described the state's dry crusade as a battle of "Schoolhouse versus saloon." After several failed legislative attempts to secure a local-option prohibition law, a successful 1877 state statute forbade liquor sales within four miles of chartered schools outside of incorporated towns. After the defeat of other, more direct legislative measures to ban the manufacture, sale, and consumption of alcohol, prohibition forces proceeded to dry up the state by gradually extending the Four Mile Law and applying it to all schools—public or private—and in all parts of the state, so that the schoolhouse became "a weapon with which to fight the saloon."² Though there were a variety of interests represented in the efforts to banish alcohol from the Volunteer state, Methodist and Baptist ministers and editors—especially Edgar Estes Folk of the Nashville Baptist and Reflector and Elijah Embree Hoss of the Nashville Christian Advocate before becoming a southern Methodist bishop—were the chief standard bearers and publicists of the crusade.

The prohibition crusade in Tennessee is germane to the present study for several reasons. First, as suggested above, building schools became, as a result of the Four Mile Law, directly linked to destroying saloons. Prohibition advocates supported erecting new schools both to educate children and to drive alcohol out of their communities. In some parts of the state, pro-liquor interests went so far as to destroy several rural schools to block the operation of the Four Mile Law. Though they proceeded on other fronts as well, arguments for expanding public education among Tennessee evangelicals often overlapped into discussions of banishing the saloons.

Second, the evangelicals’ prohibition activities, much like their concern for the education of youth, represented a new era of broader social concern by southern white Christians. Although they continued to make the most of preaching the gospel and converting individual sinners, Tennessee evangelicals increasingly understood theirs as a divine mission with both earthly and heavenly goals. It may not be surprising that prohibition activities by individual churchmen and increasingly by denominational bodies invited vigorous protest from liquor interests. But their actions also raised serious questions within denominations about the proper relationship between the church and the state and the place of preachers and moral concerns in public civic and political life. The debates that appeared in church councils as well as in the pages of denominational and secular papers offer an opportune window through which to observe the changing nature of southern Christianity. In their pursuit of a moral crusade against alcohol, Tennessee evangelicals radically expanded the temporal and earthly mission of the church and, by the end of the nineteenth century, demonstrated the extent to which religious leaders believed that the church had become coterminous with the surrounding society.
Third, evangelicals’ experiences with the mixed success of the prohibition crusade—at its heart an attempt to check the behavior of certain members of society—reinforced in their minds the need to shape the morals and behavior of future citizens in the schools. Many adults opposed and openly violated the prohibition laws and, in their obstruction, led many evangelicals to concentrate their efforts on raising up a generation of Tennesseans with the internal morality (learned now in the school, not left to chance in the home) to resist alcohol and support prosecuting their fellow citizens who disobeyed the law. In the prohibition campaigns, evangelical leaders rehearsed many of the arguments they would utilize in the early twentieth century in favor of requiring daily Bible reading and banning the teaching of evolution in the public schools.

Surely it was not accidental that Hoss chose the Fourth of July for his civil and religious sermon. Though still a southern partisan, Hoss embraced a broader vision of the relationship between religion and society that included religious standards for politics and law. As the individuals, the churches, the state of Tennessee, and the nation began a new century, Hoss insisted that “There never was a time when it was more important to assert the absoluteness of God's authority over the individual, the family, the community, [and] the nation.” While charging southern Methodists to work for the spread of religion and “keep alive in the minds of men the sense of eternal things,” Hoss was also reminding church members and others of “the absoluteness of God’s authority” on earth and in heaven.³ Hoss is an important transitional figure in the history of Tennessee

³ [Hoss], “To Our Own People,” 1. A month earlier, Hoss had editorialized on the on the question “What is the Church For?” Remembering Hoss’s conservative stance and criticisms of Vanderbilt University (in the previous chapter), it is not surprising that Hoss answered his own question with the argument that “the chief business of the Church is to foster and keep alive in the minds of men the sense of eternal things by the faithful preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” But at the same time he saw individual salvation as having social repercussions: “If faithful to its
evangelicals: though he remained a theologically conservative voice in church councils and gained prominence as the church’s chief prosecutor in its efforts to keep Vanderbilt University on the denominational straight and narrow, he also became one of Tennessee’s leading prohibition advocates. It was in his prohibition campaigns that Hoss most clearly articulated his changed conception of the church. No longer a separate community of believers at odds with the surrounding society, Hoss’s religious community and its moral order extended to and embraced all people in the state of Tennessee, whether they recognized them or not.

In the late nineteenth century, when Methodists and Baptists clearly constituted the majority of the state’s population, they forsook their dissenter heritage to embrace a vision of society more akin to the Anglicanism their British and southern evangelical ancestors had fought to overcome. As Professor George Broadman Eager of the Southern Baptist Theological seminary suggested at the time, Baptists had come to recognize the new realities of society: “The problem of life used to be the problem of the individual; now it is the problem of society in its organized form. One hundred years ago the family was the little world; now the world is fast becoming one vast family and government is paternal.”

The duty of the churches in such a new environment would be to not only maintain their relevance for individuals and families, but to spread their influence over and even through the growing and paternal government of the New South. Such an expanded conception of the evangelical churches promised—and in some cases succeeded—in expanding the social vision of Tennessee Baptists and Methodists to

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main aim and high mission, [the church] will surely affect the entire organization of human society.” [Hoss], “What is the Church For?” Nashville Christian Advocate, June 6, 1901, p. 1.

ameliorate some unpleasant social conditions stemming from southern industrialization such as poverty, child labor, and orphanhood. Rarely, if ever, however, could Tennessee evangelicals progress beyond managing the symptoms to diagnosing the social, racial, economic, and political causes of southern problems. Democratic religious denominations such as Baptists and Methodists remained social captives, unable to move far beyond their base if they hoped to retain and continue to gain membership and support. In fact, evangelical support for prohibitory liquor laws, and the resulting social and political tumult of passing and enforcing them, may have chastened white southern religious leaders about the dangers of challenging other social conditions.

**FORCES RETARDING THE GROWTH OF PROHIBITION SENTIMENT AND ACTIVISM AMONG TENNESSEE EVANGELICALS**

By the early twentieth century, most Tennesseans—whether or not they were church members—would have recognized state Baptist and Methodist preachers and officials as being at the head of the anti-liquor phalanx. With editors E. E. Hoss and E. E. Folk leading the prohibition charge not only in church papers but as heads of the Local Option League and later the state organization of the national Anti-Saloon League, white Tennessee Methodists and Baptists appeared united in their push to dry up the Volunteer State. The southern Methodist's Memphis Annual Conference, meeting in Martin in 1913, rejoiced that it had, "from the beginning ... insisted upon the complete separation of our people from the manufacture and use of intoxicating liquors."⁵ Such unified

⁵ Memphis Annual Conference, *Minutes* 1913, p. 70.
prohibition support had not always marked Tennessee’s evangelicals, however. In fact, support for strict legislative prohibition was slow to develop among both the evangelical leadership and rank-and-file church members of the nineteenth century. A long history of moderate, social consumption of alcohol marked southern lives in the more established societies east of the Appalachians as well as in the early nineteenth century southwestern frontier of Tennessee. Many Tennessee Methodists and Baptists advocated abstinence from alcohol by their members, and some even encouraged legislative appeals to limit the sale and distribution of spirits in antebellum years. But after rigid prohibitionism became associated with abolitionism and other forms of political preaching in the late antebellum period, it was eschewed by at least as many Tennessee evangelicals as supported it. The Civil War and Reconstruction in part reinforced southern evangelical tendencies to forgo explicit political action, but simultaneous desires to re-create the especially religious South motivated a slow growth of evangelical sentiment in favor of securing wider application of religious morality throughout southern society.

Alcohol, especially simple whiskey made from corn, was one of the earliest improved products of Tennessee agriculture. Easier to transport eastward over the mountains or down the Cumberland and Mississippi Rivers than unprocessed corn, whiskey was a common product in the Old Southwest. Not exclusively an export product, alcohol was commonly consumed in the state by all classes. As a general rule, early pioneer Methodist and Baptist ministers in Tennessee did not condemn drinking in moderation by members or the clergy, although they did commonly discipline members for drunkenness. Methodist founder John Wesley, in his General Rules for the order, had prohibited “drunkenness” but not drinking altogether. Alcohol consumption was so
prevalent among early Tennessee dwellers that when Methodist circuit rider Peter Cartwright first entered upon his ministry in middle Tennessee, he noted in his journal that he “found 20 talented local preachers, all whiskey drinkers.” When he attempted to bring church charges against one of them for drinking too frequently, he found it difficult to secure a trial “committee what [sic] were not dram-drinkers themselves.” Some Methodist circuit riders and local preachers apparently supplemented their meager incomes by making whiskey and selling it as they traveled the territory.\(^6\) Tennessee Methodists did not drink alone; the Baptist clergy and laity likewise imbibed, “sometimes even at church gatherings.”\(^7\) The Tennessee Baptist newspaper reported in June 1836 on the low number of teetotalers and larger numbers of Baptists who “owned distilleries, distilled whisky, and sold it by the gallon.” Baptist minister Josiah Rucks of Smith and Wilson Counties humorously commented on the propensity of his fellow Baptists to drink, claiming that “The Methodists cry, Fire, fire! The Presbyterians cry Order, order! The Baptists cry, Water, water! but mix a little whisky with it.”\(^8\)

Though willing to accept some drinking, both churches did, however, condemn drunkenness among the clergy and laity, gradually moving towards total abstinence when many members were found unable to drink only in moderation. Tennessee Methodist minister James Axley pressed the 1812 General Convention (the national body of Methodists) to forbid pastors to sell liquor, securing the measure’s passage in 1816. The Tennessee Conference of Methodists, at the urging of pioneering minister William

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McKendree, resolved in 1833 to abstain from using alcohol themselves and to encourage their families, friends, and communities to do likewise. Middle Tennessee Baptist minister R. B. C. Howell, founder and long-time editor of the Tennessee Baptist, strongly advocated temperance from Tennessee pulpits and most effectively through the pages of his weekly paper. With leadership from Howell and outspoken teetotalers like fellow Baptist Robert W. January, several Tennessee Baptist associations passed temperance resolutions, verbally attacked alcohol sale and consumption, and even pressed the Baptist General Association of [Middle] Tennessee to appoint a committee to petition the legislature in favor of prohibitory laws. But their actions often caused trouble, even within Baptist ranks. Several members balked when January made total abstinence a test for membership at Mill Creek Church. Primitive Baptists, while admitting that some of their number had become “too unguarded in taking their drams, forgetting that they ought to abstain from all appearance of evil,” nonetheless recoiled from Howell and January’s strict teetotalism. Primitive Baptist John M. Watson asked “Shall we leave the Church of God and go into a temperance society for the cultivation of temperance, because the human institution is more holy?” and criticized the Regular Baptists’ temperance societies for “insist[ing] on a higher order of abstinence than did the Saviour himself.”

In addition to the efforts of denominational bodies to curb the consumption of alcohol by their members and clergy, several voluntary temperance organizations emerged in antebellum Tennessee. Historian Anne C. Loveland has suggested that temperance societies emerged out of frustration with the tendency of church courts to

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9 Smith, Cross and Flame, 230.
10 Wardin Jr., Tennessee Baptists, 192–93.
condemn drunkenness but excuse moderate drinking. Because some evangelicals believed that it was in fact moderate drinking that led eventually to drunkenness, they urged total abstinence for themselves and their fellow members. This voluntary movement—part of a larger national organization most prominent among Quakers and evangelicals of the Mid-Atlantic and New England states in the 1820s—gained limited, but not unified support in the South. The southern wing of the American Temperance Society was led by New School Presbyterians, so Tennessee Methodists and Baptists gradually turned toward the Sons of Temperance and Knights Templars, respectively.

More ardent evangelical advocates of temperance criticized the societies because, as some argued, they were not strongly enough pro-temperance. Despite his outspoken claims to be “an original—a ye an ultra Temperance man,” the East Tennessee Methodist circuit rider-turned-local preacher and Whig political controversialist William G. “Parson” Brownlow in 1842 explained his failure to join a temperance society “but for no other reason, than that we were not willing that it should be inferred therefrom, that we regarded our rule of [the Methodist Book of] Discipline on that subject, as wanting in efficiency.” When he finally did join the Sons of Temperance in 1850, Brownlow claimed that he had always been a supporter of the cause, and explained that “the Temperance cause has ever had a close connection with religion: and it is a cause in the triumph of which, the religious community has the deepest interest.”

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Despite the misgivings of some evangelical leaders and apparently many of the denominational constituents over the wisdom of increased temperance, abstinence, and even prohibition activism, some Tennessee Methodists and Baptists stepped up their verbal, disciplinary, and legal attacks on Demon Rum in the late antebellum years. Much like their counterparts in Virginia and the Carolinas, many Tennessee evangelicals found their way to the leadership of the temperance societies.\(^\text{15}\) After temperance forces secured a law in 1838 banning the sale of spirits in any quantity less than a quart (the “quart law,” which aimed to close down taverns and saloons), Baptists and Methodists kept a watch on the succeeding legislature and urged them not to weaken the law. Calling it the “Magna Charta of Morality” and the “most salutory [sic] and efficient measure ever yet adopted by legislative authority to promote and advance the cause of virtue and good order,” representatives of both denominations urged the Tennessee General Assembly not to repeal the law.\(^\text{16}\) The Tennessee Baptist and Nashville Christian Advocate of the 1850s both published temperance tracts “advocating the legal prohibition of liquor.”\(^\text{17}\)

Anne Loveland has explained the gradually increasing support of southern Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians for “legal suasion” in their efforts to curtail the liquor trade as an outgrowth of the new temperance societies in the antebellum South. Seeing the societies and their aims as more “worldly,” they felt free to adopt more

\(^{15}\) Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 135. “Parson” Brownlow fit Loveland’s model, joining forces with the Sons of Temperance and becoming an ardent voice for prohibition in every forum he entered, whether it be his own newspaper, the northern Methodist pulpit, or as Tennessee’s Reconstruction governor. Conklin, “Parson Brownlow Joins the Sons of Temperance, I,” 185.


\(^{17}\) Wardin Jr., Tennessee Baptists, 193 (quotation); Smith, Cross and Flame, 230–31.
"worldly" means of political action through them. As a general rule, southern clergymen of the early antebellum years avoided political involvement, at least so long as politics concerned only questions of policy or party. However, as Mitchell Snay has explained, southern clergymen did claim a voice “if any political issue was perceived as possessing any kind of moral or religious significance. … Morality thus became the main criterion for determining religious involvement in politics.” Even as Tennessee evangelicals such as R. B. C. Howell and John McFerrin claimed a right to speak out on what they perceived as the moral issue of regulating or eliminating alcohol, larger issues of sectional politics were making several other evangelical ministers and members increasingly uneasy about political entanglement. Much of this desire to distance the church proper from explicit participation in politics likely resulted from the increased agitation by northern, religious abolitionists, especially in wake of Lewis Tappan and the American Antislavery Society’s 1835 southern postal campaign. Southern evangelicals roundly criticized the northerners as political preachers, even as the southerners increased their own moral and political proslavery arguments.19

In the wake of the antislavery crisis, some southern ministers denounced the legal temperance campaigns by raising the “specter of abolitionism.” Criticizing a proposal by the New York Conference to add a more stringent abstinence clause to the Methodist Episcopal Church’s General Rules, editor William Capers of the Southern Christian Advocate warned that the change was not based on any scriptural directive and was instead an effort to substitute human for divine law. “If one arbitrary law, why not

18 Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 151.
another? When you have loosed from the Bible, whither may you not be carried," Capers inquired, implying the relationship between the abstinence plank and a contemporaneous effort by the New England Conference to add a rule against slaveholding.\textsuperscript{20} Tennessee temperance advocates only achieved sporadic and short-lived legislative success during the antebellum period. The divided support of the evangelical rank-and-file, many of whom Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate} editor John McFerrin criticized for not opening their church doors to temperance speakers, perhaps soured many Methodist and Baptist leaders on the prospects of legally enforceable abstinence.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, in the heightened political climate of the late antebellum period that could imply a link between prohibition and abolition, most southern evangelicals reverted to an emphasis on moral suasion and an explanation that individual conversion was the only sure cure for the drink habit.\textsuperscript{22}

Despite the efforts of Brownlow, McFerrin, and other religious and temperance association leaders, the movement to adopt a "Maine Liquor Law"—so called after the state of Maine's total prohibition law that prohibited the manufacture or sale of liquor in any quantity except "for 'medicinal and mechanical purposes'"—failed to persuade Tennessee's political leadership. In his successful 1855 gubernatorial campaign, Andrew Johnson opposed the adoption of such a law because it would be, he explained, not only

\textsuperscript{20} Loveland, \textit{Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order}, 144–45.

\textsuperscript{21} Smith, \textit{Cross and Flame}, 230–31. Temperance opposition was not limited to Nashville, however. The Reverend Mr. Huffaker, a Methodist local preacher in the Seven Islands community in the mountains east of Knoxville took offense at a temperance address by Parson Brownlow, the champion of the Sons of Temperance, and challenged him to a debate. Their debate never materialized, so Brownlow quickly moved on to verbal spars with "a 'hard-shell' Baptist Minister, the Reverend Mr. Witt," who lived in East Tennessee, twelve miles northeast of Dandridge. Much of the debate centered around Witt's efforts to prove scriptural approval of the manufacture, sale, and consumption of alcohol and Brownlow's opposition to all three. Conklin, "Parson Brownlow Joins the Sons of Temperance, Part I," 189–94.

\textsuperscript{22} Loveland, \textit{Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order}, 158.
contrary to the Tennessee constitution but also “incompatible with the rights and privileges of freemen.” Unlike many of the other Confederate states, Tennessee did not enact a temporary prohibition law during the Civil War, so it emerged from the war with the same relatively loose laws to license the manufacture and sale of liquor that were in place before the war. But there was an important difference: William G. “Parson” Brownlow—the vituperative Whig-turned-Know-Nothing politician, sometimes Methodist preacher, outspoken Unionist and critic of the Confederacy, as well as a fervent supporter of the Sons of Temperance—became the state’s first Reconstruction governor after military governor Andrew Johnson moved to Washington as Lincoln’s vice president in 1865. Parson Brownlow continued his antebellum attacks on Demon Rum, now from the larger stage of the governor’s office and with the increased power of a strong governorship and mostly accommodating reconstruction legislature.

From his earliest messages to the legislature, Brownlow urged action against an enemy he labeled “King Alcohol.” Citing the harmful effects of intemperance on the armies during the war, the Parson warned that “it is now transferring its baneful influence to the walks of civil life, demoralizing the young and rising generations and sending to

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23 Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics*, 7. Johnson’s opponent, Whig candidate Meredith P. Gentry, did endorse a local option provision. In a position they would reverse in the years after the war, prohibition leaders in 1855 wanted a stronger, state-wide ban, and thus were unsatisfied with Gentry’s answer to the liquor evil.

24 Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics*, 8n21. There were, however, various military orders to prohibit or restrict sale of alcohol to soldiers or government employees during the war. Grace Leab, “Tennessee Temperance Activities, 1870–1899,” *East Tennessee Historical Society Papers*, 21 (1949), 52.

premature graves many of our best and most useful citizens.” In response to the continued threat of alcohol, Brownlow urged the General Assembly to “dry up” the state through “the imposition of such a tax upon the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits as will amount to prohibition of the traffic.”26 As governor, Brownlow aligned himself with Congressional reconstruction and against the more conservative policies of his old Tennessee political opponent and now President Andrew Johnson.27 His support for legislative temperance and prohibition gained him some favor among antebellum temperance advocates, but his political position as head of the state’s Radicals and subsequent endorsement of black social and political rights did little to remove old accusations about the linkages of temperance and abolition as both products of radical New Englanders.28

Even some pro-southern partisans like Tennessee Methodist Sterling M. Cherry would seem to agree with Brownlow’s assertions about the increased use of alcohol during the war. Cherry quoted a Tennessee Confederate officer who attributed southern defeat to whiskey: “with the exception of the reverse at Fort Donelson, we were defeated not by the Federals but by whiskey.”29 Such sentiments could possibly spur Tennessee evangelicals on to support stronger temperance or even prohibition efforts, but they

29 Quoted in Smith, Cross and Flame, 231.
remained reluctant about identifying particular churches or denominations too closely with what many people in the state still considered a political question only. Political tensions took on heightened significance when grafted onto the pressing questions of the relationship between northern and southern branches of the great evangelical bodies like the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians who, unlike their political counterparts, were not quickly returned to denominational unity by the end of the war. Parson Brownlow, though he had been an ardent antebellum defender of slavery, was best known among southern evangelicals as both an zealous Unionist, the leader of Tennessee’s Radical Republican administration, and supporter of the northern Methodist Episcopal Church. In the fall of 1865, as Brownlow was assuming his post as Tennessee’s first postwar civil governor, senior southern Methodist bishops addressed their ministers and congregants a letter expressing their "apprehension that a large proportion, if not a majority of northern Methodists have become incurably radical." Charging that the northern wing of the church had "incorporated social dogmas and political tests into their church creeds," the southern bishops admitted that they could "anticipate no good result from even entertaining the subject of re-union with them." Therefore, they concluded, southern Methodists should "preserve our church in all its vigor and integrity, free from entangling alliances with those whose notions of philanthropy and politics, and social economy are liable to give an ever varying complexion to their theology."\(^{30}\)

Eastern Tennessee, which harbored far more Unionist sentiment than the other two-thirds of the state and was, not surprisingly, Parson Brownlow’s political power

base, also witnessed the continuing strength of the northern Methodists throughout Reconstruction and postbellum years. An eastern correspondent reported to the Nashville Christian Advocate in 1872 on the continued agitation between representatives of the two denominational divisions, criticizing northern Methodists for their inability to separate religion and politics. Middle Tennessee southern Methodists purposefully positioned themselves in opposition to northern Methodists like Brownlow who, they charged, commingled religious and political questions. Wishing to avoid even the appearance of meddling in political questions, the Tennessee Annual Conference membership in 1874 voted three to one against a proposal to add total abstinence to the list of General Rules to be observed by all ministers and members.

Although antebellum Tennessee Methodists and Baptists had begun to take a stand against not just drunkenness but any use, however moderate, of alcohol, the political climate of the sectional crisis, Civil War, and Reconstruction sapped support, at least among members of the southern denominations, for explicit political and legal action by churches to limit or ban alcohol sale and consumption. Parson Brownlow’s support for temperance legislation did little to alter conservatives’ connection of temperance with Radicalism. Interestingly however, the decline of open political strife following Tennessee’s “redemption” by conservative Democrats in 1869 combined with the continued hostility between northern and southern wings of the major evangelical denominations to create a fertile atmosphere for the growth of temperance sentiment among southern evangelicals. Although the southern churches and citizens would remain

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32 Smith, Cross and Flame, 231.
divided on the proper role of religion and preachers in politics, there was a perceptible increase in temperance and then prohibition sentiment in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and opening years of the twentieth.

**FROM TEMPERANCE TO PROHIBITION WITHIN CHURCH AND STATE**

In the first two decades following the Civil War and the restoration of native southern Democrats to political control of the Volunteer State in 1869, temperance forces gained power in both civic and religious assemblies but repeatedly came up short on their pledges to dry up Tennessee. Following Reconstruction a social, cultural, and political climate that privileged white males’ individual liberty and encouraged loyalty to the conservative Democratic party emerged. As state liquor interests allied themselves with the Democratic party, anti-drink advocates faced enormous obstacles to any desires for legislative prohibition in Tennessee. Southern evangelical leaders likewise struggled to differentiate themselves from the northern wings of their denominations while still claiming relevance to a southern society greatly disrupted by the war and its accompanying social upheavals. Temperance activities grew out of the continuing sectional tensions that followed the end of the Civil War, as southern evangelicals attempted to reassure themselves of their status as God’s chosen nation—even after defeat—by recreating the especially religious southern society they claimed had existed before the war. Efforts to re-sanctify southern society led many postbellum Tennessee evangelicals first to increase discipline within their own ranks and then to move beyond
moral suasion and the boundaries of their own churches to preach morality—or at least temperance—to Tennessee citizens as a whole.

William G. "Parson" Brownlow—although he had shifted with the political winds from his antebellum defense of slavery to an outspoken advocacy of the Radical social and political agenda—used the bully pulpit of the governor's office to resume pushing his old campaign against the sale and consumption of alcohol. He made explicit his temperance beliefs and prohibition desires in each of his biannual messages to the Tennessee General Assembly, calling on them to enact high enough taxes on liquor to drive it from the state or at the very least prohibit its sale or consumption near chartered schools. Despite his usual support in Tennessee's Reconstruction General Assembly, Brownlow's anti-alcohol proposals were all rebuffed by the legislature.33 Although Brownlow was unsuccessful in enacting his liquor-control bills, the introduction of a number of similar though likewise unsuccessful bills initiated in the General Assembly suggest that anti-drink forces had at least some support in the legislature.34

In addition to temperance work within churches, civil anti-alcohol forces moved along two fronts in the years following the end of Reconstruction: voluntary societies and legal petitions to the legislature. On the voluntary front, state branches of the Sons of Temperance, Order of Good Templars, Cadets of Temperance, Friends of Temperance, as well as a number of local and women's groups—after 1882 including local chapters of

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33 Conklin suggests three possible explanations for Brownlow's failure to successfully push prohibitory laws through an otherwise compliant Radical legislature: either they were too busy with more pressing issues such as the physical rebuilding of the state's infrastructure, his control over the Radicals was political only, or that he wisely chose not to push other radical and moral policies when his racially and politically radical plans were already engendering enough opposition. "Parson Brownlow and the Sons of Temperance, Part II," 304–305.
34 Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 8–9.
the Women’s Christian Temperance Union—pushed Tennesseans to pledge abstinence, pressured saloonkeepers to close shop, and worked to create what one organization termed “a healthy temperance sentiment” throughout the state.\textsuperscript{35} While the voluntary societies worked on individual Tennesseans by urging them to pledge abstinence, the societies and a number of other reformers petitioned the legislature in favor of more stringent legal restrictions on alcohol manufacture, sale, and use. Like crusaders elsewhere in the nation, most southern legal efforts centered on securing local option legislation that would allow counties or local communities to vote themselves dry and prohibit the sale of alcohol within their bounds. During the 1870 constitutional convention, delegates made two different efforts to add a local option prohibition clause in Tennessee’s new constitution, but both efforts were rebuffed by narrow margins.\textsuperscript{36} The failure of the delegates to include a local option prevision, combined with the enactment of a constitutional requirement that all laws had to be public and general—that is, applying to the whole state, not just an individual place or class—left some doubt in the minds of future legislators as to the constitutionality of local option laws. Nevertheless, anti-alcohol forces deluged the General Assemblies of 1871 and 1873 with petitions favoring various prohibition laws. A bill passed the legislature that would have required potential saloonkeepers to apply to the county court clerk for a license that could only be granted after an election in which qualified voters of the incorporated town could vote “for license” or “against license.” The bill, entitled “an act to provide against the evils resulting from the sale of intoxicating liquors in the state,” passed both houses but

\textsuperscript{35} Leab, “Tennessee Temperance Activities,” 55 (quotation) and 52–68.

\textsuperscript{36} Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 9; and Leab, “Tennessee Temperance Activities,” 57.
was vetoed by Governor John C. Brown. In his veto, Brown cited two problems: one narrowly procedural, the other constitutional. The most important legacy of Brown’s veto for the long-term anti-alcohol campaign was his assertion that local option laws, by their very nature of appealing to the people in a given district, were an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power from the General Assembly.

Although future legislators would introduce local option laws, the anti-prohibition forces only stood to gain from the legal and constitutional doubt surrounding such measures. Many argued that prohibitory laws were a waste of legislative effort, easily stymying anti-alcohol laws in a state low on funds and suspicious of excessive governance. As one historian of Tennessee’s Prohibition campaigns has concluded, Governor “Brown’s veto undoubtedly contributed to the defeat of later attempts to enact local option measures in Tennessee and forced anti-saloon leaders to resort to promoting another kind of law.” Governor Brownlow had campaigned for the prohibition of liquor sales near schools, explaining that the state “owe[d] it to the cause of Christian morality, to the cause of popular education, and to the young and rising generation, to separate liquor shops from our institutions of learning.”

Although the Reconstruction Legislature did not indulge the Parson, the schoolhouse became an important agent in the battle against alcohol.

Efforts in the 1870s to separate schools from saloons set a precedent for legislative prohibition that would eventually dry up the state. George R. Fairbanks, the

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37 The procedural problem was that the bill presented to Brown to sign had originated in the Senate, but when transmitted to the House was adopted in place of a similar House bill. Because the Senate bill was not read and passed on three different days in the House, Brown argued, it was invalid. Leab, “Tennessee Temperance Activities,” 57–58.
38 Leab, “Tennessee Temperance Activities,” 58; and Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 9.
39 Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 9 and 8.
business manager, tireless promoter, and early historian of the University of the South—an Episcopal college in Sewanee, on the Cumberland plateau, in rural southeastern Tennessee—responded to “the attempts of vicious and willful parties to establish near to, if not on, the domain” of the university “grog shops” by imploring his state legislator to introduce legislation providing for a dry zone surrounding the school. After unsuccessful attempts in 1873 and 1875, Fairbanks succeeded in 1877, securing passage of what has since been termed the Four Mile Law, which prohibited “the sale of all intoxicating beverages within four miles of any chartered institution of learning outside an incorporated town.” Fairbanks had sought a law to dry up Sewanee, but since the 1870 state constitution required all laws to be general, the Four Mile Law applied to all private chartered schools outside of incorporated areas. The law’s rural limitation suggests the reason for its passage: as Fairbanks explained, since the law did “not affect the cities and incorporated towns, the liquor dealers [had] no direct interest in having it repealed.” The 1887 General Assembly would expand the law to apply to all schools, public or private, outside of incorporated areas.

Although the Four Mile Law was effective at drying up the Tennessee countryside, adamant prohibitionists wanted a more effective ban to cover the whole state. Many of the voluntary associations, as well as the newly formed state chapter of

40 George R. Fairbanks, History of the University of the South (Jacksonville, Fla.: H. & W. B. Drew Co., 1905), 169.
41 Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 10–11. Fairbanks only recounts the unsuccessful attempt in 1875, noting that the bill was all ready to pass when “on its third reading a member, who probably desired to defeat indirectly its passage, moved an immaterial amendment, which was adopted and which then required that the bill should go back to the Assembly for concurrence in the amendment, but it was on the last day of the Legislature and was not reached, so failing to become a law.” Fairbanks, History of the University of the South, 167.
42 Fairbanks, History of the University of the South, 168.
the WCTU, banded together in the Tennessee Temperance Alliance to agitate for a prohibitory constitutional amendment. The proposal, which would allow the General Assembly to pass laws and set fines for violations of the charge that “no person shall manufacture for sale or keep for sale as a beverage any intoxicating liquors whatever, including wine, ale, and beer,” was passed by the legislatures of 1885 and 1887. A state-wide referendum in the fall of 1887 resulted in a tally of 135,197 against and 117,504 for the amendment—a strong showing, but a defeat nonetheless for the prohibition forces. In the wake of their 1887 constitutional defeat, the anti-saloon forces turned their attention back to local option laws and extending the effective range of the Four Mile Law to successively larger cities until by the early twentieth century it applied to the whole state—rural and urban.

By the time of the 1887 prohibition referendum, there was strong support within many churches for the constitutional amendment, but the continuing legacies of the Civil War and Reconstruction made it difficult for any of the southern churches to speak with one voice on temperance and prohibition. Tennessee evangelicals continued their antebellum process of church discipline for drunkenness while taking an increasingly hard line against church members involved with alcohol in any capacity. Through the last decades of the nineteenth century, many Tennessee Methodist and Baptist churches began to recognize the increasingly interconnected nature of the New South society and sought to ease the individual church member’s duty to resist alcohol by removing the

44 Ibid., 62.
45 Leab, “Tennessee Temperance Activities,” 63; and Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 32–60. Much of the support for prohibition came from heavily Republican East Tennessee. A map showing the distribution of votes for and against the proposal can be found in Roger L. Hart, Redeemers, Bourbons, and Populists: Tennessee, 1870–1896 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 105.
temptation from the surrounding society. Increasingly identifying the boundaries and moral standards of the church with the entire society, many state evangelicals led and joined the campaigns for effective prohibitory legislation in Tennessee and became the principle spokespersons for the unsuccessful 1887 prohibition referendum.

Postwar Tennessee evangelicals continued their antebellum practices of church discipline of members for moral offenses. Stephen V. Ash notes that middle Tennessee congregations supervised the behavior of members “with renewed energy and determination” in the years following the war. A Lincoln County Baptist urged his brethren to “mark them which cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine” of the church, while another church resolved to promptly investigate “members who indulge in dancing intoxication profane language & such irregularitys [that] bring a reproach on religion.”

Studies of several southern states suggest a decline in the practice of church discipline in the decades following the Civil War. There was, however, a coordinate increase in the scope of alcohol-related offenses that could incur the sanctions of church discipline. Whereas antebellum church trials disciplined members for drunkenness or operating a saloon, postbellum churches increasingly chastised members for any involvement in the manufacture, sale, transport, or consumption of alcohol. Memphis Tennessee Baptist editor James R. Graves appears to have been more strict than some of his brethren in this matter: while the Richmond (Va.) Religious Herald defended grocers

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46 Ash, Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 245–46.
47 Randy J. Sparks, On Jordan’s Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773–1876 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 154, notes that intoxication was the most common charge leveled against white males, though it declined from a high of 45.8 percent of total charges in the decade 1820–30 to only 20.7 percent in 1860–70. Ted Owenby marks a similar decrease in alcohol-related offenses in the last years of the nineteenth and first years of the twentieth centuries. Owenby, Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865–1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 205–7.
who sold spirits as no more culpable than “the farmer who grew the grain,” the “cooper who manufactured the barrel,” or the “mechanic who made the still,” Graves argued that anyone associated with the manufacture or sale of liquor ought to come under church censure.  

Baptist and Methodist associations throughout the South struggled internally over prohibition questions in the late nineteenth century. Several Methodists, especially though not exclusively those associated with the second-blessing or holiness movements, led a charge for Wesleyan perfectionism and urged higher standards of human behavior and moral accountability within the church. Anti-alcohol forces mounted several campaigns throughout the 1870s and 1880s to rid the church of any complicity with the saloon and its noxious product. Some members continued to argue for the prohibition to fall only on drunkenness, not moderate use of alcohol. Senior southern Methodist bishop Lovick Pierce warned that efforts to change the church rules in favor of total abstinence were not what Wesley intended and, moreover, were an effort to substitute human for scriptural standards. Nashville Christian Advocate editor Thomas Summers Sr. stepped into the fray, warning both sides that such agitation could only harm the church and urging a return to the church’s “great business [of] saving souls—everything else must be

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48 Spain, At Ease in Zion, 183–86.  
49 One of the earliest and leading advocates of strict individual abstinence within the Tennessee Conference of the MECS was Benjamin F. Haynes, who would later formally split with the Methodist hierarchy and help to organize the church of the Nazarenes, a holiness organization. Smith, Cross and Flame, 231–32. Christopher Owen notes that Georgia Holiness advocates, conditioned by their southern environment and the lingering controversies over preachers and politics associated with Reconstruction most often embraced “a narrower, though deeply felt, conception of ‘personal holiness’” instead of “the ‘social holiness’ that often characterized the movement in the North.” Christopher H. Owen, The Sacred Flame of Love: Methodism and Society in Nineteenth-Century Georgia (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 137.
made tributary to this." In spite of Summers' warnings, the anti-alcohol agitation continued within the church, with proposals throughout the 1870s to broaden the rules to include sanctions against any member in any way involved in the manufacture, sale, transport, or consumption of alcohol. Fifteen years later, editor Oscar Fitzgerald argued in the pages of the Christian Advocate that temperance could be a coordinate part of soul-saving. Instead of a proliferation of temperance organizations, Fitzgerald called on “the laity of the Church [to] unite with the ministry in the eradication of the evil from the heart and life of the Church, and then labor for the conversion of men.” All the justification for abstinence within the church was “included in the scope and purpose of the gospel, and is therefore to be provided for in the organization and action of the Church.” The 1886 General Conference finally enacted a rule requiring strict abstinence provisions in the church’s General Rules.

The Baptists’ congregational heritage and organizational structure made such top-down tactics as favored by the Methodists difficult, but various state conventions and finally the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution in 1896 strongly encouraging member churches and organizations not to retain “in the fellowship of a Baptist church”

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50 Pierce in Nashville Christian Advocate, August 29, 1874, quoted in Hunter Dickinson Farish, The Circuit Rider Dismounts: A Social History of Southern Methodism, 1865-1900 (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1938), p. 310-11n5. Summers was inspired by several contemporary issues confronting the MECS, not just alcohol, but including questions about reunion with the northern branch of Methodism and reorganizing the episcopal supervision system in the southern church. “Schemes of fraternization, adjustments of Church-polity, plans, platforms—all may be very well, in their place—but that is a very subordinate one. Our great work is to save the souls of men. Our fellow creatures are living and dying in sin—they are every moment in danger of hell. It is our work to deliver them from going down into the pit. ...This is our great work, compared with which every thing else is unimportant.” [Summers], “Saving Souls,” Nashville Christian Advocate, August 22, 1874.


52 Farish, Circuit Rider Dismounts, 314.
any “person ... who engages in the manufacture or sale of alcoholic liquors.” But instead of stopping there, where most southern Baptists had been at least since the 1850s, the new resolution included an advisement also to exclude any member “who invests his money in the manufacture or sale of alcoholic [sic] liquors, or who rents his property to be used for distilleries, wholesale liquor houses, or saloons. Nor do we believe that any church should retain in its fellowship any member who drinks intoxicating liquors as a beverage, or visits saloons or drinking places for the purpose of such indulgence.”

Demonstrating the difficulty encountered by Baptist associations attempting to dictate rules to member churches, the Union Association of Baptists in rural Middle Tennessee in 1890 had to revise a temperance resolution, amending the clause requiring churches to disfellowship members who used, manufactured, or sold alcohol to only a recommendation. Although the Memphis Tennessee Baptist editor had urged such a course from at least 1872, the state convention did not adopt an explicit resolution encouraging member churches “to discipline [members] for whisky-selling and drunkard making as well as for drunkenness itself” until 1893.

Southern evangelicals were moving, in the last years of the nineteenth century, toward a firmer stance against alcohol within the churches. In spite of a larger range of potentially “churchable” offenses (those for which an errant member might be disfellowshipped or excluded from the church), the frequency of church discipline, even for drinking offenses, seemed to be on the decline. Ted Owenby suggests several

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53 Quoted in Spain, *At Ease in Zion*, 185. John Eighmy notes that most Baptist churches by the 1850s included in their doctrinal statement a requirement that members “abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks.” *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 51.

54 Union Association of Baptists *Minutes*, 1890, p. 10. Microfilm publication 836, SBHLA.

55 Tennessee Baptist Convention *Minutes* 1893, p. 40. Reel 2, microfilm publication 239, SBHLA.
explanations for this apparent contradiction. Dismissing explanations that either church members had learned to control their behavior or that the churches had “made peace with their culture” and “no longer felt the need or ability to judge each other’s behavior,” Owenby argues that southern evangelicals had broadened their vision and the scope of the churches’ authority to include all of the surrounding society. Citing the increase in civic moral legislation endorsed by evangelicals, Owenby has suggested that “as churches were losing interest in disciplining the behavior of their members, they were trying to reform the behavior of all Southerners.”\(^{56}\) Such moral legislation, he continues, “showed that evangelicals were coming to terms with a larger world by trying to conquer it.” It was a new era in the relationship between evangelical religion and society, as southern church members expressed their lack of satisfaction with attempts to “separate themselves from the sinful excesses of nonevangelical behavior, they now tried to stamp out many sins altogether. By giving up church discipline, evangelicals were not giving in to the world by redefining their place in it.”\(^{57}\) However persuasive Owenby’s explanation of the discrepancy in discipline cases can be, it remains unsatisfying on at least two fronts. In addition to his smoothing of the tensions within the churches over the process of more clearly embracing a social mission, his explanation begs the question of why and how southern evangelicals came to embrace a social mission when they did after most had so adamantly opposed one in the immediate post-war years.

The first of these concerns will be in part addressed below, in the section on “Political Preachers” about the controversies within Tennessee Baptist and Methodist

\(^{56}\) Owenby, *Subduing Satan*, 207.

churches over the political actions of church members and leaders in the 1887 prohibition amendment campaign, support for the Prohibition Party in 1890, and overtly political actions by the minister-leaders of the Local Option and Anti-Saloon Leagues. The second concern, arguably more difficult to pin down exactly, is resolvable by a resort to some combination of at least three different explanations. First, the growing acceptance by evangelical Tennesseans of an extension of church moral and disciplinary standards to the larger society was part of a larger Lost Cause effort to sanctify society and recreate the southern apologists' notion of the especially religious South. Secondly, it was a further outgrowth of the competition both between the northern and southern wings of the major denominations and among the various southern denominations—an evangelical desire constantly to increase the membership of the church that led nineteenth-century church officials to call for the church repeatedly to justify its relevance to the newly emerging society. Finally, it resulted from the post-Reconstruction decline of outside pressure on the southern church to remain apolitical in an effort to distinguish itself from the abolitionism and radical social and racial ideas of northern evangelicals.

One part of the explanation, as suggested above in Chapter II, has to be the post–Civil War social, religious, and cultural phenomenon of the Lost Cause ideology that put such a premium on the idea of an especially religious antebellum South. This was, in part, a continuation of the sectional war, no longer with guns but now with words. Southern ministers, noting the increase of drunkenness following the Civil War, argued that the "liquor interests were Northern based, and thus an alien, corrupting force"—an argument somewhat hard to sustain in bourbon and whiskey-rich Tennessee and Kentucky. Nevertheless, southern ministers like H. A. Scomp argued that the southern
armies had drunk less than any other before them and canonized Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee as "models of sobriety." Furthermore, when northern reformers sought to claim credit for the postwar temperance and prohibition campaigns in the South, Scomp and others pointed proudly to the southern temperance efforts of the 1830s and 1840s as further proof of southern sanctity.\(^{58}\)

In their efforts to understand and accept military defeat, southern evangelical apologists preached that the South was still God's chosen people and defeat was, perversely, a sign of his favor. As key historians of the Lost Cause movement have pointed out, various social and political classes appropriated the Lost Cause rhetoric and ideology in support of their own racial, political, and social agendas, but I would suggest that the ideology had an important religious dimension as well.\(^{59}\) If they truly believed that defeat and the suffering of Reconstruction were really signs of God's favor (in the sense of an immanent God who acted in the world and cared enough to punish them for certain moral shortcomings and as a challenge to more ambitious evangelism), Tennessee evangelicals would be motivated to take new efforts to spread the Gospel and attempt to evangelize society however possible. One sign of a healthy church, they believed, was a growing membership list—not just from foreign missionary efforts but in their own


\(^{59}\) Wilson deals more explicitly with religion, although because of his focus on the "civil religion" aspects of the Lost Cause, he makes little effort to separate the efforts of ministers of the Lost Cause from ministers of the Gospel (some but by no means all of whom, of course, were one in the same). Neither Wilson nor Gaines Foster has much to say on Prohibition directly, although Wilson does add a couple of paragraphs and Foster's explanation of the malleability of the Lost Cause ideology for present political and social purposes has clearly influenced my thinking in this matter. Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 87–88; and Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
Tennessee back yard as well. On several occasions, Nashville Christian Advocate editor and future MECS bishop Oscar Fitzgerald stressed the importance of the church being relevant to modern society and not falling behind in either spiritual or physical affairs. Bristling at the growth of temperance and social relief organizations, Fitzgerald argued for the “sufficiency of the church” in the temperance cause. Further, he warned that “[t]he Church must reassert her divine commission and resume her temporal function, in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and those that are in prison” or else it must “be prepared for the most disastrous results. ... If she will devolve this work upon other organizations, she must be content to let them take her place in the hearts of mankind.” Concluding his essay on the “Temporal Functions of the Church,” Fitzgerald asserted that “Our Christ must have his due. Let every dollar expended in doing good bear his image and superscription. His Church can do his work.” Heading into the winter of 1880, Fitzgerald admonished his readers to see charity as an opportunity for conversion: “Give [the poor] food, raiment, and shelter, and then they will hear your prayers, songs, and sermons.” A correspondent followed up on Fitzgerald’s argument, warning that “the religion, by whatever name it may be called, and whatever pretensions it may make, that does not concern itself for the physical welfare of suffering humanity, will not be believed when it expresses great concern for the salvation of souls.” Good works would increase the stature of the church and possibly garner new members.

60 [Fitzgerald], “Sufficiency of the Church,” 8.
A third possible explanation for the growth of temperance activism within Tennessee Methodist and Baptist churches begins with an acknowledgement of the lingering sectional tensions as described above but stresses that the end of Reconstruction to some degree lessened the outside pressure on the southern churches. Without so much incentive to appear different from the northern, radical, political churches, southern evangelicals could more safely enter politics on the side of moral questions. As Christopher Owen has noted in his study of Georgia Methodists, “With slavery and Reconstruction gone, social demands for a nonpolitical church had weakened. Prohibition campaigns aroused opposition, but desire for white unity, though strong, no longer stifled Wesleyan aspirations to use government to ‘reform morals.’”

Tennessee Baptists and Methodists were still not united on the propriety of denominational action in political spheres, and pro-liquor spokesmen often criticized preachers for straying out of their proper realm, but the charge was no longer as potent as during the crisis of abolitionism or radical Reconstruction and the rule of Parson Brownlow.

Tennessee evangelicals of the late nineteenth century did not just move towards stronger standards of individual temperance within the churches, they also moved out to both urge temperance and self-restraint in the larger public. They accomplished this mission in part by lending moral and physical support as well as membership to the

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64 Owen, Sacred Flame of Love, 181. Owen is very attentive to the various factions of modernizers and traditionalists within Georgia Methodism, suggesting further that the death of an older generation of conservative bishops and church leaders in the first decades after the Civil War further prepared the ground for a new class of “progressive” and “neoconservative” leaders, most symbolized by Atticus Haygood and Warren Akin Candler respectively. Haygood would play a prominent role in stirring up southern Methodists’ interest in public education; Candler would prove one of the chief critics of Chancellor Kirkland and Vanderbilt University, eventually leading the charge to abandon Vanderbilt in favor of a new Emory University funded by his millionaire brother. Ibid., 151.
state's many voluntary temperance organizations, even as they strove to make the churches strong temperance societies at the same time. Far more public were the efforts of various itinerant revivalists—most notably the flamboyant Georgia Methodist Sam Jones—to convert Tennessee sinners, drinkers, and whiskey-peddlers. Jones, himself a recovering alcoholic, made several appearances in Nashville and other cities to lead revivals emphasizing individual responsibility and morality while criticizing much of modern society, especially alcohol. With endorsements from Knoxville and Nashville ministers, as well as strong support from Nashville Christian Advocate editor Oscar Fitzgerald, Jones returned to Tennessee year after year to spread his temperance and revival messages.65 Boastfully denouncing saloon keepers and liquor dealers as “wallowing hogs” and “puking dogs,” Jones set up his Gospel Tent right on Broad Street, just up the hill from Nashville’s thriving saloon district. Captain Thomas G. Ryman, Jones’s most famous convert of the Nashville meetings, banned the transport or sale of liquor on his extensive fleet of steamboats, closed up his Nashville saloon, named one of his ships the Sam Jones, and spearheaded a movement to build the Union Gospel Tabernacle (later renamed the Ryman Auditorium) for Jones to hold future revivals in the city.66 A group of Nashvillians were so enthusiastic about Jones’s beneficial effects on

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66 In addition to housing Jones’s revival services, the auditorium became a frequent public gathering place for religious, political, and entertainment events, housing everything from high
the town that they raised a subscription of funds and offered Jones and his wife a nice house in the city if they would relocate. 67

Though far from united on the subject, some Tennessee evangelicals began calling for legal sanctions against alcohol from the early 1870s and became leaders in the civic campaigns against Demon Rum in the century’s last decades. Methodist David C. Kelley, who was active in the founding and growth of Vanderbilt University, addressed an 1872 temperance sermon to the Tennessee General Assembly, calling on the legislators to notice the great number of crimes caused by alcohol and to “make liquor dealers responsible for the legitimate results of their iniquitous trade.” 68 Several correspondents wrote to the Nashville Christian Advocate favoring local option laws that would allow individual communities to prohibit alcohol sales. In an open letter to the legislature, W. Perkins cited financial statistics showing the cost of alcohol to the state in lost productivity, in cost of prosecution and imprisonment of drunkards, and in lives thrown away to the bottle. 69 J. S. Thomas reported in the Memphis Baptist that his local association had recently passed a resolution in favor of local option laws, praying for the paper to reprint their principle to “Let the voice of the people rule in everything, and say whether liquor shall be sold in their county or not.” 70 An unsigned editorial in the Baptist

67 The group of citizens offered Jones a furnished home valued around $10,000 so he would hold more frequent revivals in the city. Jones, who was dining with Capt. Ryman at the time, declined, citing family interests and loyalty to Georgia. [Fitzgerald], “Sam Jones Declines,” Nashville Christian Advocate, June 6, 1885, p. 17.
68 Kelley, quoted in Farish, Circuit Rider Dismounts, 315n1.
a few months later gave not only the paper’s explicit support for a local option law but also an explanation of why evangelicals should be interested in securing such a law:

But members of churches hold important relations to government as citizens, and these relations create certain political and civil obligations and duties. While a Christian man looks to the good order, purity, and integrity of his church, he is equally bound to look to the good order, purity and moral healthfulness of the society in which he lives. The State has claims upon him which he cannot rightfully ignore. In his political sphere he is a law-maker, and he is responsible to God and to conscience for the laws he makes.

It is in view of these facts that we urge the Baptists of Tennessee, as good, Christian citizens, to put themselves on record as the friends and supporters of the proposed Local Option Law.71

Reverend E. E. Folk, J. R. Graves’s successor at the Baptist newspaper (renamed the Baptist and Reflector when it moved to Nashville in 1889) would become an even more outspoken advocate of personal temperance and legal prohibition, using the paper as a strong anti-alcohol information network.

As he was in the realm of education, Methodist editor Oscar Fitzgerald also proved an important transitional figure in Tennessee evangelicals’ relationship to alcohol and politics. Though a strong advocate of personal restraint and individual abstinence, and even in favor of church activism to encourage temperance among others, Fitzgerald warned his readers about letting their temperance activism overshadow or obscure what

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71 Baptist editor J. R. Graves may have been out of the state when this article was published, so it not entirely certain that he wrote it. He had, however, already expressed favor of stricter temperance discipline within the church, so an extension of this nature is not unreasonable, but still problematic given Graves’s Landmarkist tendencies that would militate against a breach of a strict separation of church and state, even for moral legislation such as this. “Temperance Movement,” Memphis Baptist, January 4, 1879, p. 698.
he described as the true mission of the church. In his first years at the editor’s desk, Fitzgerald followed the tone set by his predecessor Thomas O. Summers Sr. who had argued for the importance of conversion and the ineffectiveness of laws to combat liquor: “Laws, however salutary the precepts, and just and summarily executed the penalties, will not effect a radical cure. Society must be regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost.” Fitzgerald similarly cautioned that although “Fragmentary moral reform is well enough as far as it goes, ... Christianity goes deeper, and redeems the whole man. The world needs Christianity, and nothing less.” The southern Methodist church, Fitzgerald explained, was not only “the divinely-appointed agency for the salvation of men,” but was also “adequate to its purpose. When Christians forget this, and direct their time, their enthusiasm, and their money into other channels, they sacrifice the higher for the lower, the stronger for the weaker, the divine for the human.” While warning the church to concentrate more on individual salvation, he did claim a voice for himself and other church spokesmen to comment when civil and political issues were specifically moral in nature. While willing to speak out specifically on alcohol, Fitzgerald was more reticent about less clearly moral questions. Responding to a number of requests to comment on the controversies surrounding Tennessee’s state debt in 1879, Fitzgerald demurred, explaining that the duty of the church would be to teach generally about morality and responsibility but not to comment explicitly because the debt was an expressly political question.

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73 [Fitzgerald], n.t., Nashville Christian Advocate, April 5, 1879, p. 8.
Fitzgerald was not opposed to temperance activism, however, and he gradually took stronger and stronger stands in the Christian Advocate on the need for individual church members to take an active interest in the campaigns. He did, however, call for patience from other reformers to “let the Church do its own work in its own way.” That way, he explained, was the indirect method of social reformation, saving individuals and stirring up a desire for moral laws in society: “When the Church shall have created a Christian conscience in the community, it will be an easy matter to embody its judgment on moral question in suitable civil statutes.” Fitzgerald seemed interested in more direct action by church members and the church in moral and social reform. In a coincidence that was probably not accidental, Fitzgerald used “The Editor’s Fourth of July Meditation” of 1886 to call Tennessee Methodists to action for an upcoming election that would determine the fate of a referendum on a proposed Prohibition amendment to the Tennessee constitution. Arguing that “Christian citizens cannot sit in cushioned pews and sing of heaven, and leave it to others to grapple with the deadly evils that threaten the destruction of social order and the moral life of the nation,” Fitzgerald reminded his churchly readers of their responsibility to act in the world.

Prohibition advocates succeeded in passing the amendment through the General Assembly twice (in 1884 and 1886) as required by the constitution and organized statewide to turn out a strong vote for the 1887 referendum. Fitzgerald, like his Baptist editorial counterpart, turned up the anti-alcohol rhetoric in the Nashville Christian Advocate to mobilize support. Justifying his and the paper’s entry into politics and

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75 [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, August 14, 1886, p. 8.
attempting to head off criticism, Fitzgerald explained that “As long as the protest against
this murderous work [alcohol sale] expressed itself only in praying, preaching, weeping,
and passing condemnatory resolution, the Whisky Devil laughed. Moral suasion, though
a good thing, did not succeed in persuading him to spare an outraged and suffering
humanity.”77

Memphis Baptist editor J. R. Graves was outspoken on the need for individual
abstinence and church supervision of members’ discipline, calling on them to charge
members associated in any way with the liquor trade with “grossly unchristian
conduct—aiding and abetting drunkenness.”78 But he was equally adamant that churches
should not invite Prohibition party meetings within their doors, especially not on
Sundays. Apparently many churches followed Graves’s advice, for when Rev. A. B.
Wright, the circuit-riding chairman of a local branch of the Tennessee Temperance
Alliance, arrived at the Baptist Church in Sunbright, Morgan County, he found that the
Baptist preacher had “locked us out” and forced him to find another place for the
temperance meeting.79 Many Tennessee Baptist associations advocated more direct
political action than did Graves. The Union Association, centered in rural northern
sections of Middle Tennessee, recorded in 1886 “that we favor total prohibition. … that
we favor the submission of the pending question of prohibition to a vote of the people. …
[and] that we will support no man for the Legislature who does not favor prohibition.”80

77 [Fitzgerald], “The Hand-to-Hand Fight Against the Saloon,” Nashville Christian Advocate,
August 13, 1887, p. 1.
78 Quoted in Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 22.
79 Wright diary, quoted in W. Calvin Dickinson, “Temperance,” in West, ed., Tennessee
Encyclopedia of History and Culture, 913.
80 Like their Methodist counterparts, Tennessee Baptists who recorded their opinions were careful
to justify their participation in politics on moral grounds, prefacing their resolution with the
The Tennessee Baptist Convention expressed similar sentiments, calling for the election of representatives who would favor the submission of prohibition to a referendum of the state’s voters.\textsuperscript{81}

**FROM PREACHERS IN POLITICS TO POLITICAL PREACHERS**

Tennessee Baptists and Methodists, though they remained internally divided over the proper limits of political participation in pursuit of moral aims, had nonetheless come a long way by 1887 toward a broader embrace of southern society and were becoming increasingly militant in asserting their place not just in its culture but in its governance as well. In organizing to support the 1887 constitutional prohibition referendum, Tennessee evangelical leaders had to adopt political methods in their unsuccessful efforts to achieve what they saw as moral imperatives of drying up the state. The backlash from the failed 1887 amendment campaigns, combined with other disturbances surrounding the 1890 gubernatorial election, forced Tennessee evangelicals to work through internal denominational dissension and ultimately cleared the way for more united prohibition campaigns after the turn of the century.

After the Tennessee General Assemblies of 1885 and 1887 passed a resolution to call a statewide election to vote for or against adding an amendment to the Tennessee constitution that “No person shall sell, or keep for sale as a beverage any intoxicating liquors whatever,” the civil and religious organizations that comprised the Tennessee

\textsuperscript{81} Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes, 1886, p. 25.
Temperance Alliance mounted massive campaigns to turn out the prohibition vote in 1887.\textsuperscript{82} Tennessee's Baptist and Methodist newspapers, which had gradually moved toward stronger support for more than just individual abstinence and social reform through moral suasion, increasingly adopted a political tone as the special election neared. The Nashville Baptist called for divine sanctions, predicting that "the man who refuses to vote, or the man who votes for the vile traffic with its fruits, will have the curse of God upon him and his family while his generations bear his name."\textsuperscript{83} In addition to his moral arguments for prohibition, Methodist editor O. P. Fitzgerald sounded like an old-time political manager in the weeks leading up to the election, calling on his readers to take up face-to-face canvassing of voters and to beware of political tricks by the anti-prohibitionists.\textsuperscript{84} Methodist convert Capt. Thomas Ryman took out advertisements in Nashville papers specifying some of the tricks prohibitionists should check, including making sure that ballot boxes contained bottoms to them and were empty at the start of the voting period.\textsuperscript{85}

When the votes had been tallied, it was clear that the prohibitionists had lost. In an unusually large turnout, the people had spoken: 145,000 against and 118,000 for prohibition. The Tennessee Annual Conference (MECS) explained away the vote as "a temporary and trifling defeat at which we are in nowise surprised" and reminded its members that "victory is assured to the right, and every step in the battle is a triumph,\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{82} Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 16. Actually, the Temperance Alliance was responsible for much of the pressure applied to the legislatures that passed the resolutions in 1885 and 1887. \\
\textsuperscript{83} "Duty Concerning Prohibition," Nashville Baptist, September 17, 1887, p. 6, quoted in Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 44. \\
\textsuperscript{84} [Fitzgerald], "The Last Weeks of the Campaign," Nashville Christian Advocate, September 10, 1887, p. 8. \\
\textsuperscript{85} Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 54.
however else named by the world.” In this explanation, electoral defeat of the prohibition amendment “was a splendid triumph” and “a necessary step in the education and crystallization of a sentiment of tireless and ceaseless opposition to the saloon iniquity.”

Methodist and Baptist prohibition spokesmen, continuing their alliances with the other temperance forces, promised to continue their efforts to dry up the state by strengthening and extending the Four Mile Law and fighting for a local option provision to encompass the incorporated towns and cities. The 1887 campaigns did cause some dissent within the churches about their too explicit involvement in politics and opened the door for critics both within and outside of official church circles.

Pro-liquor attorney and Democratic politician John J. Vertrees mounted an impressive campaign to discredit the prohibitionists, marshalling political, racial, and gendered arguments to support his case. The prohibition effort, he warned, may be led by “true prohibitionists and political Methodist priests” marching under “banners … blazoned with the legend of God,” but they were only fronts for “the Republican, the ambitious place hunter, the woman’s rights shrieker, the fanatic, and the independent.”

In addition to appeals to Democratic (white-solidarity) loyalty, the anti-prohibitionists also dredged up old sectional animosities, proclaiming that the prohibition idea originated

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86 Tennessee Annual Conference (MECS) Journal 1887, p. 22. Much of this sentiment was recorded by Fitzgerald in the days after the election in which he claimed to celebrate defeat because, he argued, the strong showing by the prohibition forces showed the saloon forces that their days were numbered. “The Tennessee Election,” Nashville Christian Advocate, October 8, 1887, p. 8. In a similar fashion, the Tennessee Baptist Convention at its annual session in Jonesboro just after the election noted the defeat of the amendment, but called on Baptists to continue their agitation for personal temperance, the continuation and extension of the Four Mile Law, and the enactment of local option laws. Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes 1887, p. 21.

87 There was some disagreement among the prohibitionist forces about how best to proceed. See Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 58–60.

88 Vertrees quoted in Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 46.
“in the hot beds of New England, where all the ‘isms’ come from that produce strife between Church and State.” Looking back to the antebellum and Reconstruction-era associations of prohibition with abolition, anti-prohibitionist H. C. Snodgrass suggested a connection with the other products of northern radicalism, attempting to make prohibition guilty by association with “free loveism, woman’s suffrage, infidelity, etc.”

Vertrees criticized the political actions of Methodists Fitzgerald, Candler, and Kelley, asking rhetorically “Shall religion control politics? Shall the political preacher hereafter be a factor in the politics of Tennessee?”

In the wake of their 1887 referendum defeat, prohibition advocates found themselves under attack not just from liquor mouthpieces like Vertrees but from some less expected sources as well. David Lipscomb, editor of the Disciples of Christ’s Nashville-based journal the Gospel Advocate, suggested that “where the preachers and women most fully took charge of the canvass, the defeat has been most decided.”

Lipscomb’s charges have to be taken with some caution as to their veracity, but it is important to note that he was not arguing in favor of alcohol as much as he was making a point that using civil authority “to enforce morality and religion is a crime against God and man, and embodies all the elements of religion by law; which is persecution for religious opinion.”

Both Lipscomb’s Disciples of Christ and the southern Presbyterians had been cautious in the campaigns leading up to the 1887 referendum, declining to

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89 Snodgrass, Nashville American, September 24, 1887, quoted in Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 53. In an interesting reversal of metaphors, prohibitionists spoke often of their campaigns as aimed at throwing off the “slavery” to alcohol. The Tennessee Baptist Convention of 1901, after a lengthy harangue against the saloon as the root of all evil and a thoroughly un-American institution, concluded: “As it was with slavery, so shall it be with the saloon. The saloon must go!” Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes, 1901, p. 35.

90 Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 46.

91 Quoted in Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 57-58.
engage political power, even for supposedly moral ends. Lipscomb was intensely interested in the importance of individual responsibility in morality and conversion, practiced total abstinence himself, and argued that alcohol users did not belong in the church, but he nonetheless refused to endorse the prohibitory campaigns. Disciples churches, even more than their Baptist cousins, practiced congregational autonomy. A number of local churches apparently supported prohibition, but Lipscomb’s refusal to let the *Gospel Advocate* become a prohibition organ left the churches without a strong voice in favor of prohibition.92

Answering the charges of Lipscomb, Vertrees, and others that they were advocating an unholy “union of church and state,” Oscar Fitzgerald and other religious prohibition advocates attempted to justify their political actions. In a warning about the “solidarity of evil parties” against morality and good government, Fitzgerald attempted to refocus the arguments over a union of church and state.

> Let no man say we advocate a union of Church and State. We abhor such an unholy marriage; but we more vehemently, if possible, protest against a divorcement of the State and moral principle. We reject political atheism as we do any and all other forms of atheism. We do not ask that Christianity be established by law, but we demand that it shall not be defeated by law.93

92 Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics*, 23–27. Lipscomb’s outspoken stand on the prohibition matter were not out of character with his larger rejection of politics and civil government. Whereas Tennessee Methodists and Baptists were moving toward a broader embrace of their surrounding society and at least faint traces of post-millennialism, Lipscomb and his Disciples clearly maintained a sect mentality in opposition to both the established churches and the larger society. As other Tennessee evangelicals were making overtures to reforming individuals and society, Lipscomb’s apocalyptic worldview gave little room or purpose to social redemption. Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 119–34.

Assistant editor Warren Candler elaborated on Fitzgerald’s argument, repeating that he was opposed to a union of church and state but equally opposed to their total separation. As the finale to his argument, Candler clothed the religious prohibitionists’ arguments with a powerful historical mantle, explaining to his readers that in their position on the necessity of moral legislation, he and Fitzgerald were “strictly in line with the founders of our government.”

Other than charges that the prohibitionists were advocating a “union of church and state,” the most damning accusation Vertrees and other anti-prohibitionists could muster were that the Temperance Alliance was a threat to the ruling Democratic Party. In the mostly one-party post-Reconstruction South, white loyalty to the Democratic Party—the party that had halted Reconstruction—involved multiple layers of loyalty not just to party, but to race, region, and even manhood as well. Historian Paul Harvey has noted the significance of the southern convention of referring to the process of ending Reconstruction and re-establishing native Democratic rule as Redemption. Southern white Baptist ministers, Harvey has shown, played an important role in the 1860s and 1870s of shoring up Democratic rule by transcending their antebellum exclusion from politics to preach “the political ideology of white supremacy from the pulpit.” They clothed the “redeeming” Democratic party with the fabric of moral and racial purity that would retain a strong hold on the postbellum South.

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As a result, many of the earliest temperance and prohibition campaigners were quick to point out that theirs were non-partisan efforts. During his tenure at the Nashville Christian Advocate, Oscar Fitzgerald constantly reiterated that his was a religious, not a political journal, and would support moral issues, not candidates or parties.  

Involvement in party politics, he warned, would diminish the preacher's moral hold on the people: “The voice that is heard haranguing ... crowds of partisans during the week will be shorn of half its potency in the pulpit on Sunday.”  

In fact, Fitzgerald suggested, the minister manned “a battery which he can turn effectively against every evil on earth” and therefore did not need to “plunge into the seething pool of party politics to make himself felt in the great reformatory movements of the times.”  

In the weeks leading up to the 1887 referendum, Fitzgerald was careful to reiterate the position of the Temperance Alliance that they were not voting for or against any party, but for the specific issue of prohibition. “The Methodist Church is set to support or oppose no political party,” he argued. “Its mission is to carry the gospel to men of every party.”

The supposedly non-partisan appeals of the prohibitionists were to at least some degree calculated and politically astute maneuvers. Recognizing the political and social power of the Democratic Party in the post-Reconstruction South, prohibition advocates were reticent to tie their moral campaign to an opposing party and desired instead to work within the existing party structure if that would secure their goal. In their frequent admonishments to members not to blindly vote for a party but to vote their conscience for

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96 See for example, [Fitzgerald], “The Christian Advocate and the Political Parties,” Nashville Christian Advocate, October 4, 1884, p. 8.
97 [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, February 28, 1885, p. 1.
98 [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, March 7, 1885, p. 1.
a moral issue, state Baptist and Methodist leaders were not attempting to overthrow the Democratic Party but rather to force it to adopt their prohibition program. But Tennessee was also a politically divided state, with considerable Republican strength in East Tennessee and some of the larger cities. The 1887 referendum had shown a tendency for East Tennessee Republicans to vote more heavily in favor of prohibition, foreshadowing the possibility of a political revolt if the prohibitionists took a more partisan approach. Former Tennessee Supreme Court justice T. J. Freeman, himself a strong proponent of prohibition, warned Democrats not to identify themselves too closely with liquor, prophesying that Vertrees’s efforts to save liquor by linking it to the Democratic Party would eventually lead to the party’s defeat along with alcohol. The moral issue, he explained, was more powerful than the political, and the “Christian element of the state” would rather bolt the party than associate with alcohol-peddling sinners.

The powerful pull of party loyalty came into sharp relief in Tennessee in 1890, when a Methodist clergyman put his moral crusade squarely into politics by running as the Prohibition Party candidate for governor. Though easily defeated at the polls, the resounding debates inside the churches and in the larger public arena forced state religious leaders and editors into a new round of justifying political action for moral ends. The Prohibition Party was never really a threat, but the 1890 election, while demonstrating the powerful pull of Democratic loyalty, provided a model for a future electoral defection that would eventually split the Democratic Party and sweep a Baptist, prohibitionist, and Republican governor into office in the early twentieth century.

100 Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 56.
101 Ibid., 47.
David Cato Kelley, who had as early as 1872 been active in promoting efforts at legal prohibition, accepted the nomination of the Prohibition Party to run for governor in 1890. The party was national in character but had only appeared in Tennessee in time for the 1888 election. With neither of the major parties coming out strongly for prohibition, Kelley received the endorsement and campaign support of the Nashville-based prohibition paper, the *Issue*. As a regular minister of the southern Methodist church, Kelley attempted to receive the permission of his supervising bishop before leaving his duties at Gallatin. Stating that he believed his acceptance of the nomination “was the highest service [he] could render the kingdom of God,” Kelley asked Bishop J. C. Keener for either permission or, if denied permission, at least a statement of explanation to the Prohibition Party. Keener made an ambiguous reply, telling Kelley that he could not both minister and campaign, but “between these two claims upon you it is left for you to decide which is the stronger, and to act accordingly.”

Kelley’s presiding elder, Benjamin F. Haynes—himself an ardent prohibitionist—counseled Kelley not to give up the nomination, fearing that the anti-liquor press would assume from the action that the Methodist church was not in favor of prohibition.

Kelley secured a retired minister to fill his church at Gallatin and proceeded to canvass the state in favor of the Prohibition Party. Although he led the party to their highest level of support ever in Tennessee, Kelley garnered only 11,000 votes statewide, which paled in comparison to the successful Farmers Alliance-Democrat John P. Buchanan’s tally of 113,000 votes. To add insult to the injury of electoral defeat,

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102 Much of the correspondence was reprinted in the Tennessee Annual Conference *Journal* 1890, pp. 25–33.
Bishop Robert Hargrove, who presided over the Tennessee Conference that year, maneuvered to charge Kelley with deserting his station and had him suspended from the ministry for six months. Although the majority of the members of the Tennessee Conference supported Kelley and his prohibition cause, Hargrove and the other bishops punished him. There were several other tensions swirling among Tennessee Methodists at the time, but at least some of the reason for Kelley’s censure was his open engagement in politics and break with the Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{105}

Tennessee Baptists were similarly stirred by the 1890 political campaign, turning the normally placid and unified reading of the Temperance report at the annual convention into a heated discussion that continued into the pages of the Nashville Baptist and Reflector for the following months. After much discussion on the convention floor, the delegates adopted a short substitute report “That this Convention favors the absolute prohibition of the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks, believing them to be among the greatest obstructions to the growth of the cause of our Heavenly Father.”\textsuperscript{106} Part of the controversy was apparently the perception by some of the delegates that the resolution, though not stating so explicitly, was an endorsement of the Prohibition Party and D. C. Kelley as its candidate for governor.\textsuperscript{107} Beyond any concerns about disloyalty

\textsuperscript{105} John Abernathy Smith suggests the important context of the Holiness movement for the Kelley controversy; arguing that “the bishops’ decision to act against Kelley probably derived less from partisan conviction than from fears that holiness preachers would use Kelley’s candidacy to justify their habit of deserting assignments for evangelistic work elsewhere.” Cross and Flame, 236.

\textsuperscript{106} Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes 1890, p. 40. As with most convention minutes, those from 1890 do not offer the full text, or even the themes of the arguments on the floor, only a listing of some of the discussants. But two of the major figures from the convention—S. E. Jones and G. A. Lofton—continued their argument in the Baptist and Reflector throughout November and December of 1890, offering some idea of the context of the convention debates.

\textsuperscript{107} S. E. Jones, who had written the original report (that was not adopted) criticized the substitute report as “favoring prohibition, or the third party.” G. A. Lofton replied that “It was distinctly
to the Democratic Party, the discussions at the convention and thereafter in the Nashville
*Baptist and Reflector* revolved around differences of opinion concerning the proper level
of political action in pursuit of moral aims. S. E. Jones, a longtime pastor in
Murfreesboro and a social and theological conservative anchor for Tennessee Baptists,
had written the original Temperance report and waged verbal war in the *Baptist and
Reflector* against Baptist entanglement in politics. The only real cure for intemperance,
Jones argued, was

> the persuasive power and regenerating instrumentality of the gospel of
> Jesus Christ. ... It is therefore our honest conviction that the church of
> God and her ministers are not called upon to save men and nations apart
> from the foolishness of preaching; that the solution of this particular
> feature of intemperance, as well as all intemperance, is in the constant,
> persistent, and never ceasing business of preaching repentance toward God
> and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.\(^{108}\)

George Lofton, pastor of Nashville’s Central Baptist Church, countered Jones’s
conservative stance, arguing that “It would be a crime against Christianity and the
nineteenth century for a Baptist Convention under the present circumstances to be silent
upon the great issue of the age—prohibition.”\(^{109}\)

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\(^{108}\) S. E. Jones, “That Temperance Report Again—Reply to Dr. Lofton,”
Nashville Baptist and Reflector, November 13, 1890, p. 4; and G. A. Lofton, “That Temperance
Report Again—Reply to Brother S. E. Jones,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, November 20,
1890, p. 4.

6, 1890, p. 1. For the larger context among southern Baptists over distinctions between
individual and convention endorsements of civil and moral reform, see Spain, *At Ease in Zion*,
42–43.
Jones and Lofton continued their controversy through several issues of the *Baptist and Reflector*, at many times merely talking past each other but nevertheless laying out the parameters of Baptist political involvement that would shape denominational actions for the coming decades. Jones maintained the primacy of individual conversion as the only true purpose for church activity, while Lofton argued that the church did have an interest in present social conditions—at least as far as prohibition was concerned. Both preachers, as well as the *Baptist and Reflector*’s prohibition-supporting editor E. E. Folk, criticized David Kelley’s action of leaving his pastorate for active political office, suggesting that “he already had a higher office than the one he sought” and warning that “his action tended to lower the pulpit in the eyes of the world.”¹¹⁰ But short of entering politics directly, Lofton argued, the church should do everything in its power to fight the saloon: “Passing a resolution in a Baptist Convention, or in a Baptist church, for moral effect against a great moral evil is not dabbling in politics.”¹¹¹

In our organic and official capacity Baptist[s] do not dabble in politics as such; but we preach, and pray, and resolve against public evils which require legislative control or prohibition for the general and universal good; and there should be no creed, or confession, so restricted in the light of the gospel as to repress the great throbbing heart of any denomination of Christians from beating in sympathy with all people for the public and general welfare of humanity and religion.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ [Folk], “The Kelley Case,” Nashville *Baptist and Reflector*, October 16, 1890, p. 8. Jones suggested that if Lofton’s arguments about the importance of prohibition were followed, “then every preacher, church, and Convention may quit the high vocation and go, Kelley-like, into politics.” Lofton replied that “as to preachers taking the stump for prohibition Kelley-like, I think they had better press the subject as a moral revolution in their own pulpits.” Jones, “That Temperance Report Again—Reply to Dr. Lofton,” 4; and Lofton, “That Temperance Report Again—Reply to Brother S. E. Jones,” 4.
As had his antebellum forebears, Lofton argued that churches should eschew politics unless a specific moral principle were involved. "The Church is the guardian of public morals. Hence it is her right—her duty—to denounce public evils," explained a Tennessee Methodist. Even though "her action may influence legislators in favor of virtue and in antagonism to vice," evangelical agitation for morality in civil realms "does not in the slightest degree mix up the Church in partisan politics." ¹¹³ The lasting effects of the 1890 election was not just a denunciation of explicit partisan political action by a minister, but a reassertion of Tennessee evangelicals' and churches' duty to inject morality into governance.

In the decade and a half that followed D. C. Kelley's unsuccessful gubernatorial bid under the Prohibition Party banner, the Tennessee Baptist and Methodist newspapers waged an unrelenting war against the saloons while constantly and consciously assuring their readers they were engaged in a moral campaign, not partisan politics. With Tennessee and southern politics in general disrupted by the challenges of third party politics, the editors feared that attaching the church to any one party would harm its moral voice. ¹¹⁴ While professing to be non-partisan, religious organizations nonetheless

¹¹⁴ O. P. Fitzgerald had been making arguments for non-partisanship throughout the 1880s as well, such as this pronouncement after the defeat of the prohibition referendum: "The political situation is somewhat complex, and the temptation to cross the line of propriety and prudence is subtle and strong. Before he is aware of it a minister of ardent and impulsive temper may find himself committed to a course of action incompatible with his obligations to the Church of God, and calculated to embarrass and weaken him in the discharge of his sacred functions. No political party has a right to the use of his pulpit or his church. He is God's messenger to all men of all parties, and he may not use the authority and influence of his sacred office for this party or the other." [Fitzgerald], "The Spectator," Nashville Christian Advocate, August 4, 1888, p. 1 (quotation); and [Fitzgerald], "The Christian in Politics," Nashville Christian Advocate, June 23, 1888, p. 1.
managed to threaten the existing parties not to dismiss their moral campaigns. As the Tennessee Annual Conference resolved in 1897, although they did “not presume to dictate to our voting members their political affiliations,” they did believe “that no genuine Methodist should be controlled by any political clique or party organization that is managed in the interest of the saloon business.”\textsuperscript{115} The editors of both papers continued to denounce partisan politics even as they adopted increasingly political methods to secure prohibition. They continued to argue that they were organized for an issue, not a party, and desired all of the parties to take up prohibition. Marking the new non-partisan, issued-based approach, Methodist editor E. E. Hoss in 1893 called for the organization of a state temperance convention, announcing that “Whether a man has heretofore been a Democrat, or a Republican, or a Third Party Prohibitionist, is a matter of small importance. The only question now worth considering is whether he is willing to enter into an open fight for the restriction, suppression, and extermination of the liquor business.”\textsuperscript{116}

Though they attempted to remain non-partisan, the minister-leaders of Tennessee’s prohibition movement had to adopt political means to achieve their goals. While professing that the Christian Advocate had “consistently and uniformly opposed the partisan method of dealing with the liquor problem” because “we have always thought, and still think, that the issues involved [were] such as can be best adjusted without any reference to political parties,” E. E. Hoss warned all the political parties that he was watching and intended to publish a record of how each party and member voted

\textsuperscript{115} Tennessee Annual Conference Minutes 1897, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{116} [Hoss], Nashville Christian Advocate, October 5, 1893, p. 1.
on prohibition issues in the General Assembly.\footnote{Hoss}, “A Shameful Spectacle,” Nashville Christian Advocate, May 9, 1895, p. 1. Explaining that “the time has passed when mere sentiment has any value” and “what is needed are votes at the ballot box,” Hoss, along with E. E. Folk of the Nashville Baptist and Reflector and James I. Vance, a prominent Presbyterian minister in Nashville, became the guiding forces and most powerful publicists for the Local Option League (after 1899 affiliated as a state wing of the Anti-Saloon League) in the campaign against the saloon.\footnote{Hoss}, “Local Option League of Tennessee,” Nashville Christian Advocate, July 2, 1896, p. 8. Increasingly conscious of their potential political strength, the individual churches threatened politicians to heed their calls to put an end to the saloon. The 1901 Tennessee Baptist Convention resolved that “we, the representatives of the 135,000 white Baptists in Tennessee, … hereby record our determination not to vote for any man of any party for any office who is known to be or supposed to be in sympathy with the saloon. The saloon must go! Down with the saloon!”\footnote{Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes, 1901, p. 35.}

The prohibition campaigns picked up speed in the new century, and although some Tennessee evangelicals continued to worry about becoming too involved in politics, the majority of the denominational leadership and much of the membership were strongly in favor of banishing the saloon through whatever means necessary.\footnote{[Winton], “The Church and Politics,” Nashville Christian Advocate, May 15, 1908, pp. 3–4.} Ministerial activism for prohibition, much as it had done in 1890, continued to elicit criticism of “political preaching,” but Tennessee Methodists and Baptists by the turn of the century were increasingly assertive not just in religious, but also in civil and political spheres. As the southern Methodist Tennessee Annual Conference resolved in 1900, “The liquor traffic is in politics; and if you are after it, you must go where it is. We do not want
politics brought into our religion, but we do believe that the great need of to-day is
religion in our politics."\textsuperscript{121} Responding to one of many criticisms in anti-prohibition
papers about political preaching, E. E. Folk of the Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector} wrote
“If it be said that the preacher has no business in politics, we reply: It is the business of
the preacher to fight the devil. The devil is in the saloon. The saloon is in politics. And
so it becomes the business of the preacher to go into politics.” In Folk’s recounting of
history, preachers had, by proclaiming their desire to avoid politics, allowed the saloon to
grow. Folk printed an imaginary response to a saloonkeeper’s argument that the church
was “interfering with our business”:

We reply: “You are interfering with our business. Our business as
preachers is to save men. Your business is to damn them. The church and
the saloon are antipodes, opposite extremes. Each tears down what the
other builds up and builds up what the other tears down. Either the church
must put down the saloon or ultimately, logically, the saloon will put
down the church."\textsuperscript{122}

Marching at the head of the Anti-Saloon League, Tennessee Baptists and Methodists led
the charge for prohibition from the pulpit, in the press, and even at the polls.

\textsuperscript{121} Tennessee Annual Conference Minutes, 1900, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{122} [Folk], “Political Preachers,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, February 16, 1905, p. 8. Folk
apparently repeated this line frequently, as can be seen in his private response to a Knoxville
 correspondent that “I claim that I have as much right to go into politics as a saloon keeper
has—no more, no less—It is my business as a minister of the gospel, and should be the business
of all good people to fight the devil. The devil is in the saloon. The saloon is in politics. To get
at the saloon good people must go into politics to a greater or less extent—at least to the extent of
voting.” Folk to M. F. Caldwell, July 22, 1904. Box 1, folder 30. Despite their professions to
shun partisan politics, E. E. Folk, as revealed by his few surviving papers, was a keen political
activist who paid attention to party affairs in his efforts to secure prohibition. See, for example,
the letter from W. S. Hickey, a grocer in Jonesboro, Tennessee, advising Folk on the prospects of
garnering Republican votes in favor of gubernatorial candidate James Frazier. W. S. Hickey to
Folk, June 26, 1904. Box 1, folder 84. Edgar Estes Folk Papers, AR 663, SBHLA.
Their campaigns to enact statewide prohibition were finally successful in 1909, when the General Assembly passed a law over the veto of Democratic governor Malcolm Patterson, extending the Four Mile Law to encompass the entire state. As for the lingering pull of Democratic loyalty, J. H. Freeman’s prediction in the wake of the 1887 referendum defeat proved prescient, for the ultimate victory of statewide prohibition was accomplished through a split of the party. The 1908 shooting death of Edward W. Carmack, vituperative editor of the Nashville Tennessean and the recently defeated prohibition-favoring Democratic candidate for governor, on the streets of Nashville by prominent advisors to the victorious “wet” Governor Patterson galvanized the temperance forces and split the Democratic Party.

Reminding readers that “Senator Carmack has died the death of a martyr to the cause of civic righteousness and public sobriety,” editor George Winton of the Nashville Christian Advocate predicted that “prohibition, the choicest flower in our public life, will spring from his grave and give fragrance and beauty to this fair state of the South.”

After Patterson not only vetoed the state-wide prohibition laws presented to him by the legislature (which easily passed them over the veto) but also pardoned Carmack’s killer (and Patterson’s political crony), the Democratic Party split wide open. With two

\[123\] Winton, “Senator Carmack,” Nashville Christian Advocate, November 13, 1908, p. 1. Winton made a more specific call for action a few weeks later, writing that “The people of Tennessee, bereaved [by] ... the death of one of the State’s most brilliant, experienced, and incorruptible public men, feel that the very least that can be expected as a compensation for the loss of the martyred Carmack is the everlasting banishment from their fair State of the hated liquor traffic.” [Winton], “Prohibition in Tennessee,” Nashville Christian Advocate, December 4, 1908, p. 4. Carmack’s martyrdom even included something of a shrine at the place of his death, as a rural Tennessee Methodist circuit rider recorded in his diary that while in Nashville he “visited the spot where Senator Carmack was murdered and put my arm around the post against which he fell. He did not die in vain. His assassins are being tried in the criminal court at this time.” Book 5, February 3, 1909 diary entry. Jeremiah Walker Cullom (1828–1915), Diary, 1904–15. Diaries, Memoirs, etc. Box 2, folder 9, ac. 68-384, TSLA.
Democratic factions running candidates for governor the following election, Republican prohibitionist and Baptist layman Benjamin Wade Hooper slipped into office in 1910. Giving his unqualified support for Hooper and the prohibition-fusion ticket, *Baptist and Reflector* editor E. E. Folk justified his endorsement: “It is not a question of party, but of temperance, of morality, of honor, of self-preservation.”

The death of Carmack brought forth not just a new round of political action by Tennessee preachers, but also repeated justifications of such action. Methodist George Winton, though still reticent about direct partisan political action by ministers or churches, presented a telling editorial in December 1908 summarizing the evangelical call for a place in private life, and in American public and civil life as well.

In America we have allowed the pendulum, swinging away from State-controlled churches and from religion infected with the hollowness and corruption of politics, to go to the contrary extreme. Many are trying to make out that we have an utterly Godless nation, an essentially secular government. This must never be. The American people, taking them in the largest way, are the most nearly Christian and religious of any whole people in history. That they should consent to a governmental scheme absolutely divorced from all the sanctions of religion and voluntarily ignorant of God himself is an intolerable anomaly. It should never be allowed to be more than the vain dream of a few malignantly atheistical extremists.

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124 In addition to his credentials as “a fine type of a clean, capable, high-class Christian man,” “Capt. Hooper is himself a Baptist, and is a prominent and consistent and influential member of the Newport Baptist church” and a graduate of the Tennessee Baptists’ Carson-Newman College. [Folk], “Capt. Ben W. Hooper,” Nashville *Baptist and Reflector*, August 25, 1910, pp. 4–5. Methodist editor Thomas Ivey was a little less direct in his endorsement of Hooper, but he was careful to legitimize the fusion ticket and the efforts of Independent Democrats as not being disloyal to the South in any way: “one notable feature [of the independent convention] was the large number of ex-Confederate soldiers, many of whom will vote against the regular Democratic nominee for the first time in their lives.” [Ivey], “Independent Democracy in Tennessee,” Nashville *Christian Advocate*, September 23, 1910, p. 7.
And of the Church the voice is her ministry. These men, standing between God and man, untrammeled by ambition, unscorched by corruption, must continue to prophesy. No outcry of damaged demagogue, no squeamishness of influential Christian should be suffered to muzzle them. They are God’s voice to their generation. If he speak not through them, he may not be heard.\textsuperscript{125}

The prohibition battles called evangelicals out of their churches into the public sphere, forcing them to articulate not just their right, but now their duty to act for the preservation of the church and the state.

**Prohibition and Public Education**

In their crusades against alcohol, Tennessee Baptists and Methodists moved to take a more active role in present social and political affairs, awaking as it were to their own political power and responsibility not just to save individual sinners but also to work to eradicate temptations to sin. This active interest in society also played out in evangelical battles over the content and control of public education, but the temperance and prohibition campaigns were even more closely linked to education. In spite of educational historian Andrew Holt’s erroneous assumption that “the dominant political issue in the decade 1903–1913 was prohibition” and that “education was not intimately involved in the issue,” the two in fact went hand-in-hand not just in that decade, but at least as far back as 1877.\textsuperscript{126} The Four Mile Law, which eventually dried up Tennessee by

\textsuperscript{125} [Winton], “Solomon’s Temple,” Nashville Christian Advocate, December 4, 1908, pp. 4–5.
prohibiting the sale of alcohol in a four mile radius of any school, turned the prohibition struggle in Tennessee into a “contest between the school and saloon” as Tennesseans were forced to chose which their community valued more. More than that, Tennesseans saw education—not just the physical schoolhouse but the process that supposedly went on under that roof—as a means of teaching a whole new generation of Tennesseans the lessons of health, sobriety, and morality. Finally, Tennessee evangelicals first rehearsed many of the arguments they would adopt in their struggles to control the public schools in the battles against the saloon. Similar to their arguments on the place of the Bible in the public school, evangelical prohibitionists endorsed “home rule” and “local control” as long as it was expedient but abandoned such arguments in favor of a “majority rule” argument to overcome localism that just happened to support alcohol.

It may have been nothing more than a constitutional or legal accident that the Four Mile Law became the preferred method for driving the saloon out of Tennessee, but because of its 1877 passage the saloon and the schoolhouse became inextricably linked. The schoolhouse became a vaccine, clearing out an alcohol-free zone eight miles in diameter wherever it was established. As George R. Fairbanks, manager of the fledgling University of the South and chief proponent of the original bill, remarked a quarter century after its passage, “this law has been of wide influence and is said to be the best temperance measure ever put in force, as it secures all neighborhoods having incorporated schools from the presence of a tippling shop within four miles, and is an

inducement to build and sustain schools.”

O. P. Fitzgerald reported in the Nashville Christian Advocate that the citizens near Lebanon, Tennessee, had recently erected a number of school buildings “in order to prevent the sale of liquor, under what is known as the ‘four-mile law.’” But as the schoolhouse became the tool for removing the saloon, some anti-prohibitionists struck back at the schools. Fitzgerald reported that those same schoolhouses near Lebanon “were wantonly fired and destroyed by incendiaries,” and suggested that “why the houses were destroyed is sufficiently obvious.”

After the election of prohibition-advocating Governor Benjamin Wade Hooper in 1910, D. L. Cougar of Fayetteville sent the governor a postcard boasting about the “Progress of Education in Lincoln Co., since Prohibition in Tennessee.” Carrying an explanation that the buildings pictured were within one-half mile of the town of Mimosa, Tennessee, the postcard contained images of an abandoned distillery, an abandoned one-room schoolhouse, and a brand new consolidated school building. Congratulating the governor on his support for both education and prohibition, Cougar inscribed on the card “here is a practical demonstration of the workings of prohibition in the country in Old Lincoln Co.”

Thus the school and the whiskey trade were diametrically opposed, and neither could flourish in the others’ presence. But instead of having only the physical existence

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128 Fairbanks added the interesting comment that the law had been supported because it did “not affect the cities and incorporated towns,” so “the liquor dealers have no direct interest in having it repealed. It is perhaps more in danger from the over-zealous temperance societies and organizations who may, by their efforts to procure more radical legislation, create a reaction.” He further boasted that the law “has been a great blessing to this University. ... An intoxicated person is rarely seen upon the mountain.” Fairbanks, History of the University of the South, 168.
130 D. L. Cougar to B. W. Hooper, November 17, 1912. Box 4, folder 5, Benjamin Wade Hooper, Governor’s Papers, 1911–1915, TSLA.
of the school building itself be the tool of the prohibitionists, anti-alcohol forces sought to use the school curriculum to inoculate the rising generation against alcohol through lessons on its physical and moral ill effects. The schools of Washington County as early as 1872 were “carrying on extensive temperance programs” for their classes. In their 1892 report on temperance, Middle Tennessee southern Methodists declared their belief “that all the children of our state should be taught the evils of intemperance.” A few years later, the same body proclaimed that the “greatest hope for the final overthrow of the saloon and whisky power” was the “education and Christian enlightenment of the people” not just “through the pulpit [and] press,” but also through the “schools of our country.” The Big Hatchie Baptist Association of West Tennessee passed several similar endorsements of using public education to stop whiskey, resolving in 1893 that although they desired to “let absolute prohibition begin with the church,” they also charged church members to “set good examples” and “vote as they pray.” They called upon state lawmakers “to enact a law requiring instruction on” the “hygienic [sic] effects of alcohol upon the human system . . . in all of our schools supported by public money or under State control.” Their entreaties were not in vain, and the Tennessee General Assembly of 1895 passed a law requiring that “physiology and hygiene, with a special reference to the nature of alcoholic drinks and narcotics, and smoking cigarettes, and

132 Tennessee Annual Conference Journal 1892, p. 37; and 1899, p. 35.
133 Big Hatchie Baptist Association Minutes 1893, p. 12. The Tennessee General Assembly in 1915 created Frances E. Willard Day, to be observed in the public schools every fourth Friday in October, on which the school principals were to teach a lesson on the importance of temperance. Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 242.
their effects upon the human system, shall . . . be made a regular course of study for all pupils in all schools supported entirely or in part by public money."¹³⁴

Tennessee evangelicals looked upon the public schools as an important training ground of the future citizenship of the state and membership of the church and thus took a great interest in the content and control of what those children learned. Just as they desired that the Bible should be an integral part of the public school, so too did they agitate for instruction in temperance. In 1912, after the passage of a state-wide prohibition law but continued difficulties over enforcement in some of Tennessee’s larger cities, Governor Ben Hooper instructed his state superintendent of public instruction to insure that city school districts were observing the requirement to teach temperance to the pupils. The growing awareness of the difficulty in adequately enforcing prohibition or changing the behavior of some adults inspired the governor and prohibitionists to turn their attention back to the schools.¹³⁵ It is probably not purely coincidental that this renewed interest in school temperance lessons coincided with the increased pressure for

¹³⁴ Tennessee Public Acts 1895, Chapter 180. After Ben Hooper was elected governor, he had his state superintendent of public instruction write to city school superintendents in 1912, inquiring if they followed the law about teaching temperance. Superintendent Arthur C. Nute of the Union City Public Schools replied that temperance instruction “is in the very air that our pupils breathe. Alcoholic stimulants and cigarettes are constantly held up before our pupils and their effects are unceasingly told.” After describing the textbooks they use, Nute continued “but better than all this, I believe, are the frequent lectures given to the pupils, sometimes together, sometimes by grades, by superintendent, teachers, pastors, and visiting lecturers of the W.C.T.U. upon just these topics. We never yet have missed the opportunity to have a lecturer upon this subject to visit our school and give instruction according to strictest tenets.” Not missing an opportunity to ingratiate himself to the prohibitionist governor, Nute proclaimed that “there is no one in connection with the school who does not say ‘Amen’ to every temperance law in the state.” Nute to Supt. J. W. Brister, July 20, 1912. Miscellaneous Correspondence 1913, Box 7, folder 5, Hooper Governor’s Papers, TSLA.

¹³⁵ Superintendent Brister’s inquiry and several responses from city school superintendents are in Box 7, folder 5, Hooper Governor’s Papers, TSLA.
and subsequent passage of the Daily Bible Reading law of 1915 (see discussion in Chapter V below).

Despite the constitutional questions surrounding the idea of local option legislation against saloons, Tennessee evangelicals continued to advocate the concept of “home rule” in matters of community control over alcohol. Billing alcohol and liquor interests as outsiders, they assumed that most if not all communities would vote to ban alcohol. In the fall of 1885, only a few months after he had reiterated his argument for “home rule” over the use of the Bible in the public schools, Oscar Fitzgerald of the Nashville Christian Advocate used the same terms and reasoning as it applied to alcohol: “Local Option in Georgia and the Four-mile law in Tennessee recognize the same sound principle—home rule.” Part of the “home rule” compromise in control of public education had assumed that parents would provide a nurturing environment in the home, supplementing the non-sectarian instruction of the public school and teaching children morality and religion. One of the prohibitionists’ chief arguments pointed to the disastrous effects of alcohol on that home life and breaking down not just the individual family but the future hope of church and state in that child. If homes were to bear up under the weighty burdens Fitzgerald and other Tennessee evangelicals assigned them in the late nineteenth century, prohibitionists believed they needed to be protected from the disastrous effects of alcohol.

Although they temporarily abandoned the local control policy in the 1887 campaigns for constitutional prohibition, evangelical leaders continually returned to the

136 [Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, November 7, 1885, p. 8. For his use as it related to schools, see Ibid., August 15, 1885, p. 1.
argument. After the 1887 defeat, when it became obvious that the majority of the state’s voters—and a disproportionate number of them city-dwellers—opposed prohibition, Tennessee evangelicals and anti-drink advocates turned back to securing local option legislation that would allow prohibition in at least most parts of the state. They favored extensions of the Four Mile Law as compatible with local option because after 1899 it allowed communities (of under 2000 inhabitants) to vote to rewrite their charters as dry towns. In the early twentieth century, once extensions of the Four Mile Law had driven the saloon out of every part of Tennessee but four cities, evangelical prohibitionists turned to arguments of majority rule. In an open letter to the legislators supporting a state-wide extension of prohibition, R. N. Price wrote that “Local option is too local and too optional. It recognizes the right of bad citizens to say, by vote, whether an immoral and demoralizing institution shall be set up and maintained in the community.” What was needed, he explained, was legislation to allow the “better citizens of the State to banish saloons from the entire territory of the State.”138 Sam Jones had attempted this kind of argument in the 1887 campaign for constitutional prohibition, saying that in the cause of prohibition, the religious majority should speak out so that the “vox populi was, indeed, vox dei.”139

Tennessee’s evangelical prohibitionists also sought to privilege their own voices within any majority. It was clear to Price and other evangelicals who exactly were those “better citizens of the state” and what sources they should draw upon. Tennessee Methodists and Baptists often reminded their readers—both supporters and

139 Quoted in Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, 19.
opponents—that the American "government and the civilization it has produced and fostered was founded, and has been maintained, under the auspices of Christianity, based upon a Christian Bible and a Christian Sabbath."\textsuperscript{140} It was the same Christian nation-majority rule argument that would play a prominent role in twentieth-century evangelical efforts to require daily Bible reading and ban the teaching of evolution in Tennessee public schools.

**CONCLUSION**

In his now-classic study of southern Baptist social relations, John Lee Eighmy points to the importance of Baptist engagement in temperance reform as the "first major contact between Southern Baptists and social Christianity" that "brought Southern Baptists into the arena of social action, where they soon became aware of issues other than temperance."\textsuperscript{141} Similarly, William A. Link focuses on the significance of the temperance and prohibition campaigns as setting a model for Progressive-era southern social reform. In his explanation, late-nineteenth-century moral reform "provided an emotional language and a rhetoric to a variety of reforms that appeared in the subsequent

\textsuperscript{140} Tennessee Baptist Convention *Minutes* 1891, p. 32. Forrest L. Marion provides an interesting account of the regional nature of the Sabbath-observance campaigns in antebellum Tennessee, suggesting that although East Tennessee evangelicals favored respect for and observance of the Sabbath, they were not united in the national campaigns such as those against the Sunday mails. "East Tennessee and the Sabbath Question, 1828–1832," *Journal of East Tennessee History*, 66 (1994), 9–31.

\textsuperscript{141} Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 79–80 and 56.
generation.” The significance of temperance reform at the end of the century was that the moral reformers “change[d] the terms of debate from individual to social redemption.”

One can discern in Tennessee Methodists’ and Baptists’ growing concern over the effects of alcohol on individuals, families, and the larger society an interest first in the soul of the individual but also a growing recognition of the interdependence of individuals and society. “Prohibitory laws,” the Tennessee Baptist Convention proclaimed, “are for the protection of society or the social system. It is the duty of civil government to protect the innocent and helpless against the vicious.” But in order to get the laws passed and enforced, they recognized the need “to strengthen the sense of the personal responsibility of each citizen for every other citizen's well-being and well-doing.”

Swept into the governor's office on a platform of prohibition enforcement, Baptist layman Ben Hooper encapsulated these views of the modern interdependent society in his first legislative address of 1911. Arguing that “the individual citizen of Tennessee is a member of a complex social organization, and, as such, sustains relations to millions of individuals.” Hooper proclaimed that “the State has a right to restrain him” in “the drinking of any liquor … not for the petty purpose of tyrannizing over him, but for the great and righteous purpose of protecting society.”

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142 Link, *Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, 57 and 51.
143 Tennessee Baptist Convention *Minutes* 1914, p. 55; and *Minutes* 1910, p. 48.
The evangelicals’ involvement in temperance and then prohibition campaigns and the backlash from anti-prohibitionists forced Tennessee Methodists and Baptists to justify their involvement in a particular political question and explain their growing understanding of a social mission for the church. The explanation was worked out in many forums, but it perhaps found its best voice in the southern Methodist Memphis Annual Conference’s temperance report of 1922:

We must make it plain that Christ has outlined the spirit in which all matters pertaining to social life can be adjusted and this spirit must first begin in the home and in the school life. Christ came to create a new earth where righteousness would dwell. His aim was health—whole bodies, whole minds, a complete manhood.

Christ was also the transformer of social conditions, the founder of a divine social order. He proclaimed a new era of justice and kindness in which men should live together. He sought to change society by transforming individuals and creating a society of love. This process works from within, out upon a world. His aim was a world of new men. Along with the saving of our lives we must seek to transform social conditions which destroy men’s lives. We must look also into social institutions to detect sources of selfishness. We must keep our eyes upon our schools to see that no erroneous ideas poison the minds of our youth.\(^{145}\)

Though they maintained the centrality of the individual conversion and the supremacy of divine authority, the authors of the report clearly espoused the church’s responsibility to

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act not just in the world, but on it, and not just on individuals but on the societies in which they lived.

Such clear articulations about the need to reform the society became intricately linked to the evangelical efforts to supervise the teaching within the public schools. An important legacy of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century evangelical moral campaigns was not just in providing Tennessee Methodists and Baptists a view of the larger society around them but in giving them experience at utilizing a coercive paternalist state in an attempt to impose their religious behavioral standards on a broader culture. If prohibition, divorce, Sunday-closing, anti-smoking, and motion picture laws were attempts to curb behavior, it did not take religious leaders long to recognize the importance of controlling the education of Tennessee's youths. Prohibition laws were imperfect restrictions on the behavior of adults. Moral training in the home and school—especially if it included, in addition to the Bible, lessons on the physical dangers of intemperance—would raise up a new generation of Tennesseans to lead both church and state and recapture the moral supremacy of southern society. But this would remain a source of tension within and among evangelical denominations in the following years—what was the proper balance between reforming social conditions and converting individuals? The question few Tennesseans paused to ask was whether, in their efforts to enforce religious temperance on the larger society by law, they were settling for an appearance of morality in place of a genuinely converted state and region.
Writing in the early 1920s, southern Methodist educator Lester Weaver reminded readers of the Nashville *Christian Advocate* of the importance of an educated and religious citizenry. He was, in part, still reacting to the recent end of the great European war, arguing that the Allies, with the help of the United States, had won because God was on their side. God had frowned on the atheistic, war-like, and materialistic Germany while smiling on the morally and religiously pure Americans. But if such divine favor were to continue, the author asserted, religious Americans would need to redouble their efforts to instill religion and morality in the rising generation. The southern church, he warned, was faced with an important choice: either “educating or evacuating her place as a controlling influence of society.”¹

Tennessee at the end of the first World War was very different than it had been at the end of the Civil War. For one, it was on the winning side, congratulating itself that it had preserved a state and nation that it believed were deserving of God’s favor. But despite their recent martial victory, religious Tennesseans were increasingly uneasy about the future. In the vanquished Germany, their recent adversary, they saw many similarities to American Progressive-era campaigns for education, efficiency, and scientific culture. The German school system had been the envy of many state

¹ Lester Weaver, “The Church’s Choice—Educate or Evacuate,” Nashville *Christian Advocate*, January 28, 1921, p. 11.
educational boosters at the end of the nineteenth century, and had even been applauded by some churchmen for spreading literacy and light throughout the country. Much of the German educational bureaucracy had been copied in the United States at large and, to a limited extent, in Tennessee as well.

The problem with German education, many Tennessee religious leaders then argued, was that it was at best only a partial education and at worst the definitive cause of German militarism, atheism, and aggression. German schools were run by the state and therefore banished religious instruction from the primary grades through the much-vaunted universities. The lack of religion in education had left ordinary Germans unable to distinguish right from wrong and incapable of resisting the emperor's aggression. If America were to avoid a similar fate, Weaver and other ministers warned, she must ensure that the next generation would be trained in religion and morality. They should learn from German mistakes and protect the schools and students from materialism and atheism.²

Tennessee religious leaders had offered similar warnings since the creation of the state's public schools in the 1870s, but then they in reality had little to fear from the locally controlled and predominantly Protestant public schools of the nineteenth century. Operating under Oscar P. Fitzgerald's 1880s "home rule" compromise, Tennessee evangelicals had embraced the public elementary schools, believing they would be under the supervision of sympathetic Protestant communities that would ensure a place for

² There had been some earlier suspicions of German intellectuals, including this prescient warning from Methodist editor E. E. Hoss in the 1890s that "We have learned many bad lessons from Germany. If we learn how its religion as a vital force was prostrated, and be wise enough to protect ourselves from the same deplorable results, this lesson will be a salutary one." [Hoss], "A Lesson from Germany," Nashville Christian Advocate, July 11, 1891, p. 8.
religion in the curriculum. Further, they believed that parents, Sunday Schools, and church colleges would supplement formal schooling with denominationally specific religious training. But by the second decade of the twentieth century, even before the outbreak of the Great War, the “home rule” compromise was appearing increasingly untenable. Denominational colleges were becoming more and more expensive to operate, were losing students to state universities that offered free tuition, or were being lured away from their founding denominations with liberal financial carrots from the Carnegie Foundation and other agents of supposedly secular higher education. Elementary education was almost entirely the province of state-funded public schools and, in some parts of the country and even some of Tennessee’s cities, being pressured to remove religious content. Furthermore, Sunday School attendance was declining, church membership as a percentage of total population was falling, and there was anecdotal evidence that, as Weaver asserted, the “old-time Christian home of Bible study and prayer has all but entirely disappeared.”

Tennessee evangelical leaders praised the faithfulness of the state’s citizens while offering jeremiads about the future of Tennessee and the nation should the church fail in its duty to preserve society through the proper education of the rising generation. In the first decade of the twentieth century, evangelical leaders supported an expansion of public education, pushing for religious teachers for the public schools, faithful parents in the home, growing Sunday School programs, and strong denominational colleges as the sure guarantees of religion in education and a religious society in the years to come. They repeatedly called on parents to be faithful in raising their children and on teachers

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3 Weaver, “The Church’s Choice,” 11.
to listen to the missionary call for service in the public schools. But, much as they had
come to understand in their fight against alcohol, Tennessee Methodist and Baptist
leaders recognized the ineffectiveness of moral suasion alone to create or sustain the
society they envisioned. So they again turned to legislation, exercising what one state
religious leader termed a "citizen’s right" to control what was taught in the public schools
supported by taxation.4 State Methodists and Baptists divided within and between
denominations on the propriety of reading or teaching the Bible in the public schools, but
all could agree that the public schools could and should teach morality. Most came to see
the presence of the Bible in the daily school program as an important indication of the
religious nature of public education and increasingly fought to place it in the schools—by
law if necessary.

This chapter explores how the increasing formalization of education in
Tennessee—in many ways supported by state religious leaders in campaigns to improve
the state’s schools—positioned public education as a battleground for competing social
visions. In their campaigns to strengthen the schools, religious leaders unintentionally
weakened informal sources (home and church) of education by aiding the
institutionalization of the public schools and the state itself. Confronted with an
increasingly centralized school bureaucracy and growing evidence of the decline of
supplemental sources of religious education, Tennessee evangelical leaders pushed for a
more explicit respect for Christianity in the state schools. Largely disregarding
constitutional protections of minority beliefs, evangelical leaders marched under a banner
of a righteous majority fighting to preserve a Christian nation. No longer willing to leave

questions about the role of religion in public education to the whim of individual communities, many Tennessee evangelicals proposed, lobbied for, and eventually enacted laws requiring school to be opened each day with selections from the Bible and forbidding the teaching of evolution in the state schools.

PUBLIC EDUCATION UNDER THE "HOME RULE" COMPROMISE

As discussed in Chapter II above, Tennessee evangelical leaders had originally distrusted the public school movement, labeling the state-funded institutions "godless schools" and warning parents of the dangers of sending their children out of the home to be educated. By the close of the nineteenth century, however, most state religious leaders had not only curbed their criticism but in fact were avid supporters of the common school movement. This religious accommodation of public schooling was possible in general because of the broad endorsement by evangelical Protestants of literacy as a key to an individual's ability to read the Bible, believe, and achieve salvation. But in more specific terms, Tennessee evangelicals came to accept public elementary schools through what Methodist editor and public education advocate Oscar P. Fitzgerald coined the "home rule" principle. Protestant parents and leaders should endorse, aid, and supervise the public elementary schools; under the watchful eyes of religious parents, teachers, and local school directors and school boards the schools would reflect the values and religion of the local, presumably Protestant communities of Tennessee.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{ Fitzgerald}, \textit{Nashville Christian Advocate}, August 15, 1885, p. 1.\]
Most church leaders agreed that the public schools could not and perhaps should not teach denominationally specific religion, but their non-sectarian instruction could be supplemented by parents in the home, by the church in the Sunday School, and by the denominational college if the child continued his or her education. But this by no means meant that the public schools were to be atheistic or anti-religious places. Despite occasional protests to the contrary, most Tennessee Methodists and Baptists favored the public schools as natural extensions of the churches’ educational mission and worked to include religious, and sometimes even denominational instruction wherever and whenever possible to do so without raising objections from other denominations or non-Protestants. Preachers and prominent laymen secured positions as school administrators, pushed the importance of placing Christian teachers in the public schools, and urged local ministers and school patrons to utilize every opportunity to spread the gospel through the state schools.

Preachers and prominent laymen of most denominations secured positions as school officials throughout the state. Often building on their experience as some of the more educated members of rural communities or the most interested members of a better educated public, many Tennessee ministers worked as local school directors, members of county boards of education, and even as state Superintendent of Public Instruction, the highest administrative position in the state’s school system. Such positions were not reserved solely for the traditionally better-educated denominations, although the late nineteenth century had seen a progression of Presbyterian administrators in Drs. Doak and Crawford.⁶ While disclaiming any interest “to enter into politics at all, or [to cast]

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⁶ Knoxville Chronicle, July 2, 1882, p. 2.
any reflection on the other candidates,” Baptist editor Edgar E. Folk openly suggested the appointment of Southwestern Baptist University professor and president G. W. Jarman to the state’s highest school post in 1891. To Folk’s chagrin, but probably best for Southwestern Baptist, Jarman did not get the job, although Governor Benton McMillin appointed a Baptist layman, Morgan Fitzpatrick, as state superintendent of schools in 1899. J. W. Brister, a Methodist layman, led the state’s public schools in the first decades of the twentieth century, assisting in the state-wide campaigns to improve the schools while also serving as treasurer of the Methodist’s Twentieth Century Educational Fund-raising efforts and taking an active interest in the Nashville Sunday School movement. More typically, state religious journals noted the appointment of evangelical laymen to head city or county school districts. For example, the editor of the Nashville Christian Advocate praised Sidney G. Gilbreath, state superintendent in the 1890s, superintendent of the Chattanooga public schools after 1904, and an active campaigner for improved public schools throughout the state, as “a loyal Methodist and the superintendent of our Sunday school at Trinity” Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The Baptist and Reflector likewise noted the appointment of Baptist ministers to head the public schools of Athens and Cowan, Tennessee.

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7 [Folk], Nashville Baptist and Reflector, January 15, 1891, p. 9 (quotation); and April 6, 1899, p. 12.
8 Tennessee Annual Conference (MECS) Board of Education, “Annual Report,” in Tennessee Annual Conference Minutes 1907, p. 54 and 1910, p. 46. The yearly journals, as well as the bound handwritten minutes of the board of education are deposited with the Tennessee Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History at McKendree Church annex in Nashville. [Ivey], “A Campaign against Illiteracy,” Nashville Christian Advocate, May 17, 1912, p. 6. Church leadership seemed to run in the Brister family, as his wife was in charge of the McKendree Methodist Church (Nashville’s oldest Methodist church) “cradle roll.”
9 [Winton], Nashville Christian Advocate, July 14, 1904, p. 6.
10 [Folk], Nashville Baptist and Reflector, September 9, 1915, p. 9; and [Albert Bond], Nashville Baptist and Reflector, June 21, 1917, p. 12.
Even more important than securing jobs for ministers or laymen as school officials, both Baptists and Methodists worked to ensure that the public schools were staffed with conscientious Christian teachers. Recognizing that the state public schools would not be under the direct control of the churches, evangelicals called for teachers with “character” built on “a firm faith in God and in the moral order of the universe.”\textsuperscript{11} “The remedy” to fears of secular education, they argued, would be “in conscientious Christian teachers.” Given the decentralized nature of public schools in the 1890s, evangelicals recognized that “after every thing has been said and done, the truth still remains that the great thing in the school is the teacher himself,” and therefore they should concentrate on getting Christian teachers into the schools.\textsuperscript{12} Proclaiming first that “We Baptists must educate!” the educational committee of the 1890 Tennessee Baptist Convention reported their conclusion that “none are best qualified for public school directors and teachers but warm-hearted Christians.”\textsuperscript{13} Even State Superintendent James Killebrew agreed with the arguments for Christian teachers, calling for teachers in 1873 who could be non-sectarian but at the same time not irreligious.\textsuperscript{14} State superintendent Dr. W. S. Doak addressed the state normal institute—a summer training school for present and prospective teachers at the state university in Knoxville—when it first opened in 1881 on the importance of teachers setting a moral example for students and striving to educate both their intellect and morality.\textsuperscript{15} Instructors at the institute in the years that

\textsuperscript{13} Tennessee Baptist Convention \textit{Minutes}, 1890, p. 29.
followed emphasized the importance of good religious teachers even while guarding against excessive sectarian influences.\textsuperscript{16}

Denominational leaders argued that hiring Baptists or Methodists as teachers in the local public schools could help the churches in two ways. The presence of well-trained teachers would directly aid in the organization and instruction of the local Sunday Schools—hire a Baptist teacher for the week-day school, get an extra day of volunteer labor from him or her in the Sunday School. Indirectly, Christian teachers would further the educational mission of the church by inculcating a religious spirit into all the lessons of the public schools and planting seeds to be nurtured in the home, church, and Sunday School.\textsuperscript{17} Vanderbilt University Chancellor James H. Kirkland remarked to a national group of educators in 1910 that, at least concerning Tennessee, “no unfriendly attitude has been shown to religion . . . . The Bible is generally read in the public schools, and often school is opened with a song and prayer. This is more apt to be the case in rural than in city schools, but nowhere in the South that I am aware has any protest been made against simple religious exercises.”\textsuperscript{18}

Some ministers urged an even more direct relationship between the churches and the public schools of Tennessee. While admitting that the teachers probably could not teach denominationally specific religion, Baptist editor E. E. Folk argued that “there is still the need and privilege of religious leaders to lend some support and even direction to

\textsuperscript{16} Knoxville \textit{Daily Chronicle}, July 4 and 11, 1883.
the ideals that shall obtain in the public school system." He noted that there were many opportunities for preachers to speak to the students during school time: "he may read the Scriptures, make a short address and lead in prayer. He thus can secure a religious contact with the children with propriety." Folk warned ministers not "to neglect this privilege" and thereby fail to capitalize on a "chance for abiding good."19 Likewise, several rural Baptist ministers wrote to the Baptist and Reflector, reporting on their success at preaching in the public schools. One minister, writing from Paris, Tennessee, claimed that he had led revival services in the Henry County high school twice a day for a week, speaking for 45 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes at the end of the school day. He concluded his report by charging his fellow ministers to do likewise: "If any of the brethren over the State can find a High School which will open its doors to a meeting of this kind, by all means make the most of it."20 Baptists and Methodists alike utilized any opportunity to inject explicit religious teaching into the public schools, with only occasional dissenting voices within or without the denominations. Most Tennessee evangelicals had, by the end of the nineteenth century, accepted the public elementary school not only as a necessary intrusion of the state into what should be the province of

19 [Folk], "Minister and the Public School." Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 5, 1917, p. 8. 20 J. W. Storer, "A Unique Opportunity," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, May 5, 1921, p. 5. Storer's letter suggested his recognition that such denominational teaching was far more likely to occur in rural as opposed to urban schools, noting that "it would be impossible to do this in many localities where the Jewish and Catholic elements would be sufficiently strong to object, effectually." His final word, "effectually" suggests a theme that will be explored later in this chapter, namely the understanding by some Protestants that others might object to the religion being taught in the public schools, and even the possible unconstitutionality of such teaching, but willingness to overlook or deny any constitutional contradictions on account of their beliefs that a "majority" of the citizens were Protestants or sympathetic to the aims of such religious instruction in the public schools. Storer's use of "effectually" suggests that he did not care if Catholics or Jews would object, only if they could do something about it. For other examples of similar direct preaching to public school students, see Livingston T. Mays, "A Christian School Superintendent," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, June 8, 1922, p. 9.
the church, but as a powerful ally in the churches’ mission to evangelize the state, region, and world.

TENNESSEE EVANGELICALS AND THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF PROGRESSIVE-ERA SCHOOL REFORM

In February 1915 Methodist layman and educator Greer Peoples addressed a crowd of fellow Methodists on the relationship between churches and the public schools. From his observation that “the public school is with us and is going to stay for generations and centuries to come, and will more and more mould the life of the people,” Professor Peoples concluded that “therefore it is necessary for us of the Church, who have to deal with people from the cradle to the grave, to interest ourselves in the work of the public school.” His was not a new or novel opinion in Methodist or Baptist circles; state religious leaders and prominent laymen had accepted and even endorsed the public elementary schools since the 1880s. But the first two decades of the twentieth century saw an increased involvement of Tennessee evangelicals with the public schools. By the time of Peoples’s 1915 address, public elementary schools had been transformed from decentralized, unstable, and of questionable permanence to the expected source of primary education for the overwhelming majority of the state’s children. The public

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21 J. R. Wright, “Franklin District Institute,” Nashville Midland Methodist, February 3, 1915, p. 4. The Midland Methodist was a weekly newspaper, jointly operated by the three Methodist Annual Conferences (Tennessee, Memphis, and Holston) that covered Tennessee. The Nashville Christian Advocate increasingly assumed a denomination-wide readership in the twentieth century, although with its editorial offices in Nashville, it remained interested in state and local affairs. There are not complete files of the Midland Methodist, although some issues can be found on microfilm at the Tennessee Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Commission on Archives and History, Nashville.
school was no longer an experiment but would, as Peoples noted, “more and more mould the life of the people.”

Tennesseans were actively involved in the South-wide educational revival of the early twentieth century and provided several leaders for the regional movement. The Conference for Education in the South, a region-wide movement that began in Capon Springs, Virginia, in 1898 and met annually throughout the South (twice in Tennessee) until 1914, supplied a clearinghouse of money and information to coordinate the efforts in the various states. Comprised of regional religious leaders, northern philanthropists, and school and social reform advocates, the conference originated from a desire to improve black and rural education but quickly shifted its focus to a wider improvement of southern public education as a whole. The Conference established a bureau of information and research at Knoxville’s University of Tennessee and provided funds for the annual Summer School of the South conducted on the campus to train current and prospective teachers in improved pedagogical methods.\textsuperscript{22}

Tennessee school reformer and education historian Andrew David Holt has referred to the first decade and a half of the twentieth century as the “campaign era” in Tennessee’s educational history. In the years 1903–1913, Holt argues, state and regional school reformers, aided by a generally improved economy and supported by contributions

from the Southern Education Board, successfully aroused public and legislative interest in improving the public schools. The University of Tennessee professor and Southern Education Board Information Bureau chief Philander Priestly Claxton coordinated the summer and fall educational campaigns held throughout the state in an effort to stir up grassroots support for educational reform and to encourage present and prospective government officials to support the educational plans of the school supporters. Claxton and the state school superintendent scheduled educational rallies in every county of the state, with Claxton managing to speak in every Tennessee county at least once during the 1906 campaign. They would close the area schools for the day, invite local political officials and candidates to appear on the platform and explain their views on education, schedule bands, parades, pageants, and barbecue basket dinners, and arrange for special excursion trains and rates, all in an effort to increase attendance. They often coordinated the rallies with other meetings such as farmers institutes or county fairs to increase the crowds. Claxton even claimed that the educational rallies attracted larger crowds than did the political rallies of the same season. They increased attendance at the rallies with speaking and entertainment, rounding out the day by presenting the gathered masses with

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23 The Southern Education Board was formed in 1901 as the executive arm of the annual Conference for Education in the South. It was headed by Robert Curtis Ogden and included philanthropists and southern educational leaders J. L. M. Curry, Charles W. Dabney, Edwin A. Alderman, Charles D. McIver, H. B. Frissell, George Foster Peabody, and Rev. Wallace Buttrick, among others. The board worked to raise southern public opinion in behalf of improving the public schools and at the same time encourage and receive gifts from private persons and boards to aid public education. This latter function was quickly separated and placed under the control of the General Education Board, headquartered in New York. Dabney, *Universal Education in the South, II*: 54–73, details the founding of the Board.

a list of resolutions on school issues to be endorsed and forwarded to the next meeting of the state legislature.

Claxton and the state superintendents did not happen upon the format of the school rallies by accident; similar public convocations had long been a staple of rural southern life. More than one observer noted that the rallies resembled religious revivals, though now transformed into educational revivals. Theirs was a campaign for improved education, but since many of their intended audience were poorly educated, reform leaders could not depend on newspapers and written campaign materials to convey their message. P. P. Claxton, a native Tennessean, veteran of the school reform efforts in North Carolina, and future United States Commissioner of Education, believed that rural southerners’ experience with religious revivals would prepare them for the school rallies. As he explained in 1908, “the people in the Southern States were raised on camp meetings, and when they go and carry their dinner with them it is an offense to speak a half hour and dismiss them. . . . They have the power to sit and hear it, so that you can appeal to them morning and afternoon and they will remain.”25 State religious leaders lent voice, pulpit, and press to aid the movement, joining in calls for more and better elementary schools, professionally trained teachers, increased state and local funding, more intelligent spending of school monies, and improved attendance. Rev. J. D. Hammond, editor of the “Education Notes” section of the Nashville Christian Advocate,

25 Claxton quoted in Holt, The Struggle for a State System, 221. Dabney quotes from Claxton’s descriptions of the school rallies: “Usually these rallies lasted all day with picnic-dinners. The best of them had wagon loads of water melons. . . . At these we spoke to more than 100,000 people during the year. In some counties half the voters were out. In many places the attendance ran up to two, three or four thousand and once to six thousand. It was a political campaign year and . . . candidates were . . . out for the legislature, governorship and United States senatorship. But we had much larger attendance at our educational meetings than the political speakers had.” Dabney, Universal Education in the South, II: 365.
offered his support of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Seymour Mynders’s 1906 school campaign. Hammond said the campaign was a good idea, encouraged other states to start similar efforts, and urged school reformers to pay particular attention to the plight of the rural schools of Tennessee. Meanwhile, Middle Tennessee Methodist preacher Jeremiah Cullom took an even more active role in the school campaigns, noting several places in his diary where he attended school rallies, even bringing a wagon load of school children with him to a Williamson county rally in the fall of 1910. By the end of his 1906 school campaign, Superintendent Mynders remarked that “Education and public schools have been preached from the pulpit, the bar, the stump; at picnics, barbecues, circuit and county courts, school commencements, county fairs, race tracks and even at a wedding ceremony.”

Tennessee education historian Holt paid little attention to issues of religion in public education, although he did suggest that many of the private school patrons and teachers opposed the expansion of public schools. He admitted that any opposition—he did not provide any specific names of educators who campaigned against the public schools—was not as organized as in North Carolina, South Carolina, or Georgia where supporters of religious schools openly opposed expanded systems of public education through organizations such as the Christian Education Association. Holt dismissed any

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26 Cullom noted the day in his diary: “the State Supt. of Public Instruction had a meeting of the schools of the county in Franklin today. By request I escorted a wagon load of ‘kids’—28, on one wagon. We carried a sumptuous basket dinner with us, and several distinguished guest dined with us, as our County Supt., Fred Page. Mr. Redman, candidate for the Senate, and Prof. Ayers, President of the University of Tenn. It was a ‘red letter day’ for the children.” Jeremiah Walker Cullom (1828–1915). Diary, 1904–1915, Book 5. Diaries, Memoirs, etc. Collection. VI-F-5 ac. 68-384 Box 2, folder 9, TSLA.

27 Mynders, quoted in Holt, the Struggle for a State System, 210.

such opposition as "selfish" and stemming from a desire to protect private colleges from a potential loss of students to a strengthened state school system, but he did not pause to consider any ideological motivation behind criticisms of the state university. Some denominational college leaders were nonetheless concerned about the increased funding for the University of Tennessee and the prospects of increased competition with the church schools. When President Jeffries of the Baptist's Carson-Newman College wrote Governor Hooper to inquire about his intentions, State Superintendent Brister assured the governor and college president of their "interest in and kindly feeling towards the private institution, and my belief that their progress and development is necessary to the best interests of our educational system." By and large, however, few Tennessee Baptists or Methodists—even those in charge of denominational colleges or proprietors of private preparatory schools—opposed the campaigns to improve public elementary education. In fact most Methodist and Baptist laymen, ministers, and college officials spoke at one time or another in favor of the public schools, while both denominational journals offered frequent editorial support of the school campaigns.

Editors of both the Baptist and Methodist weekly papers generally favored the extension of public elementary education throughout the state. Oscar Fitzgerald, as has been discussed above, had been actively involved in public education long before moving

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29 Holt, *The Struggle for a State System*, 114. James Leloudis although he gives far more attention and credibility to the opponents of the University of North Carolina, likewise discounts the ideological differences between religious and secular educators in the controversies in that state between Charles Elisha Taylor of Wake Forest and supporters of the state university. See Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*.

30 J. W. Brister to Gov. Ben Hooper, August 25, 1911, Box 2, folder 4, Benjamin Wade Hooper, Governor’s Papers, 1911–15, TSLA. At least one Methodist minister had directly endorsed Hooper’s choice of Brister as his state superintendent. See Rev. E. C. Atkins (Pastor, Elm Street MECS, Nashville) to Governor Hooper, April 21, 1911. Box 2, folder 2, Hooper Governor’s Papers.
to Tennessee to take editorial control of the southern Methodists’ important weekly journal, the Nashville *Christian Advocate*. Under Fitzgerald’s leadership, the paper came out forcefully in favor of public elementary schools as long as the state did not transgress the terms of the “home rule” compromise. Fitzgerald’s advocacy was continued by his successors: a former college president, E. E. Hoss, and George B. Winton, a missionary to Mexico and later a professor at Vanderbilt. Take for example Hoss’s November 1891 “Thanksgiving” essay in which he praised the progress of the public schools so far, and looked forward to their continued spread throughout the state. “Ignorance is no more the mother of good citizenship than it is of religious devotion,” Hoss explained in the front-page editorial. Believing as he did that “God loves all the creatures of his hand, and wishes them to rise as high as they can in the scale of intelligence,” Hoss urged the further growth of the schools as an aid to both the church and the state.\textsuperscript{31} James R. Graves, the editor of the Memphis *Baptist*, was an avid supporter of Southwestern Baptist University and expanded education in general, while his successor E. E. Folk often lent his editorial voice to support the public school movement in Tennessee. Under Folk’s editorship, the Nashville *Baptist and Reflector* publicized the beginning of Superintendent Mynder’s school campaign of 1903, encouraged better attendance, and endorsed many of the aims of the school reformers.\textsuperscript{32} George B. Winton of the Nashville *Christian Advocate* actively supported the efforts of the Conference for Education in the South, and in a 1903 front page editorial endorsed the campaigns of the Southern Education Board for “better equipped and better paid teachers, longer school terms, better

\textsuperscript{31} [Hoss], “Thanksgiving,” Nashville *Christian Advocate*, November 21, 1891, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{32} Nashville *Baptist and Reflector*, April 2, 1903, p. 1.
[school] houses, and the development of graded schools in the rural sections, with manual training, agricultural and nature-study departments.” Responding to questions about his support of the movement through the denominational press, editor Winton explained that “We make no apology for giving all this space to the question of public schools. Concerning education, temperance, and morality, the Methodist Church never needs to define her position or to defend her policy.”

[33] Winton, “The Southern Education Board,” Nashville Christian Advocate May 14, 1903, p. 1. Winton made several other explicit endorsements of the work of the SEB to combat southern illiteracy. See for example “Illiteracy in the South,” Nashville Christian Advocate, April 9, 1903, p. 1. Perhaps his most explicit endorsement of the public education campaigns came just at the opening of schools in the fall of 1907, in an editorial titled “The Battle Against Ignorance,” in which he asserted in no uncertain terms, that the church must aid the intellectual development of man as a part of improving his moral development. Since the church could not educate all the children on its own, it must turn to the state and aid the public schools in their efforts: “In any campaign against ignorance the Christian Church can always enter with earnestness and sincerity. The cultivation of the mind is always an adjunct to the true development of the spiritual life. The appeal to mankind is always through the intelligence, and the heightening of the intelligence increases the possibility of receiving the highest revelations. The gospel has no compromise to make with darkness, not even the darkness of ignorance. The school has always had a place by the side of the Church in the economy of God’s kingdom. The Church may establish educational institutions for the equipment of its own leaders and to put the impress of Christianity upon the learning of the world, but it can never withhold its encouragement and support of those public institutions which are necessary to reach all the people. The Church may equip the teachers and furnish the high moral and religious ideals for the schools for all grades of society, but it must look to the State to aid in this work that means the development of its citizens. By voice and pen the leaders in the Church—who ought surely to be leaders in society—may create sentiment and public opinion in favor of schools for all the children of all the people. Where teachers are incompetent or the schools are crowded or children are allowed to stay out of school, let a cry be raised and a campaign be inaugurated for the improvement if not a correction of these conditions. The public school is not an enemy of public morals nor of true Christianity, as some may claim, but it is the eternal foe to ignorance, superstition, and the conspiracy of any set of men in Church or State who would hold in subjection their fellow creatures for their own selfish ends. The public school has always meant the equipment of men for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Its efficiency is sometimes crippled by the support of influential citizens being withheld and this great institution for the whole people being allowed to be controlled by parties that are incompetent to direct the interests of any school. But all schools, whether public or private, that will insure the partial education at least of every child should be encouraged. The battle against ignorance is on, and the Church is ready to join the State in any campaign that will result in the wiping out of the disgrace of illiteracy and the education of all the children of the nation.” Nashville Christian Advocate, September 27, 1907, pp. 2–3.
Perhaps no Tennessee evangelical leader after Fitzgerald was a more forceful advocate of the public schools than was Rufus Weaver. In addition to his duties as pastor of Nashville’s Immanuel Baptist Church from 1908 to 1917, adjunct professor of religious education at Vanderbilt 1913 to 1917, and member of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1909 to 1918, Weaver served as Secretary of Christian Education for the Tennessee Baptist Convention and was an outspoken supporter of public elementary, especially rural, schools in Tennessee. In the spring of 1917 Weaver authored several full-page articles on public education for the back cover of the Nashville Baptist and Reflector. He encouraged his fellow Baptists to take an interest in improving public schools because “the educational problem of this state is a Baptist problem.” Reasoning first that “one-half of the people of this state are Baptists in fact or in sentiment,” and then that the majority of the denomination were “a country people,” Weaver begged Tennessee Baptists to call on their legislators to confront “the educational problem of the Baptists of Tennessee . . . the development of our rural schools.”34 In several other articles, Weaver provided maps of all of Tennessee’s counties, detailing the school expenditures and session days in each, and summing that many of what he termed “Baptist counties” (39 total, in which 45 to 93.4 percent of the churched people,

34 Rufus Weaver, “Baptists and the Present Public School Situation,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, March 8, 1917, p. 16. In later years Weaver continued to stress the important role Baptists should play in public education, warning in 1926 that “if illiteracy and an impoverished rural life continues, we cannot escape our share of the blame. . . . Until each southern commonwealth assumes the responsibility of providing an adequate elementary education for all of its children wherever they may live, the next generation of Baptists will furnish practically the same number of backward rural churches led by pastors with as limited education as we now have.” Weaver, “The Contribution of the Christian College to Scholarship and the Teaching Profession,” address from February 1926. Box 5, folder 6, Rufus W. Weaver (1870–1947) Collection, AR 99, at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville (hereafter SBHLA).
according to the 1906 census, were Baptists) were in the bottom rank of both categories.\textsuperscript{35}

Throughout his time in Tennessee, Weaver led other evangelicals to take an active interest in education, acting in denominational and public circles to stir up support for expanded opportunities of education at all levels. State evangelical leaders recognized that much of the churches' strength was in the rural sections, but that the rural churches were in trouble as country people moved to the cities for jobs and better school opportunities. Improving the rural schools would strengthen the rural churches, the bulwarks of the denominations. In 1918, when he became president of the Baptist's Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, Weaver continued his advocacy for education, serving on several denominational and state education boards.\textsuperscript{36}

In their support for the school reform campaigns, state denominational journals often emphasized one particular component of the reform plan: better teachers. In the call for better teachers, religious leaders found a way to improve the quality of instruction in the public schools while at the same time aiding denominational colleges and gaining greater indirect control over the public schools. The school administrators who met in Nashville in 1903 at the call of Superintendent Mynders created a list of eight objectives

\textsuperscript{35} Weaver, "Lengthen the Rural Schools," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, March 15, 1917, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{36} Weaver's biography reads like a laundry list of denominational, state, and national educational associations, many of which he presided over: Southern Baptist Convention 75 Million Campaign (1919–21); Chair of the committee on Universities and Theological Seminaries for the SBC (1919–21); member of the Georgia Illiteracy Commission (1919–27); member of the Georgia State Education Board (1922–25); member of the National Council of Boy Scouts (1922–?); President of the Georgia Association of Colleges (1923–26); Member of the Georgia Education Association (1923–27); Corresponding Secretary of the SBC Education Board (1927–28); Secretary and Treasurer of the National Advisory Committee on Illiteracy (1929–32); and President of the SBC Education Association (1934–). In addition to all of these interests, Weaver was actively involved in war chaplaincy work and, near the end of his life, issues of religious liberty. Much of this biographical material can be found in the collection descriptions for the Rufus W. Weaver (1870–1947) Collection, SBHLA. A more extensive collection of Weavers' papers are at Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.
for the upcoming summer reform campaign, among them proposals for the “higher training of teachers” and the “elimination … of nepotism from the public schools.”\footnote{37 Holt, The Struggle for a State System, 94.}

Writers in the Nashville Baptist and Reflector apparently agreed, urging the “best professional training on the part of the teacher” and arguing that poorly qualified teachers should not be able to “step into the classroom because Uncle is on the school board.”\footnote{38 Rev. S. W. Tyndall, “Evolution of the School Idea,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, December 31, 1903, pp. 2–3; and Jas. W. Sewell, “What the South will Gain from George Peabody College for Teachers,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, September 17, 1914, p. 6.}

In an effort to both aid the campaigns for better trained teachers and not coincidentally increase their own attendance, Baptist and Methodist denominational colleges greatly expanded their normal school (teacher-training) courses in the early twentieth century. In its early years Vanderbilt had offered free tuition as an inducement to students preparing to be teachers, while in the twentieth century Chancellor Kirkland made nearly constant efforts to affiliate the university with the George Peabody College for teachers, which was located on adjacent property in Nashville.\footnote{39 [Summers], “Teachers in Council,” Nashville Christian Advocate, May 6, 1876, p. 9.}

Vanderbilt quickly discontinued this practice. Kirkland’s efforts to affiliate with Peabody, though in the long run a good addition to Vanderbilt University, added unnecessary fuel to already hot fires concerning the direction and control of Vanderbilt within Methodist circles, as well as within Nashville. Paul Conkin details the intermingling of Kirkland’s “courtship” of Peabody with the separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. See Gone with the Ivy, 149–84. After several abortive efforts, Vanderbilt and Peabody finally merged in 1979 (pp. 706–14).

\footnote{40 "Demand Better Public School Teachers,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, January 26, 1922, p. 7.}
was approved by the state and its students “have the peculiar advantage of a ‘practice school’ for high school work in the University Building, and for general public school work in the College Street City School situated right by us.” Union students could practice their teaching in the Jackson city schools, graduating as experienced teachers and therefore becoming more desirable to school boards.\textsuperscript{41} Harry Clark, the Educational Secretary of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, urged school superintendents in 1921 to get their teachers from Baptist colleges, noting that they “have been professionally trained to teach.”\textsuperscript{42} Tennessee Baptists expected Clark, who had previously been an instructor at the Summer School of the South and the University of Tennessee, to increase state school officials’ appreciation of teachers trained in denominational colleges, to turn “the faces of many of our young men and women from our public high schools to our denominational colleges,” and to help church-school graduates “find places of leadership in the educational system of the State.”\textsuperscript{43}

In addition to their efforts to bolster attendance at denominational colleges by advertising their education departments, state religious leaders saw other advantages to increasing the number of public school teachers trained in church colleges. As one supporter of a Methodist normal school argued, “the Church alone can furnish a school that can give its students Christian education.” In the wake of Vanderbilt’s separation

\textsuperscript{41} G. M. Savage, “Union University,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, June 24, 1917, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{42} Clark, “Get Your Teachers From Baptist Colleges,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, March 30, 1922, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{43} [Moore], “Our Educational Secretary,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, January 20, 1921, p. 5. In his first article as educational secretary, Clark announced first among his objectives: “the sympathy and support of the public school system will be sought for our colleges; that high schools may be led to send their graduates to Tennessee College, Carson and Newman, Union University and Hall-Moody in increasing numbers.” Clark, “Department of Christian Education,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, February 10, 1921, p. 7.
from the Methodist church, supporters of the proposed Emory University in Atlanta pointed to its teacher’s college as a center for “the regeneration of the ideals of our teachers. … The only practical thing for us to do if we would redeem ourselves is to build a truly great teachers’ college in the South—the greatest in the world.”

Tennessee evangelicals argued that only Christian teachers trained in denominational colleges could make the best impression on the pupils. If there were doubts about to what extent religious instruction could be conducted in the public schools, state evangelicals argued, the schools should be at the very least staffed with consecrated Christian teachers who could endorse religion through the force of their own examples.

Throughout the campaign era, state religious leaders continued to be avid supporters of the efforts to improve and expand elementary public education. School reformers quickly realized that religious bodies could aid in their campaigns, and they made efforts to enlist their support directly. In addition to inviting ministers to participate in the local school rallies, reformers took to the religious press and denominational conventions to encourage ministers to take an active interest in the local schools. W. R. Bourne, the state high school inspector, appeared at Methodist meetings across the state in 1913 and 1914. He made a presentation and then gave them pre-written resolutions to pass and include in their minutes. The general pattern of the resolutions, taken from the report of the Tennessee Annual Conference Board of Education for 1913, was that

Mr. W. R. Bourne, State High School Inspector, appeared before your Board and asked for the help of the pastors in strengthening our public

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elementary and secondary schools. ... [T]he object of Church and of school is much the same. We therefore suggest that our pastors give more active support to the schools in their charges, that they pay frequent visits to these schools, that they urge their people to give better facilities for the training of their children, that they assist in the survey now being made of the rural school situation by making reports of conditions in the country and in the smaller towns, and that in any other way possible they cooperate with the school interests for social and for moral uplift.\textsuperscript{46}

Bourne was well received by the denominational bodies, and the Nashville \textit{Midland Methodist} made several notes of the Methodist layman’s commencement sermons and efforts to inculcate morality into the students of the public schools.\textsuperscript{47} State evangelicals could easily endorse the plans to have ministers more involved in the public schools, believing that they could thereby use their influence on the students, teachers, and community leaders to guarantee a favorable hearing for religion and morality in the schools.

Many state religious leaders had actively supported the school reform movement and believed that better elementary schools, operating under the home rule compromise, would provide moral and religious education to even more of Tennessee’s youth. At the end of the campaign era, former school reform activist and current president of the new East Tennessee Normal School S. G. Gilbreath was invited to speak at the inauguration of


\textsuperscript{47} Nashville \textit{Midland Methodist}, May 27, 1914, p. 8; and March 24, 1915, p. 9.
Rev. William Gentry as president of the Baptist’s Carson-Newman College. Gilbreath’s address is a good indicator of what state school officials thought of the relationship between the churches and public education. “The work of the public elementary schools,” Gilbreath argued, “should find no duplication in the course of study in any denominational institution.” Furthermore, he explained, “organized Christianity and denominational institutions are under obligation to give loyal support to the public school.” Such support, Gilbreath suggested, could “be given by the co-operation of ministers with public school officials and teachers, by earnest exhortation in the church for regular attendance on the schools, and for the co-operation of parents and teachers, by attendance at teacher’s meetings and by active personal interest and work for universal education.”

The campaign era in Tennessee public education was immensely successful, and the school boosters succeeded in passing legislation to lengthen the school term, increase state and local funding, set higher standards for teachers, and begin to establish a complete system of schools from elementary to college. State religious leaders had supported the campaigns in general and had been especially vocal in their endorsement of better rural schools and professional standards for teachers. But ironically the long-term

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48 S. G. Gilbreath, “The Relation of State and Denominational Schools,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, October 18, 1917, pp. 2–3. Gilbreath continued by discussing the relationship of church and state in the newly emerging high schools, as well as in colleges. In general, he suggested that there should be no duplication of effort, even in the colleges. Denominational colleges would and should continue to exist, he explained, because they alone could provide more distinctively religious and recognizably denominational teaching so as to perpetuate the existence of the specific denominations and to provide leaders for themselves in the future. The chief reason for the existence of church colleges, he asserted, was “the desire of the church to perpetuate itself and all its institutions” and because “the denominational school is a necessary force in the existence of the church. ...” Writing in the wake of the Vanderbilt controversy, he added the caveat that “the denominational college, to be worthy of respect and support, must not deny its denominationalism.”
effects of the school reform efforts so energetically supported by denominational leaders would weaken and eventually destroy the “home rule” compromise that had originally won their support for public schools. The school campaigns had focused on streamlining school bureaucracy, removing district or local school directors, and placing control of schools into a single school board in each county.\footnote{Public Acts of Tennessee, 1907, chapter 236. Ironically, though the bill raised many objections, it actually complicated the school bureaucracy. The county board members still ran individual school district advisory boards, but they also had to work with county high school boards. This system, with minor revisions, remained until 1923, when a true county unit system was put in place, creating a school board of seven members elected at large from the county. Public Acts of Tennessee, 1923, chapter 79. For the progress of school oversight, see Rhey Boyd Parsons, “Teacher Education in Tennessee,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1935), 26–28. Parsons argues that the efforts to block centralization of school authority were purely issues of political patronage, spearheaded by local politicians who “employs and discharges their teachers, and in some cases even demands as the price of appointment either political vassalage or an actual cash bribe. ... The issue in the struggle today as in the struggle in the past is the issue between administration by petty local politicians and administration by trained educators” (28). Methodist editor George Winton supported the reform efforts for better teachers, calling for legislation to remove teacher selection from “the muck of local politics.” [Winton], “The Southern Education Board,” Nashville Christian Advocate, May 14, 1903, p. 1.}\footnote{Holt, The Struggle for a State System, 243. In 1903, there had been 3,7433 school districts in the state, each governed by three school directors. Most of the school districts, except those in towns and cities, controlled only one school. The 14,232 school directors were not necessarily pleased with the shift in control, and it was their potential opposition that led the school reformers to downplay their plans to restructure the schools. Ibid., 101.} Passed over the objections of several rural legislators who argued for “local self-government” of schools, the county board bill rationalized the school bureaucracy but at the same time limited the possibility of genuine local control of the schools.\footnote{Holt, The Struggle for a State System, 243. In 1903, there had been 3,7433 school districts in the state, each governed by three school directors. Most of the school districts, except those in towns and cities, controlled only one school. The 14,232 school directors were not necessarily pleased with the shift in control, and it was their potential opposition that led the school reformers to downplay their plans to restructure the schools. Ibid., 101.}

The movement to increase the professional standards for teachers, while in part giving churchmen an opportunity to provide professionally and religiously trained teachers for the schools, ultimately weakened the power of local school boards and communities to determine who should teach in the schools. The school law of 1873 had required teachers to obtain a certificate from the county school superintendent but did not
establish any clear standards for teachers. After 1909, teachers could obtain a
"permanent license" to teach in any state elementary schools after graduating from a state
normal school. Furthermore, the 1913 school laws set uniform state-wide standards for
teacher certification, and "the great variations in standards which existed from county to
county ceased," at least in theory.\textsuperscript{51} With the addition of standardizing legislation in
1925, the state school superintendent could enforce uniform standards of school
administration, including teacher certification, by withholding state funds for schools. By
emphasizing professional standards based on training, coursework, and experience,
teacher certification laws lessened the ability of local communities always to adhere to
older standards based on more personal judgments of character, religion, or morality.

The school reform campaigners urged the establishment of a complete system of
state schools, extending public education from the elementary schools up through the
state college. They achieved part of their goal with the 1903 state budget, finally
securing some public funding for the University of Tennessee (UT). University
appropriations remained tenuous for the next decades, but they had nonetheless
established a precedent for state funding of higher education that would allow UT to
better compete with the denominational colleges. State religious leaders such as Rufus
Weaver raised some objections to the "top-heavy" funding for the UT, arguing repeatedly
that Tennessee should spend more on rural elementary schools for all students before
providing higher education for a select few students.\textsuperscript{52} A perhaps more important

\textsuperscript{51} Parsons, "Teacher Education in Tennessee," 74 and 78 (quotations); and 69–88.
\textsuperscript{52} Weaver criticized the state's willingness to "spend a large part of its revenue in the domain of
higher education, where only the favored few are benefited" while at the same time "prevent[ing]
the children from securing a common school education" because of the inequitable distribution of
the state school funds. Rufus W. Weaver, "Lengthen the Rural Schools," Nashville Baptist and
Reflector, March 15, 1917, p. 16. Weaver continued his criticisms in several other back-page
achievement of the school reform efforts was the creation and funding of middle and high schools by state and county taxation. First made possible by an 1899 law, counties slowly established high schools throughout the first decades of the century. By 1916 forty-two of the ninety-six counties had high schools, and a 1921 law required the establishment of at least one high school in every county.\textsuperscript{53} The growth of high schools was both a threat and an advantage to denominational academies and colleges: the state schools would compete with the academies for students but would also provide a larger pool of potential students for the denominational colleges. Chancellor Kirkland of Vanderbilt, along with Presidents Watters, Savage, and Gentry of the Baptist colleges could all agree with state school superintendent Gilbreath’s assessment that “with the larger growth of the public schools will come larger prosperity to the denominational college,” but they nonetheless feared a temporary decline in enrollment as the public schools siphoned off some of the less prepared students.\textsuperscript{54} The establishment of public high schools would have a critically important, if unanticipated and unintended consequence: state elementary schools concentrated on basic academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. The new state-supported high schools, however, would include biology and other higher academic subjects among their courses. Thus the

\textsuperscript{53} Parsons, “Teacher Education in Tennessee,” 23.
\textsuperscript{54} Gilbreath, “The Relation of State and Denominational Schools,” 2–3.
growth and formalization of state education would provide the arena for the controversy over the teaching of evolution. The expansion of the state into the fields of high school and college preparatory education led it not only into direct competition with preexisting academies, but also exposed increasing numbers of students (and parents) to potentially controversial subjects such as biology and geology.  

**Failure of the Home Rule Compromise**

Following on the heels of the Superintendent Mynder's successful public school rallies during the summer of 1906, public school supporter, former editor, and now Methodist bishop Oscar Fitzgerald authored a lengthy editorial in the Nashville *Christian Advocate* on "The Old South and the New." Fitzgerald praised the educational progress of the recent years but worried about its direction:

> There has been unquestionable progress in the matter of popular education in the New South as compared with the Old South. The expenditure of money for educational purposes is larger, the percentage of illiteracy is smaller. But the question may be permitted, Has public and private morality exhibited a corresponding ratio of progress? While it is true that ignorance is the hotbed of all that is vile and ruinous to a people, it is as certainly true that mere knowledge is not sufficient to save a nation from

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55 This connection was first suggested to me by Ronald Numbers a couple of years ago, and I thank him for the idea. Edward Larson has likewise noted the importance of the growth of high schools. Tennessee high school average attendance increased from 10,000 in 1910 to over 50,000 by 1925, the time of the Scopes trial. Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 24.
destruction. Nobody but an idiot has anything to say against education.

But it depends on the kind of education as to whether it is good or evil.\textsuperscript{56}

Fitzgerald’s questions were not new, at least for the \textit{Advocate}’s pages. Editor George Winton, while he generally endorsed the plans of the Southern Education Board, nonetheless predicted as early as 1903 that “if its propaganda should prove successful, there will be a distinct tendency to organize an elaborate scheme of public education, beginning with the primary school and culminating in the State university.” In such a system, he asked, “will any place remain for the Church schools?” Or, more importantly, “will any provision be made for religious training” of the pupils in the state schools, or shall “religion … be neglected” entirely? Winton concluded that “a godless educated population is a very poor exchange for a religious and moral[ly] ignorant one” and warned school officials and his readers that “the South should not be forced upon the horns of any such dilemma.”\textsuperscript{57}

Despite the vocal support of most Tennessee evangelicals for the school reform campaigns of the early twentieth century, many state religious leaders became increasingly concerned about the stability of the “home rule” compromise that had provided a truce for questions of religion and public education since the 1880s. The “home rule” compromise had assumed that the state would provide elementary education for all children, but that parents, churches, and colleges would supplement the child’s education with religious training and that local, predominantly Protestant communities would insure that even the public schools were at least broadly Christian institutions.

\textsuperscript{56} [Fitzgerald], “The Old South and the New,” Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, April 19, 1907, p. 13.

Winton and Fitzgerald's concerns about the future growth of secular state control over public education coincided with mounting evidence that parents, Sunday Schools, and denominational colleges were not fulfilling their appropriate roles in the religious education of children.

Operating under the "home rule" compromise, state religious leaders frequently asserted that the public schools could not operate safely without moral and even Christian teachers in the classrooms. They agreed with state school officials that teachers should not necessarily teach the specific beliefs of an individual denomination but should nonetheless be of sound moral and religious character.58 E. E. Hoss encouraged "the good people in every community [to] give due attention" to the schools, arguing that "the first thing to be looked after is the character of the teachers." With the Bible in use as a regular part of the schools, Hoss and others explained, nothing "is likely to be of more benefit to boys and girls than the daily reading of the word of God in their presence by a sincere and earnest Christian teacher; but what will the effect be when that word is mumbled by a cold-hearted skeptic or a lukewarm professor of the faith?"59 Such comments were not baseless criticisms of the public school teachers: many people who could would look for other work because the pay for teachers was abysmal, the sessions too short to earn a living, and most teachers used the job as only a temporary stop or stepping stone.60 Applicants for teaching positions were not always model religious

58 Killebrew, Tennessee State Teachers Association Proceedings, 1873, p. 25.
59 [Hoss], Nashville Christian Advocate, October 18, 1890, p. 1. See also Nashville Christian Advocate, June 6, 1889; June 20, 1889; and February 22, 1890; Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 19, 1894; Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes 1889, p. 32; TBC Minutes 1890, p. 29; and TBC Minutes, 1895, p. 26.
60 Parsons, "Teacher Education in Tennessee," 43–68, details the pay and demographics of Tennessee teachers throughout the period.
citizens either. Several owed their jobs and therefore political allegiance to the patronage of their local school director or county school board member. Others, such as John Harell or Edgar E. Puryear, embodied some of the worst fears of religious leaders and school reformers alike. Apparently, both the young men were applicants for a teaching position in Dilton, a small community southeast of Murfreesboro, in the winter of 1896. It is unclear whether the two fought over the school position or the affections of a young lady also applying for the job, but Harell allegedly attacked Puryear, who “instantly drew a revolver and fired at his assailant, sending a ball crushing into his bowels, and inflicting a dangerous wound.” As the Nashville Banner editorialized the following day, “It is a sign of serious social demoralization when school teachers go about unlawfully lugging pistols in their hip pockets.”

The growth of public education to include secondary and high schools further undermined the home rule compromise, restricting definite denominational education to time outside of school or not until college age. Despite arguments for “limiting education by the State to the primary branches,” Methodist George Winton lamented as early as 1903 that “the State has taken upon itself the work of carrying pupils far beyond the simple requisites of citizenship.” The problem, he explained, was that children of high school and college age were highly impressionable, and to hazard them to potentially “godless” public schools run by possibly immoral teachers was a terrible risk.

Part of the school campaigns sponsored by the Southern Education Board had been a desire to provide public education from the elementary school through college.

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The new precedent of publicly funding the University of Tennessee increased the
demand on denominational colleges: public money altered the balance of state and
denominational schools, providing state schools with funding for teachers and equipment
that did not come from either endowments or tuition payments. The generally poorer-
equipped denominational colleges had to compete for students and at the same time
solicit funds from the sponsoring churches. As has been discussed in Chapter III above,
this increased competition forced some church colleges to look beyond their
denominations for donations. Chancellor Kirkland's efforts to balance Vanderbilt's
denominational ties with its voracious appetite for foundation monies eventually led to
the acrimonious split of the school from the southern Methodist church. The loss of
Vanderbilt was a terrible blow to many Methodists' dreams of a great church university
in Tennessee, but it had an even more powerful ripple effect on evangelicals state-wide.
The home rule compromise was predicated on a belief that strong denominational
colleges would be the capstone to the state's educational system; the loss of Vanderbilt
and the resulting uncertainty about the future of all religious colleges seriously
jeopardized an important component of the arrangement.

An even more disturbing development of the late nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries, at least as concerned evangelical adherents to the home rule compromise, was
the mounting evidence that many parents were failing to teach their children morality and
the basics of religion. As one Baptist minister observed at the turn of the century, "the
ideal is that in the home there will be family prayers, the Bible will be read and
explained, reverence for God will be taught, the religion of Christ will be emphasized
above everything else." But how many homes approach that ideal, he asked rhetorically,
answering that many more should. Even Oscar Fitzgerald, two years before he proposed the home rule compromise, had already expressed grave concerns about parents fulfilling their duties to educate children in religion and morality. The family, he argued, “should be the nursery of the Church and the palladium of the State” but was instead allowing “millions of children” to grow “up to manhood and womanhood with a disregard of all authority.” Since the church, Fitzgerald asserted, was only “the family on a larger scale,” any decline in family life and religion would jeopardize the future of the church as well.

Recognizing that too many parents were disregarding their obligations to train their children in religion, denominational leaders urged the founding of Sunday Schools throughout the state. Baptist Sunday School advocate J. M. Phillips had practically given up on many parents as early as 1880: “Talk about it as much as we may, preach against it as we should, the fact still remains that if the religious training of the children is left to the homes of the country, thousands of children will grow up without Christian culture.” Faced with parental abdication, Phillips argued it would be “the work of the Sunday-school” to “look after their moral training” and “lead them into the light of saving truth.” But as E. E. Hoss observed, these problems only grew worse as parents increasingly relinquished their child-rearing roles to the public schools and the Sunday Schools. Some parents, “relieved by the State of the necessity of educating their children, and by the Sunday School and Church of the necessity of giving them a

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religious training ... take things quietly, and seem often to forget even their most elementary duties.” As for the future if the religious life of children were neglected, Hoss argued, “the danger [lay] not in the public schools, but in the home.” These concerns would only increase in the ensuing decades, as modern entertainments multiplied and evidence continued to mount of the decline of family religion in a rapidly changing society. A new wave of concern crested after the World War I as state and national religious leaders became even more concerned for the moral and religious health of the youth after witnessing what they perceived as the German example of the results of godless education. By 1921 a religious commentator would suggest that “the old-time Christian home of Bible study and prayer has all but entirely disappeared” because too many families “find life too strenuous to give religious instruction in the homes.”

COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS, CHILDREN, AND RELIGION

From the 1890s and continuing until statewide legislation was passed in 1913, many Tennessee education reformers advocated compulsory attendance laws, speaking in favor of them at local school rallies, and commenting on their necessity in annual school reports, addresses to the Public School Officer’s Association, speeches before the General Assembly, and finally, in mass-distributed pamphlets that were sent to school

teachers and newspaper editors throughout the state. Throughout the 1890s, various county school superintendents mentioned attendance problems and an increasing number advocated state compulsory attendance laws in their annual reports to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1898 the Tennessee Federation of Women’s Clubs passed a resolution endorsing legislation to make school attendance mandatory. At the turn of the century, there were editorials in the state teachers’ journal and addresses at the state teachers’ meetings endorsing compulsory attendance. From 1898 to 1909 lawmakers introduced a compulsory attendance bill into every session of the General Assembly. If the proposals were not defeated outright, the legislators changed

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70 The first recorded legislative proposal for compulsory education in Tennessee came in 1885 when Representative William A. Fields, a black schoolteacher from Shelby County (Memphis), introduced a bill to the General Assembly. It received little support and died in committee. Tennessee House Journal 1885, (HB 119), 156, and 505. The original bill is in the legislative archives, TSLA. See also Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, 112. Fields’ bill did not make it far in the General Assembly, dying in committee after only one reading. One possible reason for the bill’s failure was its alarmingly high fines for non-compliance: the law provided that “a willful violation . . . of this act shall be a misdemeanor and punishable by a fine not less than ten nor more than fifty dollars for each offender.” A second possible reason for the bill’s failure was that it required students to attend school at least 120 days a year, this at a time when funding was inadequate to provide teachers or schoolhouses for half that number of days for all school-age children in the state. A third reason for the bill’s defeat was that it did not seem to have the support of the education lobby. None of the secondary works on education in Tennessee mention this bill. Perhaps this reflects the bias of a majority of educational historians who have written on Tennessee, who have been too closely associated with the Progressive educational reform movement to see beyond its scope. This bill was proposed by a black state legislator, and as far as I have seen, there was no mention of it made in the journals of the State Teacher’s Association, who normally proposed all state school legislation.


72 Clipping from the Nashville American, February 4, 1898, in the files of the Tennessee Federation of Women’s Clubs, Box 3, Folder 1, TSLA. The papers of the women’s clubs are filled with notices of speeches given in favor of compulsory education and many other educational concerns, but unfortunately none of the speeches remain, only programs mentioning them. In a club yearbook from 1910, there appears a new listing for a Department of Compulsory Education in addition to the Department of Education.
the bills to affect only the county introducing them.\textsuperscript{73} Finally the school lobby, with the support of progressive Republican governor Ben Hooper, managed in 1913 to pass a statewide law that required all children ages eight through fourteen to attend school at least eighty days in the year.\textsuperscript{74} County school boards were to appoint an attendance officer and to fine parents or guardians for children's truancy unless they could prove the child was "incorrigible," in which case the board could send the child to the truant (reform) school.\textsuperscript{75}

The school law of 1913 was an important watershed in the history of public education in Tennessee. Finally, after years of abortive efforts and over the objection of some parents and industrialists, school reformers supported by many state religious leaders had secured the enactment of a state-wide compulsory school attendance law. It was a momentous occasion not because it signaled a sudden legislative or ideological shift, but because the wide support for the passage of the compulsory education law indicated how far Tennesseans' conception of the state and their place within it had changed. What had been happening ever so gradually in both church and state, had been a radical reconception of the relationship of parents, children, churches, and the state.

Other than the vigorous protests of R. L. Dabney, C. D. Elliott and others, few

\textsuperscript{73} In 1905, the first such bill passed, making Tennessee's Claiborne and Union Counties the first southern school systems to compel attendance through law. By 1909, when Governor Patterson signed the General Education Bill, thirty-five counties had already secured compulsory education through private legislation.

\textsuperscript{74} In the event that a particular county could not operate its schools for eighty days, the law required students to attend the full term for that county.

Tennesseans, particularly religious or otherwise, recognized what was happening or the potential long-term ramifications of transforming the state into a surrogate parent for all children, even those already with parents of their own. Parents gave their children to the Sunday Schools for religious education and to the public schools for intellectual and manual education, but they only gradually recognized their loss of authority over how their children should be trained or just what they should learn.

The significance of the compulsory education bill and the school reformers' new conception of the relationship between individual, state, and society is easier to recognize if compared to the patriarchal conception of society which they sought to supplant. An 1843 Tennessee Supreme Court case reveals the judicial view of the relationship between patriarch, family, and state in antebellum Tennessee. In the case of *State v. Paine*, the court ruled that it could only recognize a man's wife and children "as the property of the husband and the father, having no will of their own, no rights in contradiction to his power and authority, and only considered through him as a portion of the community in which they lived." Such a relationship kept the state at arm's length, not preventing it

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76 Peter Bardaglio argues that a patriarchal model of society had prevailed in the Early Republic period nationwide, and with only slight challenge in Tennessee and the South at least through the Civil War. Antebellum southerners, he argues, held on to a patriarchal conception long after Northerners had moved toward a more individualistic conception of society and a more interventionist conception of the State. Peter W. Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), xii–xiii. Bardaglio is reacting largely to the work of Michael Grossberg, criticizing him for overlooking regional distinctiveness in legal cultures, and arguing that although there were some isolated exceptions, southern jurists overwhelmingly upheld patriarchal control of the family prior to the Civil War, and then only haltingly accepted a more contractual view of the household wherein all members had rights and could relate to the State other than through the father. Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

from acting on the patriarch of the family if it so chose, but giving to the male head of the household nearly absolute power under his own roof.78

Southern courts were beginning to make inroads into patriarchal homes during the late antebellum period, but the experiences of the Civil War simultaneously increased both the opening of the patriarchal home and opposition to that intervention. The experiences of the Civil War and Reconstruction reinforced the old suspicions of state intervention, leaving Tennesseans, as one reformer lamented, "more inclined than ever toward freedom of the individual and less inclined toward governmental interference, either state or national, with individual enterprise."79 Collins D. Elliott, a Methodist

78 Bardaglio argues that for the antebellum South, the "patriarchal household was ... the cornerstone" of society, encompassing not just wives and children, but slaves too, as dependent members under the authority of the male head of the house. By extension, he suggests that southern secession was an effort to shield that patriarchy from the perceived Republican threat to undermine the patriarchal household by emancipating the slaves. Unfortunately, he makes no efforts to describe how non-slaveholders would fit into this argument, but as Stephanie McCurry has argued, common whites also endorsed the patriarchal ideal, and many supported secession out of an effort to protect their control over their wives and children. Bardaglio, 136(quotation) and 118; Stephanie McCurry, Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). For an investigation of elite women and their relationship to the patriarchal household in the era of the Civil War, see LeeAnn Whites, The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860–1890 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

79 Andrew David Holt, Struggle for a State System of Public Schools in Tennessee, 20. Bardaglio points to the irony of the Confederacy's need for troops and supplies actually leading to a growth in centralized authority that could compel enlistment and forcibly requisition war material, Reconstructing the Household, 121. See also Emory M. Thomas, The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

The touchstone of the state controversies over schooling in the 1880s was the debates in the United States Congress over the Blair Education Bill which proposed federal funding to state schools based on their rates of illiteracy. Tennessee's New South Democrats, who favored repaying the state debt at full price and were largely comprised of former Whigs, supported the Blair Bill, seeing it as an opportunity to court black votes by increasing education funding. Throughout the 1886 campaign, gubernatorial candidate Robert L. Taylor avoided stating publicly any clear opinion on the Blair Bill, even though he had pledged his support for the bill in a private letter to New South Senator Howell E. Jackson. The proposed bill touched some raw sectional and racial nerves in Tennessee, especially since the 1880s saw the largest number of blacks in government since their 1867 enfranchisement, and federal support for education was widely believed to mean desegregated schooling, despite Tennessee constitutional provisions that forbade interracial schools. Speaking to a convention of county school superintendents in 1887,
minister and schoolmaster, was perhaps the most outspoken critic of the developing public schools. His criticisms of nineteenth-century Tennessee school reform efforts were grounded in that older, patriarchal conception of society. Outraged at the supposed invasion of New England schoolmasters and foreign ideas of education and society into Tennessee schools, Elliott offered a blunt, regional distinction: in Tennessee, "the family is the central power, recognizing that the Children belong to the Family, in [Massachusetts] the State is the central power, as if the Children belonged to the State."^80 Elliott was not, however, arguing that the state had no role to play in education. He drew upon the Tennessee constitution's declaration that "Knowledge, learning, and virtue, [are] essential to the preservation of republican institutions" but subtly adapted its language for his own purposes.^81 Elliott supported state funding for schools but wanted

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^80 Governor Taylor explained that he was "not, and never [had been], in favor of that terrible Blair Bill." He explained that he did not want any federal aid for schooling unless it came to the states to be used as they saw fit and did not seek to impose federal civil rights statutes on southern schools. In fact, he argued, Tennessee should take the money only if it came with no strings attached, "as we received it fifty years ago, when old Hickory Jackson was President of the United States." Governor Robert Love Taylor "Address" in Frank M. Smith, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Proceedings of the Convention of County Superintendents, held in the City of Nashville, December 6th and 7th, 1887 (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce, 1887), 11. On the racial implications of the Blair bill, see Cartwright, Triumph of Jim Crow, 52. Cartwright details the political wrangling within the Democratic party in the 1880s as state-credit, high tax, New South Democrats and low-tax Bourbon Democrats competed for black votes and opened the door to Republican-Agrarian-Blackfusionist politics.

^81 Elliott, Eagle Wing vs. Mayflower, 4, 9, 8, and 6. Elliott was not just making this language up. See for example the declaration of the Wisconsin Teachers' Association from 1865 that "children are the property of the state." Quoted in Carl F. Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 158.

^81 He pointed out the provision in the Tennessee Constitution (1870) which declared that "Knowledge, learning, and virtue, [are] essential to the preservation of republican institutions, and the diffusion of the opportunities and advantages of education throughout the different portions of the State, [are] highly conducive to the promotion of this end." To fulfill these goals, the constitution created a state "common school fund," the interest of which was "to be inviolably appropriated to the support and encouragement of common schools throughout the State." Constitution of the State of Tennessee (1834) Article XI. Section 10. Quoted in White, Tennessee State Educational Organization, 41. The first constitution of the state of Tennessee (1796) made
to maintain family influence and choice in how the schools were run. In the constitution, he asserted, "there is not one dotted i nor crossed t indicating any other relation of the State to educating children, than what you find in that word encourage, so clearly and constantly are the children regarded as belonging to the Family and the State being bound to 'Favor,' 'Foster,' 'Promote' and 'Encourage' education and thus help the 'Family.'"\footnote{82}

Progressive-era education reformers rejected arguments such as Elliott's that favored local and familial control of education. In the minds of the reformers, the proper understanding of society was not as the voluntary association of patriarchal families but as an interdependent—even organic—community in which illiteracy increased crime and obstructed economic advancement. Underlying all other arguments was an understanding of an interdependent society in which individual actions had far more than individual consequences. Governor Ben W. Hooper (1911–15) provided perhaps the clearest enunciation of this assumption, explaining in his first legislative address to the General Assembly of 1911 that "the individual citizen of Tennessee is a member of a complex social organization, and, as such, sustains relations to millions of individuals who have the right to demand of him that he so conduct himself as not to injure his brother, whose keeper he is." This is certainly a different conception of society than the antebellum patriarchal society in which, for the most part, family members were subsumed under the head of the household and the state acted only in response to a crime committed. Hooper and other progressive reformers, operating from the assumption of an interdependent society, justified extending state power to preventative actions and

\footnote{82 Elliott, *Eagle Wing vs. Mayflower*, 12.}
criminalizing behaviors that they previously considered individual prerogatives. As Hooper argued, "the state has the right to restrain [the citizen who drinks alcohol, refuses to send his children to school, or works on Sundays], not for the petty purpose of tyrannizing over him, but for the great and righteous purpose of protecting society."  

The vast majority of the education reformers shared Hooper’s conception of society, although few stated it so explicitly. In his 1903 presidential address to the State Teachers’ Association, Samuel E. Hill warned that “The illiterates are here. They hang as millstones about our necks, making progress uncertain and slow. Our society cannot move faster than the slowest element in it.”

In spite of the opposition of Collins Elliott—and his opposition was not just to compulsory education, but to any extension of public schools or decline of parental authority—most Tennessee religious leaders had, by the early twentieth century, strongly endorsed the campaigns for compulsory education. Just as they had turned from moral suasion to legal prohibition in their battle against alcohol and to the Sunday School to pick up where recreant parents failed in religious education, they endorsed efforts to compel student attendance at the public schools. “As to compulsory primary education,” George Winton argued that “it is scarcely a question at all.” Such a law “would be no hardship to right-minded parents, and such of our children as have parents too ignorant or

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too selfish to care for their training need the protection of just such a law.”¹⁸⁵ E. E. Folk offered a similar endorsement to state Baptists, stating that he was “inclined also to believe in compulsory education. ... Of course, the compulsion ought to come from the parents, but when it does not, is it not a duty the State owes itself and owes its citizens, after providing education for them, to see that they shall take advantage of it?”¹⁸⁶ Folk urged ministers to utilize their influence on parents and communities to encourage better school attendance and better compliance with enforcing the compulsory education law.¹⁸⁷

One of the most frequent arguments used by the supporters of compulsory education was that the children of the state had a right to education, and it was the duty of the state to guarantee that right to its children. As P. P. Claxton put it in 1907, “Children have rights ... and the State must protect them in these rights. Chief among them is the right to such education and training as will enable them to ... become intelligent and self-supporting citizens.”¹⁸⁸ The question of just where these children’s rights originate highlights a central tenet in the reformers’ understanding of the relationship between individual, state, and society. They replaced the patriarchal society lionized by Collins

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¹⁸⁵ [Winton], Nashville Christian Advocate, November 16, 1905, p. 6. Chancellor James H. Kirkland of Vanderbilt was also an advocate of compulsory education laws, arguing that they would help fight the problem of child labor. See Kirkland, “The School as a Force Arrayed against Child Labor,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 25 (1905), 559, where he endorses the “parental power” of the state to supervise the education of children. The Christian Advocate included several other endorsements of compulsory education. See for example J. D. Hammond, “Compulsory Education,” Nashville Christian Advocate, March 22, 1907, p. 16; and [Winton], “The Battle Against Ignorance,” Nashville Christian Advocate, September 27, 1907, pp. 3–4.

¹⁸⁶ [Folk], Nashville Baptist and Reflector, March 8, 1906, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ [Folk], “Minister and the Public School,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 5, 1917, p. 8. See also Harry Clark, “The Opening of the Public Schools,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, August 21, 1924, p. 8.

¹⁸⁸ [Claxton], Should the General Assembly, 6. George Fort Milton, editor of the Knoxville Sentinel, explained in a 1908 article that “in compelling the parent to send the child to school, the State does no more than to secure to the child his right.” “Compulsory Education and the Southern States,” Sewanee Review, 16 (January 1908), 39–41.
Elliott with a system of state patriarchy. Education, in their words, was a right that the child “inherits from the state.”89 The reformers refuted arguments about the rights of parents, instead placing the welfare of the child and the society over the prerogative of the parent.

A 1915 Tennessee Supreme Court case ruling reveals how the court viewed the true importance of education for the state and suggests that the Progressives’ invocations of the rights of the child were, at least on one level, calculated rhetorical devices. In the case of Cross et al. v. Fisher et al., the court ruled that “the public school system of the State” exists “for the general benefit of all the people of the State, and not primarily, but incidentally, for the benefit of the pupils.” Furthermore, the justices declared that the “free schooling furnished by the State is not so much a right granted to pupils as a duty imposed upon them for the public good.” But the language of the court and some of the reformers reveals that they held a new conception of the importance of the state in and of itself, beyond just “the public good.” As the court declared in the Cross case, “the fundamental purpose of a public school system is the protection and improvement of the State as a political entity.”90 School reformer William Hand drew the distinction even more bluntly: “The schools exist primarily for the benefit of the State, rather than for the benefit of the individual.”91 The reformers shattered the old patriarchal model, inserting the interest and power of the State between and above the parent and the child. Not only must “the State . . . be protected against the dragging down influence of the ignorant,” but

90 Cross et al. v. Fisher et al. 132 Tenn. 38 and 43.
“a parent who permits a child to grow up in ignorance is committing an offense not only against the child, but against the State.”\textsuperscript{92}

Tennessee evangelical leaders’ support for compulsory elementary education, based as it was on their arguments of a child’s right to an education and the inability of parents to withhold that from their children, completely demolished what was left of the home rule compromise. In the spring of 1923, Methodist editor Alfred Smith described the total failure of the "home rule" compromise:

(1) A large number of public school pupils have hardly a home, much less the training of a Christian home; (2) a large number of public school pupils who represent Christian homes do not receive in those homes that religious training which should begin in every home; (3) a large proportion of public school pupils never see a Sunday school; (4) those pupils of the public schools who attend Sunday school are inhibited by limitation of time and other circumstances from receiving that religious instruction which can be called adequate.\textsuperscript{93}

Religious leaders had grown wary of parents’ ability and willingness to provide religious education for their children even as public school reforms had weakened the ability of local communities to determine for themselves questions of curriculum or teacher qualification. The "home rule" arrangement had been a serviceable \textit{modus vivendi}, but the newly reformed and centrally controlled public school system that could compel student attendance actually provided an even more potent tool for moral and religious education. Because the state had assumed the parental role in the education of children,


\textsuperscript{93} [Smith], “The Week-day School of Religion,” Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, April 27, 1923, p. 6.
religious leaders argued, it then had to assume further parental duties such as providing for not just intellectual but also moral training: "Since our government has taken this parental care of the young, she should see to it that education is thorough and strictly moral."\textsuperscript{94} Editor Smith concluded that if children were not receiving sufficient religious training in the home or the Sunday School, then the church must reach them where it could, in the public school: "the Christian Church must adopt some method of giving the children of our public school[s] a form of religious instruction during the week."\textsuperscript{95}

\textbf{Protestantism in the Public School}

In the spring of 1917 the Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate} reprinted an excerpt from an "unnamed" clergyman who objected to religious education in the public schools and argued that such instruction should remain in the hands of parents and churches. Methodist editor Thomas Ivey’s response to the passage succinctly demonstrates the extent to which most Tennessee religious leaders had abandoned the home rule compromise:

\begin{quote}
Just think of leaving the spiritual and religious element in education to ‘the Churches and families’ when the Churches reach only a handful of child life [sic] and virtually most of the parents who are halfway Christians are
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{95} [Smith], "The Week-day School of Religion," 6.
leaving the religious instruction of their children to the tender mercies of the secular school!"  

W. C. Owen would echo these thoughts five years later, stating clearly his and other evangelicals' perceptions that the "home is not functioning very effectively in the religious training of children." In light of this failure by parents to adequately educate their children, the Memphis Annual Conference suggested that "the future generations in this country will be trained in religion by the churches or not at all."  

Tennessee Methodists and Baptists had been attempting to fulfill this mission from at least the 1880s, believing that churches could through their Sunday Schools and other outreach programs compensate for parental shortcomings in religious education. But the churches did not recognize their responsibility as limited to only the children of church members. As a conference of West Tennessee Methodists argued in 1910, "Upon the churches rests the responsibility for the religious education, not only of their own children, but also of the American people as a whole."  

evangelicals had grown suspicious of parents' ability to or faithfulness in educating their

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96 [Ivey], Nashville Christian Advocate, March 16, 1917, p. 3. Ivey was further incensed that the criticisms of religion in the public schools could come from a member of the clergy: "It is a strange thing to come from a representative of that body which started the movement for universal education, which has fostered all the real educational ideals that are worth anything, and whose stamp will be on education when the proudest colleges and universities of to-day shall have given back their brick and mortar to mother earth." It is hard to tell for sure, but it is possible that Ivey could be responding to a recent article in the Nashville Baptist and Reflector in which Rufus Weaver, while arguing for the necessity of denominational education, explained that "The weakness of American education is to a large degree overcome by the fact that the child while in the public school receives in the home, in the Sunday school, and in the church religious instruction which compensates for the absence of such instruction in the public school." Rufus Weaver, "A Message on Christian Education," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, January 3, 1917, pp. 2-4.


children religiously, likewise they increasingly worried that Sunday Schools would be insufficient for the task as well. The problem with leaving religious education to the churches alone, one Methodist rationalized, was that “The Church is not reaching millions of the children and the youth of this country.” If the churches were to pass on their religion to the rising generation and have some hope of Christianizing the future society, they would have to find another means of proselytization.¹⁰⁰

Looking around themselves, Tennessee evangelicals of the early twentieth century saw a number of signs that society was drifting far from their religious ideals. Efforts to reach the hearts of children and adults, though successful in individual cases, were proving ineffective on a larger societal scale. On the particular issue of alcohol, as has been discussed in Chapter IV above, Tennessee evangelical moralists shifted from persuasion to coercion, campaigning for and eventually succeeding in enacting their temperance beliefs into prohibitory laws. Prohibition was an effort to change the behavior of adults; would not it be more effective, state religious leaders rationalized, to begin teaching morality and restraint to children in the home and school? But since they had already grown dubious of the prospects of true home religion that would reach every child or even the power of local communities to guarantee a role for religion and morality in the public schools, Tennessee evangelicals began campaigns to legislate religion into the public schools. With the new centralized school bureaucracy and compulsory attendance laws, evangelicals could spread their beliefs widely, even establishing in the next generation the religious society for which they had for so long hoped.

Many of the same Tennessee evangelical leaders who had been active supporters of the public school reform campaigns and who had been speaking and preaching on the importance of the public school for the future of society realized that those same public schools could be strong allies of religion and the mission of the church to educate the world. With the expansion of the public schools throughout the state and the growing attendance rates, more students were receiving greater portions of their education in the state-funded elementary schools. As school hours increased, the relative time and influence of parents and churches on the education of children decreased. State Baptists and Methodists gradually realized that, as one of the their number explained, "the school-teacher has fallen heir to the largest share of the minister's former mantel of influence in the community."101 This new recognition of the power of the public school and its teachers shaped Tennessee evangelicals' suggestions of the proper relationship between religion and education in the wake of the home rule compromise's demise. Though parents and churches should retain their responsibility for religious education, teachers in the public schools could be utilized to provide at least a modicum of religious and moral education to the children.

As has been stated above, most Tennessee Baptists and Methodists had accepted and endorsed public schools because they thought the schools would support, if not actively lead, the religious and moral development of children. According to Oscar Fitzgerald, broker of the home rule compromise, Christians did not have to, and probably should not, force religion into the public schools. Most teachers were

101 Prof. W. W. Richeson, "Will the Church Rise to the Needs of the Hour, and Will the Colleges of the Methodist Church, South, Take the Lead?" Nashville Christian Advocate, February 27, 1925, pp. 6–7.
religious, most schools began with Bible reading, and nearly all schools were morally safe. At the beginning of the twentieth century the compromise was already beginning to crumble because of evangelicals’ growing awareness of parents’ unwillingness or inability to provide religious education. But it took the comments of an outsider to bring the issue into sharp relief. In the spring of 1903, U.S. Commissioner of Education William Torrey Harris announced “that religious instruction should be confined to the Church, and that it should be divorced entirely from the public schools.” The first part of Harris’s opinion supported the old home rule compromise, but his further directive to remove religion from the schools was too much for many Tennessee evangelicals to stomach. He did receive some support, including a letter from Nashville Christian Advocate correspondent David H. Bishop, who argued that non-religious or sectarian teachers being forced to teach religion could do more harm than good by usurping what he considered the proper role of the home and church.\textsuperscript{102} Among the Methodists, at least, Bishop’s was a lonely voice. W. P. Lovejoy responded, arguing that “If Dr. Harris’s contention be followed, if ‘religious instruction should be divorced entirely from the public schools,’ there is nothing in reason or religion that can justify the existence of a public school. Nothing is or can be education that has not religion for its corner stone.”\textsuperscript{103} At the very least, Lovejoy and many others argued, the public schools should teach and reinforce morality, a morality based on religious principles.

George Winton, the former missionary to Mexico, future Vanderbilt professor, and current editor of the southern Methodists’ most influential weekly paper, responded

unequivocally to Harris's call for the "absolute banishment of religious instruction from our public schools" with a number of editorials in the spring of 1903. Winton, normally an avid supporter of the public schools, placed the blame for controversy squarely on the shoulders of both Harris and state school boosters. The present "difficulty" concerning the place of religion in public education, Winton argued, "ought to have been foreseen and obviated by limiting education by the State to the primary branches," which would be sufficient for teaching "the simple requisites of citizenship." In those years "the home may be trusted for [the child's] moral training," and then the parent could "select the religious training congenial to his taste" by choosing among the various "voluntary schools for the higher branches." "But whether abstractly right or wrong," Winton continued, "the State has taken upon itself the work of carrying pupils far beyond the simple requisites of citizenship." As such, Winton argued, the state must now assume its share of responsibility for the moral and religious education of children. 104

It is difficult to estimate the extent of religious influence in Tennessee's public schools, but public opinion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries latched onto an important symbolic issue: the place of the Bible in the classroom. Opinions on the place of the Bible in the public schools had differed within and between Baptist and Methodist state organizations from the 1870s, but in the first decades of the twentieth century state evangelicals would approach a nearly unanimous agreement on the necessity of including the Bible in the regular program of Tennessee public schools. This had not always been the case. In general, nineteenth-century Tennessee Baptists had raised principled objections to requiring the use of the Bible in the public school.

Responding to a proposal to petition the state legislature “that the Bible … be used as a text-book in the public schools,” the 1882 meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, after a lengthy discussion, voted “by a large majority” not to adopt the resolution. In spite of the pleadings of one member that he “had received his first knowledge of the Bible from lessons in a day school” and another that “the Bible should be taught and explained in all the schools of the land,” Tennessee Baptist leaders overwhelmingly endorsed J. B. Gambrell’s opinion that it would “be a departure from established Baptist principles to ask any assistance from the State in the matter of religious instruction.” Gambrell’s reasoning in part reflected the historic Baptist sensitivity about a union of church and state, a legacy of Baptist protest against the established English church and Baptist experience as persecuted dissenters in both England and early America. But his rationale further suggested a recognition of the same conditions that had led Fitzgerald to present the “home rule” compromise. The Bible was already in use in many of the schools, and any attempt at legislation would be “impolitic” and would most likely lead “into an ever-lasting muddle.”

Edgar E. Folk surveyed a number of Baptist educational leaders in the spring of 1894, presenting their opinions on “Our Public Education System” in the Nashville

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105 This sensibility did not die out among Baptists, and its recurring presence provided a potential foil to some Baptists’ and other evangelicals’ efforts to force religious beliefs on the public schools and teachers of the state. But Tennessee Baptists in favor of maintaining a strict separation of church and state were outnumbered or at least outvoiced by those who increasingly saw Bible reading and weekday religious teaching in the public school not as a violation of the separation of church and state, but the only way to maintain the state. For the recurring objections, see for example, Prof. W. S. Woodward, “Why Baptists Should Persist in Education,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, December 24, 1914, pp. 2–3; and especially J. W. Gillon, “Some Reasons Why I Oppose the Compulsory Use of the Bible in the Public Schools,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, July 22, 1915, p. 2.

106 Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes, 1882, p. 27, reel no. 1, pub. No 239, SBHLA.
Baptist and Reflector. Many of the respondents seemed to agree with Mercer University President J. B. Gambrell's statement that he was "against the Bible's being forced into the public schools." They did not argue that the Bible should not be used, only that it should be there voluntarily, taught by Christian teachers to children whose parents approved.107 Other respondents, chief among them Wake Forest President Charles Elisha Taylor, argued unequivocally that "The only logical position which I can hold, especially because I am a Baptist, is that prayer and the Bible have no place in schools supported by the State."108 But it was President William S. Johnson of Mountain Home College who expressed an opinion that more and more Tennessee Baptists would come to endorse in the following decades. Recognizing the new relationship of the state to the public schools and students—Johnson called the state's action a declaration of its intention to assume "parental care of the young"—he argued that the state "should see to it that education is thorough and strictly moral." On this question of moral education, Johnson continued, "I can't refrain from expressing myself in favor of the use of the Bible in the school room." He argued further that "To take the Bible out of the public

107 Gambrell, "Our Public School System," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 19, 1894, p. 2. President J. P. Greene of William Jewel College offered a similar opinion, stating that "I should not make a fight on reading the Bible in the public schools" even though he would urge the selection of good moral teachers. Greene, "Our Public School System," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 19, 1894, p. 2.
108 Taylor, "Our Public School System," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 19, 1894, p. 2. Much of Taylor's article concerned his objections to public education beyond the elementary grades, and especially the practice in North Carolina of providing reduced tuition at state colleges and unfairly, he believed, driving religious schools out of existence. James Leloudis focuses almost exclusively on this, perhaps economically motivated, part of Taylor's objections in Schooling the New South, 113–15. But Taylor's objections also centered around the question of what kind of education was best for children and young adults, suggesting that a thorough education required training of both the heart and mind, and such an education could only be found within a denominational institution. See A Citizen of North Carolina [Taylor], How Far Should a State Undertake to Educate? or, a Plea for the Voluntary System in the Higher Education (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1894); as well as Chapter III above on arguments about the importance of denominational colleges.
schools" would be illogical, since it was the Bible and religion that had inspired "the establishment of public schools.\textsuperscript{109}

Under the home rule arrangement, most Tennessee evangelicals had assumed that the Bible would be used in the schools regularly—for morning devotions and as a textbook for reading, as well as geography and history—but only if there were not objections to its use. This appears to have been the general rule in rural Tennessee, and the wisdom of not forcing the Bible into the schools seemed even more apparent when some urban Tennesseans petitioned the Nashville and Memphis school boards to require daily Bible reading. The Nashville Board of Education and the City Council both debated petitions to have the Bible read and the Lord’s Prayer said in the schools every morning, leading to several weeks of acrimonious debate at the beginning of 1896. The motion eventually foundered in the tumult of the city’s nativist politics with the council splitting evenly over the measure.\textsuperscript{110} The bill did not pass, but the practice of Bible reading apparently continued in many of the city schools.\textsuperscript{111} A similar petition in Memphis consumed the city’s school board for much of the summer and fall of 1902, ending only when the original petitioners withdrew their request, stating that they had


\textsuperscript{111} In an argument before the Memphis school board, Alfred Mason noted that the Bible was used in the Nashville schools "with no harm." See "That Memphis Bible Text Book Question," Memphis 	extit{Commercial Appeal}, September 9, 1902, p. 5.
“worked only for what [the petitioners] considered the best interest of the children in the public schools and did not at any time intend the agitation which was raised.” \footnote{112}

Unfortunately the secular news sources did not specify who supported the 1896 and 1902 petitions. The Memphis papers reported that Dr. W. H. Neal, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in the city refused to endorse the petition and that his refusal “has provoked some agitation among the Protestants supporting the movement.” \footnote{113} Governor Bentin McMillin clearly supported the proposals, asking that they be extended across the state in 1902. \footnote{114} Neither Baptist nor Methodist state papers endorsed the efforts explicitly, although they noted that the petitions had been presented. \footnote{115} Editor Folk’s notices do not reveal his specific opinion on Bible reading in general, but he does object to the Memphis plan to create a book of Bible readings agreeable to Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. The problem, he suggested, was that such a book would remove the force of the Christian message and vitiate the purposes of reading the Bible to the children. \footnote{116}

The objections to required Bible reading in the Nashville and Memphis city schools were generally grounded in a fear of the controversy that would likely ensue to

\footnote{112}“Proposition is Withdrawn: So Ends the Controversy over Bibles in Schools,” Memphis Commercial Appeal, November 11, 1902, p. 6.
\footnote{113}“Dr. Neal Refuses; Daily Reading of Scriptures in the City Schools; Will Not Sign the Petition,” Memphis Commercial Appeal, October 2, 1902, p. 7.
\footnote{114}“The Bible in School,” Memphis Commercial Appeal, July 26, 1902, p. 3. McMillen made his pronouncement at a meeting of the Tennessee State Teachers Association meeting in Monteagle.
\footnote{115}Nashville Baptist and Reflector, March 19, 1896, p. 1; Nashville Baptist and Reflector, September 18, 1902, p. 1; and Nashville Christian Advocate, September 18, 1902, p. 3.
\footnote{116}“We should like to see this Bible. We wonder if it will contain such passages for instance, as ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life;’ ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him;’ ‘The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,’ etc. And the question comes, If there is no blood in the Bible is it a Bible?” [Folk], Nashville Baptist and Reflector, September 18, 1902, p. 1.
the detriment of both religion and education. One Nashville Board of Education member demurred on religious grounds, arguing that "religion is a matter of personal choice, and not force. . . . Forcing the teachings of the Bible upon any class of citizens has never and will never do any good for the cause of Christ." 117 The Memphis Commercial Appeal editorialized that forcing the Bible into the public schools would assure "the ultimate destruction of a noble educational system." 118 Other objectors recognized the religious diversity of the two cities and the inevitable controversy of setting one, probably Protestant Christian, standard for all of the city schools. Commissioner Stokes of Nashville reminded the rest of the Board of Education about the responsibility of the schools to people of all faiths, arguing that we collect for school purposes money from every class of citizens, be he Jew, Catholic, Christian or infidel, and I do not think it is compatible with the doctrines of free government, where a man can follow the dictates of his own heart in all matters of worship to take that money and expend any part of it in forcing into our public schools, and teaching therein, a book whose doctrines are opposed, from a religious point, by any citizens from whom we collect taxes.

Further, he expressed a tolerance for other interpretations of religion, stating that although he did not agree with Jews, Catholics, or Muslims, it was the duty of the Protestants "to win them to our view, not by force, but by persuasion." 119 Stokes's arguments were remarkably similar to those presented by Baptist educator R. A. Venable in his 1894 response to Folk's questionnaire about religion and the public schools. Requiring Bible reading would be unfair to taxpayers of other or no faiths, he

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argued, because "These both pay taxes. Read the Catholic Bible and you do violence to the Protestant. Read the Protestant Bible and you do violence to the Catholic. Read the New Testament and you hurt the Jew."\textsuperscript{120}

This broad religious toleration, rarely expressed, was nonetheless supported by a general assumption that most of the schools were at least broadly Protestant institutions, and that parents, churches, and local rural communities would continue to insure the moral and religious soundness of public school education. In most rural areas, there was little likelihood of any non-Protestant student. But in the following decades, after public school expansion and centralization combined with an increased perception of the failure of parents and churches to provide religious education, more and more Tennessee evangelicals increasingly presented arguments to overwhelm potential constitutional or religious objections in their efforts to require Bible reading and in some cases even Bible teaching, in the public schools.

Methodist editor George Winton confronted both constitutional and religious objections to Bible reading in the public schools only months after William Torrey Harris's 1903 pronouncement that religion should be completely removed. "Those who contend that no religious instruction whatever can be given in a State institution because of our adherence as a nation to the principle of complete separation between Church and State have the better of the argument," Winton conceded. But, he continued, since the state had gone beyond the original agreement and was attempting to provide a complete system of education for all children, "the State—that is, the public—is now under

\textsuperscript{120} R. A. Venable, "Our Public School System," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 19, 1894, p. 2.
obligation to be illogical at a further point.” Instead of being “intimidated by [the] logic” of the “strict constructionists,” Winton argued for daily use of the Bible.

For though it must be allowed that separation between Church and State is one of our national principles and that a strict allegiance thereto seems to require the banishment of religious instruction from State schools, we are on the other hand confronted with an array of menacing facts... it is time we cut this Gordian knot and throw logic to the dogs. ... The clamor of the strict constructionists has somewhat deafened others among us, and, intimidated by their logic, we have been consenting to a course of things which both experience and reason pronounce calamitous. We are sacrificing our children on the altar of consistency, and preparing to wreck our country on a syllogism.

Winton suggested that although “we can probably never have religious instruction by enactment,” Protestants could build public opinion and “some things can be done by common consent.” Surveying the scene of religion and education in the winter of 1914, Winton’s successor at the Christian Advocate explained that he felt “a sinking of the heart” when he considered the potential obstacle of “the Constitution, whose spirit at least is regarded as opposed to the reading of the Bible and even to the teaching of fundamental religious truth in the public schools.” This would not be such a problem, he suggested, if parents, churches, and denominational colleges were fulfilling their obligations; his despair would only grow in the coming weeks as the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust. Ivey reprinted articles

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from Tennessee and other states on school and church plans to provide for Bible reading and even explicitly religious teaching in the public schools.\textsuperscript{122}

Evangelical arguments for placing the Bible in the public schools gained new power after 1914, as the outbreak of the European war dramatically increased the supposed stakes of Tennesseans' debates over the proper role of religion in education. The scattered efforts to require daily Bible reading in certain city school systems became irrelevant in 1915 when the Tennessee General Assembly passed a law "regulating the reading of the Holy Bible in the Public Schools of Tennessee." Despite the fact that the bill had been reported "without recommendation" by the House committee on education and reported "for rejection" by the companion Senate committee, it passed with relative ease. The only recorded objections again came from urban legislators, in this case both from Memphis and Shelby County, who made arguments similar to those expressed in the earlier efforts to require Bible reading in Nashville and Memphis. Representative W. M. Stanton explained his "no" vote "because I do not think religion of any kind should ... [have] any part in our public schools or institutions. It is not [in] keeping with [the] genius or spirit of institutions or form of government." In a like manner, Representative Straus explained his fear that "religious preferences enacted into law is contrary to the spirit of our State and Federal Governments."\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{123} Tennessee House Journal 1915, p. 1048. The bill passed the House 64-10 after the objections of Stanton and Straus. The Senate Education Committee's rejection of the bill was changed to a recommendation after an amendment which prohibited the reading of the same passage more than twice in a session. The original bill, with amendments, is filed as HB 379 in the Legislative History department, TSLA. The final bill, as signed by Governor Thomas Clark Rye, is in Tennessee Public Acts, 1915, Chapter 102, pp. 23-24.
The passage of this statewide law went largely unnoticed by the state Methodist papers in the spring of 1915 but elicited a blistering critique from J. W. Gillon, executive secretary of the Tennessee Baptist State Board of Missions. In an article plainly titled “Some Reasons Why I Oppose the Compulsory Use of the Bible in the Public Schools,” Gillon presented arguments based not only on an older Baptist church-state sensitivity, but also on an expanded interpretation of the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment protections of religion and religious dissent. The measure passed by the Tennessee General Assembly, Gillon argued, was an abuse of majority power at the expense of the rights of “a protesting, respectable minority.” Such legislation violated “the spirit of the Constitution of the United States,” the “American doctrine of religious liberty,” and threatened the creation of a “State Church.” After his constitutional arguments, Gillon turned his criticisms on the churches themselves, suggesting that forced Bible reading was a sign of great spiritual decay; it was an attempt to substitute form for substance:

The very fact that we have come to a period in our history when such legislation can be proposed is an evidence that vital godliness is on the wane and that we are undertaking to put the form of godliness in the place of vital godliness.

Not wanting his point to be missed, Gillon warned that such coercive measures as compulsory daily Bible reading in the public schools “will ultimately end in great injury to Christianity itself.” For one, it would endanger denominational schools by making the state schools seem Christian: “When we break down, in outward appearance, the line of cleavage between the secular and the religious institution, we inevitably destroy the
religious institution without making better the secular.”\textsuperscript{124} The truthfulness of this statement must have seemed all the more apparent in the wake of the acrimonious separation of Vanderbilt University from the southern Methodist church only a year before.

Whatever support Gillon’s article may have elicited remained mostly out of the pages of the Tennessee Baptist and Methodist journals.\textsuperscript{125} Other state religious leaders were by early 1915 turning their attention to the growing European war. Methodist editor Thomas Ivey saw the war, and German aggression in general, as a direct result of “godless” German public education and worried about “the almost complete secularization” of American education. Ivey continued, arguing that “No European war is needed to teach us that the splendid education which, according to secularists, would bring such richness to our life as a people has failed us.”\textsuperscript{126} After the \textit{Baptist and Reflector} published an article by W. J. McGlothlin on “The German School System and the Great War,” editor Albert R. Bond remarked that “it has provoked more favorable comment among our readers than any article for a long time.” Bond summarized


\textsuperscript{125} Gillon’s arguments were more in line with the arguments presented in Virginia roughly a decade later in controversies there over the required reading of the Bible in the public schools. By that time, the editorial voice of the Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector} was strongly in favor of daily Bible reading in the public school, even to the point of entering into an editorial attack and response with the Rev. Dr. R. H. Pitt, editor of the Richmond \textit{Religious Herald}. See [J. D. Moore], “Bible in Public Schools,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, April 24, 1924, p. 2; [Moore], “Bible in Public Schools Approved,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, May 8, 1924, p. 1; and [Moore], “Dr. Pitt Puzzled,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, May 29, 1924, p. 2. The Baptist state secretary of education Harry Clark went so far as to reprint the Tennessee law requiring daily Bible reading in the spring of 1925. See Clark, “Remember this Law,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, April 9, 1925, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{126} [Ivey], “The Coming Reunion,” Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, March 19, 1915, p. 4. A few weeks later Ivey, in an article criticizing efforts to exclude the Bible from the public schools of some states, pointedly stated that such actions were directly “responsible for the world’s being now at war.” [Ivey], “Can We Afford It?” Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, April 16, 1915, p. 4.
McGlothlin's lengthy arguments so that his readers would not miss their timely importance. McGlothlin, he explained "plainly indicates that German kultur was produced through Prussian militarism, disassociated with the religious sanction for deeds, and became inwrought into the national life through the school system of the nation." This, Bond argued, "should be a warning to American life lest we too forget the essential things that ought to be taught in our school system."\(^{127}\)

Tennessee's evangelical leaders built on this war-time attitude, taking ever more aggressive stances on the necessity of guaranteeing a moral and religious education to children in all schools, no matter if they were private or public, and dismissing as overblown any concerns about a union of church and state. Even after America entered the war and helped to defeat the Germans, southern religious leaders increased their warnings that America could be headed in the same direction. Postwar jeremiads traced the supposedly inevitable decline in public morality to the continued secularization of public education. Methodist Bishop Warren Candler predicted postwar education would be "missionary work" by which the southern churches should "not only convert the rest of the world, but now the rest of America." The southern churches were particularly suited to this task, he argued, because "the degenerate forms of rationalistic religion have

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\(^{127}\) The original article was published February 28, 1918; Bond's editorial comments were "The Fundamental Factor," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, March 28, 1918, p. 9. Bond makes an interesting departure near the end of his editorial, suggesting a prototype system of private or religious school vouchers, whereby students could be supported by state scholarships in denominational schools because "the national life shall take cognizance of religion in the school system through which its national ideals are most largely created. ... While there may not be direct giving by the State in support of the church school, there can be worked out a system of scholarships or rules of the individual pupil that may allow him attendance upon a church school while his support is being supplied by the civil funds."
never been able to take root in our section.”128 Rev. Stonewall Anderson, secretary of the Southern Methodist Board of Education, which was based in Nashville, argued in the summer of 1918 that although military victory may come for the Allies, the peace would not end the real war, for “a bloodless war of thought will continue.” The war in Europe, Anderson explained, was not to resist Germany, but “to resist Germanism.” He echoed the arguments of the Baptist McGlothlin, explaining that “German kultur” had been spread through the public schools and warning that to truly win the war “we must develop and promote Christian culture by the aid of our schools, colleges, and universities.”129

In the war years and immediately afterwards, most Tennessee evangelical leaders renewed their push for guaranteeing a place for religion in the public schools. Though they would usually balk at efforts for denominationally specific teachings—at least in areas where there was not a clear denominational preference among all of the citizens of a school district—nearly all focused once again on the symbolic issue of daily Bible reading in the schools. Methodist editor Thomas Ivey clearly stated the plan in a July 1917 editorial: “This great world war, in which our own country has at last become involved, has brought about a most opportune time for restoring religion and the Bible to

128 W. A. Candler, “Our Educational Work Is Now Missionary Work Also,” Nashville Christian Advocate, August 13, 1915, p. 12. Candler was the first president of the new MECS university in Atlanta, Emory University, and was very interested in setting up a teacher training department at the school. Rev. William F. Quillian, another supporter of Emory, made similar arguments after the war about the necessity of training teachers in “safe” institutions: “our quickest and surest way to bring permanent peace to the disordered nations is by the training of our young men and maidens in schools which recognize an honor the Peacemaker imperial of all ages. To do this we must have teachers who can rightly lead in this glorious crusade.” Quillian, “Building for Peace,” Nashville Christian Advocate, February 14, 1919, p. 23.
their former place of fundamental importance in the educational system of this republic."¹³⁰ Shortly after the defeat of Germany, Ivey made his argument even more explicit. In case his readers had missed the point of other writers, he reminded them of the source of German aggression and defeat: “The awful collapse of Germany was due to the fact that she had allowed her moral foundations to be weakened. She virtually dethroned God and substituted for him ungodly Might.” Ivey further cautioned that German “schools made the Bible a thing to be tossed here and there by irreverent critics” and urged Tennesseans to reverse present trends in America that were excluding religion from the schools. “The Bible,” Ivey argued, “must be the supreme book” for education; “It should be given a place now in every common school in the land.” Finally, he marked the clear departure from concerns about too close an alliance between church and state, writing that “Surely the old fine-spun constitutional objections have been smashed.”¹³¹

Thus in the wake of the world war, Tennessee evangelicals again linked religion and education, arguing that both were necessary for the survival of the church and the state. As one Methodist explained, “If this democracy of ours is to survive, if Protestantism is to maintain itself, it is absolutely necessary that our people shall be educated. And it is essential that education must include religion.”¹³² Winton, Ivey, Weaver, and most other state evangelical leaders were not ignorant of potential constitutional hindrances to imposing religion on the public schools, but they increasingly proposed solutions that either ignored such objections or attempted to overrule them with

¹³¹ [Ivey], “One Hundred Per Cent American,” Nashville Christian Advocate, March 28, 1919, p. 7. See also Lester Weaver, “The Church’s Choice—Educate or Evacuate,” quoted at the beginning of this chapter.
rationalized arguments about majority rule, citizen’s rights, or America’s history as a Christian nation. In doing so, they countered almost every one of Gillon’s arguments line for line, convincing themselves and the state at large that godly form was better than godless form, even if there was no real vital godliness in church or state.

Thomas Ivey endorsed “a campaign demanding that the Bible shall be used as a textbook of instruction in the public schools” in the spring of 1916.\(^{133}\) Although Tennessee had recently passed a law requiring daily Bible reading in the public schools, Ivey argued that there should be more religious instruction. If anyone raised objections, Ivey countered them by arguing that he and other Christian parents would only be exercising a “citizen’s right” to determine what should be taught in the public schools.\(^{134}\) Although in their arguments for compulsory education Ivey and other religious and educational leaders had seemed to downplay or even dismiss the rights claims of parents who withheld their children from the school—many times countering them with competing rights claims of the children to an education or the state to an educated citizenry—evangelical leaders returned to arguing for parents’ claims on their children to bolster their claims of citizens’ rights over their legislature and schools. The legislature controlled the schools, but citizens controlled the legislature, and therefore they should be able to determine policy for the schools in the interest of preserving both religion and the state itself.

\(^{133}\) [Ivey], “The Bible in a Democracy,” Nashville Christian Advocate, June 2, 1916. Ivey was taking off from a recent speech by Lyman Abbott, in which Abbott had argued that the Bible was the model of democracy and social order, the foundation of how the American government was set up, and thus ought to be used to teach civics, to teach literature, and the like. But, Ivey warned, it should be used for more than just secular purposes; he would prefer for teachers to emphasize its moral and religious elements as well.

During and after the World War I, Tennessee religious leaders further attempted to reinforce the distinctions between America and Germany by emphasizing that the United States was a "Christian nation." Further, in order to circumvent Constitutional questions about the establishment clause, some evangelicals argued that "No matter how it was framed and amended, we all know that this government was literally founded on the Bible." State religious leaders claimed that "our civilization is based on the Word of God and that we must rely upon its influence over the coming generations to keep the future safe." Baptist educator Harry Clark argued that "From the beginning of our American nation, religion as presented in the Holy Scriptures has given form and character to our national government." Still others argued that the judicial oath, the inscription "In God We Trust," and the actions of President Washington kissing the Bible after taking the oath of office were proof that America was a "Christian nation." They asked: "If our nation stamps on her coins the motto, 'In God We Trust,' why should she not read into young life some information about the God we trust?"

135 The author of the article, a Mrs. Evelyn Baker Dodd, continued, noting that religious freedom was founded on the Bible as well, but was somehow restricted only to proper interpretations of the book: "and while we are to give freedom to all religion in this country, we know also, full well that it is freedom to religions founded on this same Bible, and not to 'vagaries' nor 'isms' galore in our midst at present." Citing an 1874 Massachusetts public school law, she further explained that "Now the facts are that 'free schools' or public schools, were first established to teach children to read and write for the especial purpose of studying the Bible." Mrs. Evelyn Baker Dodd, "The Bible in the Public Schools," Nashville Christian Advocate, April 7, 1904, p. 3. Dodd contributed other articles to the Advocate, including another explanation of the Christian Constitution in 1909: Mary Louise Dodd, "The Christian Spirit of the Constitution," Nashville Christian Advocate, August 6, 1909, p. 9.

136 [Smith], "The Bible in the Schools," Nashville Christian Advocate, November 2, 1923, p. 3.

137 Harry Clark, "Bible in the Public Schools," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, October 6, 1921, p. 8.


Yet another argument used by Tennessee evangelicals in favor of requiring Bible reading in the public schools was to redefine Constitutional prohibitions of religious establishment to more specific issues of sectarian establishment. Arguing that the Bible was a non-sectarian book, they explained that it could not be objectionable to either the Constitution or other citizens. The problem, E. E. Hoss had explained at the turn of the century, was a class of people “unable to see the difference between religion, pure and simple, and sectarianism.” He criticized Roman Catholics, Jews, and other “exclusivists who insist that they alone possess the true religion” and demand to teach their own interpretations or none at all. Thomas Ivey deplored the protests of certain religious groups and even other states’ courts who had ruled against daily Bible readings on “the ridiculous assumption that the Bible is a sectarian book.” Baptist editor J. D. Moore built upon the assumptions of the “Christian nation” argument to justify and even require the use of the Bible in the public schools: “the Bible is the property of all Evangelical Christians. If our country be not Evangelically Christian, the Bible would be sectarian and the reading of it would be wrong in principle.” Since “our whole national civilization is based on the Bible,” Moore argued, it cannot be a sectarian book.

Finally, in case their other arguments were not sufficient, Tennessee evangelicals sought to overcome any further objections by shifting the terms of the debate from Constitutional protections of minority viewpoints to democratic methods of majority rule. “If we are democratic in other things, why should we renounce our principles in the management of the public schools?” asked Thomas Ivey. He continued, protesting that in

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141 [Ivey], Nashville Christian Advocate, March 23, 1917, p. 3.
142 [Moore], “Bible in Public Schools,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 24, 1924, p. 2.
professions of respect for minority viewpoints, the Protestant majority was allowing “infidels, Jews, and Romanists to dominate and rule out the very basis, not alone of our religion, but of our civilization.” George Winton downplayed potential Constitutional objections by invoking the “higher law of public opinion” to legislate the Bible and Christian teaching into the public schools. Winton privileged the rights of “the great majority of God-fearing and moral parents” over the “very small minority” of “infidels, atheists, and anarchists” who, “to be perfectly candid, we think ... ought to be ignored.” Baptist editor Jesse D. Moore similarly dismissed any objections to reading the Bible in the public school, explaining that such daily exercises “would be attended by an offense to none who ought not be offended, and with highly beneficial results to the state and to all its citizens.”

CONCLUSION

W. T. Callaway, pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle in Chattanooga, brought all of the arguments for Bible reading together in a spring 1926 article in the Baptist and Reflector titled “Shall the Bible Be Read in Our Public Schools?” He explained that his

143 Winton continued, returning to the theme of citizens’ rights: “For while the great majority of God-fearing and moral parents stand back helpless, and nothing is done because a few atheists object to their children receiving religious training, the forces that make for the demoralization of youth are in no wise deterred. ... Will the Christian people of these United States awake to their rights?” [Winton], “Religion and the Public Schools,” Nashville Christian Advocate July 16, 1903, p. 1. Thomas Ivey utilized a similar oratorical strategy, arguing that public opinion in favor of Bible reading in the schools was practically “unanimous.” [Ivey], “The Bible and the Public School,” Nashville Christian Advocate, April 11, 1913, pp. 4-5.

renewed interest in the subject arose because of recent disturbances in Virginia over requiring Bible reading in the public schools. Though he felt sympathy for SBC President and Richmond First Baptist Church pastor Dr. George W. McDaniel’s arguments for a strict separation of church and state, Callaway professed that he “would dislike very much to meet God at the Judgment, having deprived thousands of His little ones the privilege of hearing His Word read.” He then reiterated the Christian nation argument, stating that the Bible “is the foundation of American civilization, and all that is good in any civilization.” Furthermore, he explained, “The lodgment of God’s Word in the hearts of our children is our main hope for the preservation of this American commonwealth.” His version of the majority rule argument was flavored with a bit more nativism than some earlier arguments in the state, as he suggested that “if we have among us foreigners to whom the reading of the Bible is distasteful, they might find a more congenial clime in their own native hearth.” He further ridiculed any objectors, stating that “No one is being ‘persecuted’ in Tennessee by having the Bible read. ... Simply because a minority of Jews and Catholics will cry out ‘intolerance, intolerance,’ is no reason why the reading of the Bible should be withheld from our children.”

In addition to all of these arguments, Callaway sought to preempt any lingering arguments from supporters of the older “home rule” arrangement:

In this present generation we are seeing the beginning of moral decay and degeneracy in our nation. ... Surely, then, with the Church only having

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our children for instruction for about an hour once a week, and the public
schools having them most of the remaining time, we should welcome
every possible avenue of Bible knowledge that will be the authority and
compelling power in their young lives.\textsuperscript{146}

The home rule compromise was clearly gone by this time. Tennessee evangelicals of the
nineteenth century had recognized constitutional bars to required Bible reading in the
public schools of the state and sought to obey or circumvent them by simply avoiding
legislation. In the wake of the World War and perceptions of the declining spirituality of
the home and decreased role of the churches in public affairs, many state religious leaders
sought to co-opt the machinery of the state schools to ensure that all Tennessee's children
were exposed to the Bible.

\textsuperscript{146} Callaway, "Shall the Bible Be Read in Our Public Schools?" 6.
CHAPTER VI

“*The right of the people ... to control the schools*”: Evangelicals, Evolution, and Education in Tennessee, 1875–1925

Understanding the role of white Tennessee Methodists and Baptists in the enactment of the state’s 1925 Butler anti-evolution bill and the resulting Scopes trial requires a sensitivity to the law’s context on two fronts: not just controversies over the truth, falsehood, and perceived danger of evolutionary theories of human development, but even more important the long-standing concerns among Tennessee evangelicals about the content and control of public education. Viewed in isolation, the eleven day trial in Dayton can be a spectacle—a pitched battle of religious fundamentalism with religious, scientific, and intellectual modernism symbolized in the clash of the two great legal combatants William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow. Contextualized, the trial appears at the intersection of several intellectual and social patterns: a continuing desire among Tennessee evangelicals to recreate or demonstrate the especially religious nature of the South in comparison not just to the North, but in the wake of World War I, to the rest of the world as well; a growing militancy by some scientists and theologians for exclusive authority to explain the world; the emerging identification of evangelicals as no longer isolated and distinct community unto themselves but as a controlling majority of the larger society; and a growing understanding among Tennessee evangelicals that the public schools were their best hope and means for evangelizing and sanctifying the state.
Many of the same circumstances in the early twentieth century that drove Tennessee evangelicals to endorse daily Bible reading in the public schools would also alert them to another insidious evil obstructing their creation of a truly religious New South. While much of the impetus for Bible reading and moral instruction in the public schools was occasioned by sins of omission—the failure or inability of parents, churches, and denominational colleges to live up to their duties under the home rule compromise—many Tennessee evangelicals found the newest dragon to be a sin of commission in the schoolhouse itself. American and southern scientists, theologians, and laypersons had wrestled with theories of evolution and their theological implications since the middle of the nineteenth century, but the early twentieth century—and especially the years following the first World War—witnessed a fervent campaign by many evangelicals to protect school children from exposure to the supposedly faith-killing theories of biological development. Having argued for the importance of moral training in the public schools, most Tennessee evangelicals did not want to see the Christian religion—the basis not just of that morality but also, in their words, of the American nation as well—undermined by what many labeled the antireligious theory of evolution.

Although a minority of voices within the churches would continue to endorse the possibility of theistic interpretations of evolution, most twentieth-century Tennessee evangelicals could only see evolution as atheistic and harmful to revealed religion. Fewer and fewer of the discussions in church papers during the twentieth century would revolve around the truth or falsehood of the theory of evolution and its compatibility to revealed religion; the more important battles concerned who had the power to determine
what would be taught in the Tennessee public schools. After the success of their efforts to sanctify public schools by requiring daily Bible reading, Tennessee evangelicals were alarmed that the state high schools and colleges, and even some of their own denominational colleges, were teaching students about evolution. Thus by the 1920s, most evangelical Tennesseans supported efforts to forbid the teaching of evolution in the schools, believing that children exposed to the theory would be condemned to atheism and that the state and society of the future could not survive without a widespread belief in an omnipotent God, a divinely created world, and a future life of reward and punishment.

**SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND EVOLUTION IN TENNESSEE**

Writing an essay in the Nashville *Christian Advocate* at the end of July 1925, only weeks after John T. Scopes's conviction under Tennessee's anti-evolution law, Methodist minister M. M. Black attempted to restore some unity to religious and scientific pursuits in the wake of the public antagonism displayed in the Dayton trial. Expressing a belief in the essential unity of truth—scientific and religious—little different from assertions in the same journal a half century previous, Black asserted that "the Church no less than science must be a seeker of the truth, nor has she anything to fear from the discovery of truth in any realm." Because there was "no realm over which God does not rule, whether it be material or spiritual," Black explained, there could be "no secular or non-Christian truth. . . . When men discover the so-called laws of nature they are simply discovering the
methods by which God works.”¹ Such assertions of religio-scientific harmony may have seemed somewhat out of place in the intense cultural and political climate of 1925, but they were by no means out of touch with a large number of moderate southern religious writers of the period, or of the 1870s either. As Oscar P. Fitzgerald wrote in the Nashville Christian Advocate in 1878,

Science is of God. The attempt to array it against revelation will fail. Christian scientists already see the harmony between God’s two books—the Bible and Nature. The arrogance of materialists on the one hand, and the imbecility of many ignorant volunteer defenders of the truth on the other, may retard the coming of the bridal day, but religion and science will be wedded in a lawful and eternal union. Pending this happy consummation, let speculators be prudent, and let believers be patient.²

Such professions were not the exclusive property of southern Methodists: the Memphis Baptist of that same year carried an essay proclaiming that “all truths must harmonize” and encouraging scientific study of nature “for it is the work of God, and in studying it we study its Creator.”³

With such professions of harmony between religion and science by Tennessee’s two largest denominational journals, how does one explain the passage of the Butler bill and the accompanying Scopes trial and cultural antagonism of the 1920s? The most succinct explanation, as has been suggested in the previous chapter and will be expanded upon in the following section of this chapter, must engage the question of control of schools and curriculum. The Butler bill did not emerge in a vacuum, but was intricately

² Fitzgerald], Nashville Christian Advocate, December 14, 1878, p. 1.
³ Miss Lula Bowen, “The Two Revelations,” Memphis Baptist, July 13, 1878, p. 497.
connected to the growing influence and changing supervision of the public schools—it was a reassertion of parental and taxpayer rights to determine just what was to be taught in the schools. The growth of high schools throughout the state meant a larger and larger number of Tennessee youth would take courses in advanced subjects such as biology, forcing an ever growing number of teachers, parents, and religious leaders to deal with social, scientific, and theological questions that could have otherwise been dealt with abstractly, from a distance, or not at all.

In this sense, the history of the relationship of Tennessee evangelicals to science, and especially to the theories of evolution, is most certainly also germane. In spite of the above-quoted rosy professions of 1925 and 1878 about the unity of scientific and religious truth, even the most liberal of Tennessee Methodists and Baptists, when pushed, took their stand on Scripture. Furthermore, in the first decades of the twentieth century, the great mass of southern evangelicals could not follow the fine theological and scientific arguments espoused by Black and others to reconcile Genesis with the new geological and biological theories. While still professing to find unity of truth in his own mind, Black admitted in 1925 that “the general public has become confused” and “people jump to the conclusion that belief in evolution is synonymous with rejection of God and the Bible and acceptance of the theory that man has descended from the ape.”

No longer left to abstract theorizing by scientifically conversant religious leaders, the discussions of evolution in the 1920s were very public affairs that sucked the air out of attempts to reconcile “God and the New Knowledge” and replaced the concept of harmony with a

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rigid polarization over the primacy of science or religion—no longer unified truth, whatever that may have been.  

Southern thinkers—whether they identified themselves more as theologians or scientists—had been aware of theories of evolutionary development from at least the 1860s. In spite of assertions by Clement Eaton and W. J. Cash about the essentially unscientific nature of the nineteenth-century South, many southerners were at least conversant in the science of their day, several joined professional scientific societies (some of national scope), and a few even achieved some level of scientific fame. Instead

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5 The quotation comes from the title of a series of lectures published under the auspices of Vanderbilt University’s Cole Lecture Foundation in 1926. Delivered by Dean O. E. Brown of the Vanderbilt School of Religion, Chancellor James H. Kirkland, and Professor Edwin Mims of the Vanderbilt English department, the three lectures attempted to position the Vanderbilt of 1925—much like the university founders had asserted a half-century before—as a safe place for the investigation of both science and religion. Brown, Kirkland, and Mims, God and the New Knowledge (Nashville: Cole Lecture Foundation, 1926). Chancellor Kirkland made pointed reference in his 1925 address on the fiftieth anniversary of the school to the recent Scopes trial, suggesting that “The answer to the episode at Dayton is the building of new laboratories on the Vanderbilt campus for the teaching of science. The remedy for a narrow sectarianism and a belligerent fundamentalism is the establishment on this campus a School of Religion, illustrating in its methods and its organization the strength of a common faith and the glory of a universal worship.” Quoted in Paul K. Conkin, Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 255, in which Conkin rightly weeds through Kirkland’s rhetoric to suggest the intellectual difficulties in blending the school’s Wesleyan heritage with scientific advances of the new century.

of the anti-intellectual label that settled on the region in the wake of the Butler bill and Scopes trial, a brief survey of state Baptist and Methodist newspapers suggests an awareness of and some limited engagement with emerging knowledge in the fields of geology and biology by several state religious leaders. Arguing for awareness is not to say an acceptance of the theories of Darwin, Huxley, and Spencer but rather to dispute the notion of an evangelical prohibition on all things scientific in the American South.

Most southern Methodist and Baptist thinkers, like their counterparts throughout the nation in the second half of the nineteenth century, at first opposed Darwinian notions of evolution but gradually softened their stance into a vague advocacy of theistic natural science. Investigations of the natural world, they argued, would only reveal the hand of God and point to the “existence of the Great Designer” and creator of that world, and thus were another way to study religion. They built upon a belief in the unity of truth and emphasized the impossibility of disagreement between a rightly understood observation of the natural world and a rightly understood religion. As Methodist editor Oscar Fitzgerald explained, “Between true religion and real science there can be no conflict.” Judge John Lea’s welcoming address to attendees at the 1877 Nashville meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) suggests that Tennessee evangelicals did not have exclusive rights to such phrases. Welcoming

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7 [Summers], “The Church and Its Enemies,” Nashville Christian Advocate, September 27, 1877, p. 3.
the one hundred plus scientists, the Tennessee jurist found important symbolism in the meeting of so many men of science in Nashville, the “city of churches”:

The mission of science is the ascertainment of truth and that mission, far from conflicting with any principle of religion, strengthens our conviction in the existence of ‘a great first cause’ which regulates . . . the orderly arrangement of every particle of matter.⁹

Such vague professions were generally acceptable to both churchman and scientist alike, but specific endorsements of the potentially conflicting theory of evolution could bring the two into sharp relief.

At that same 1877 AAAS meeting in Nashville, the organization’s newly elected president, O. C. Marsh, presented a lengthy paper on a series of North American fossils that, he explained, proved the process of vertebrate evolution. Citing the concurrence of fellow evolutionist Thomas Huxley, Marsh explained that he would not and indeed did not need to offer further proof of evolution “since to doubt evolution today is to doubt science, and science is but another name for truth.”¹⁰ But it was the theory of evolution, specifically a Darwinian version of evolution that posited the creation and transmutation of species through a process of natural selection—with no need of divine direction—that caused scientists and theologians in Tennessee and elsewhere the most difficulty in maintaining their professions of unity.

Thomas O. Summers Sr., an English-born Methodist, editor of the Nashville Christian Advocate, and professor of theology at Vanderbilt University provides a good example of a nineteenth-century Tennessee evangelical thinker attempting to reconcile

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science and religion. Reprinting excerpts from his regular university lectures in the *Advocate*, Summers offered his readers a glimpse at theological efforts to accommodate changing scientific evidence about the age of the earth. Beginning of course with the admonition that he was not attempting a “reconciliation” of Genesis and Geology because “they are not in antagonism,” Summers argued definitively for God’s agency as creator of the universe and all in it but somewhat more tentatively about “the time and manner of the *genesis* of the universe.” Summers seemed content to retain Bishop Ussher’s chronology that fixed man’s creation “about six thousand years ago,” but allowed more latitude for the rest of creation. Ruling out any interpretation of the Mosaic cosmogony relying on natural (i.e., non-divine) causes as “a preposterous and gratuitous notion,” the aging Wesleyan suggested three possible methods of reconciling the apparent contradictions between Genesis and the age of the earth suggested by scientific examination of the fossil record. First, the fossils, like Adam and Eve, could have been formed directly and immediately. Second, he proposed a time delay between the first and second verses of Genesis. With such a system, “In the beginning” could stretch back “as many millions of ages as Geology requires for all the phenomena developed by its researches,” while the succeeding six demiurgic days of creation still conformed to Ussher’s chronology of six thousand years.\(^{11}\) Summers seemed to most favor this “gap” theory, but he also presented his students and readers a further possibility of interpreting each of Moses’ “days” as not regular, twenty-four hour days, but as lengthy periods that would allow for geological and biological development.\(^{12}\)

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In his efforts to reconcile Moses' account with modern geology, Summers followed many of the arguments presented by his fellow theologians in the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{13} The early religious opposition that greeted Darwin's theories had the support of the majority of U.S. scientists who, until the mid-1870s, disagreed among themselves about the theory's plausibility. As Summers remarked in the wake of the 1877 AAAS meeting in Nashville, "When doctors disagree,/ disciples then are free" to believe or reject scientific theories.\textsuperscript{14} Taking their cues from such prominent scientists as Harvard's Louis Agassiz and even Asa Gray, who had helped to publicize Darwinism in America but nonetheless had some reservations about the theory, Summers and other American religious leaders found it somewhat easy to reject Darwinian evolution because of the aggressively naturalistic tone of many of evolution's champions before 1875. But, as Jon Roberts, Ronald Numbers, and others have pointed out, after 1875 the majority of American scientists were moving to an acceptance of some version of evolution, and therefore "attacks on the scientific validity of the transmutation hypothesis became more problematic in the face of the mass exodus of scientists to the evolutionists' camp."\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} By far the best analysis of American theologians' encounter with theories of evolution is Jon H. Roberts, \textit{Darwinism and the Divine in America: Protestant Intellectuals and Organic Evolution, 1859–1900} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988). A more regional approach to Darwinism in the American South, suggestive in theme but limited by the brevity of its essay format, is Numbers and Stephens, "Darwinism in the American South."

\textsuperscript{14} [Summers], "The American Association for the Advancement of Science," Nashville Christian Advocate, September 15, 1877, p. 8. Utilizing scientific disagreements over the specifics of evolutionary or geological theories has been a common trope not just of Summers, but of several generations of anti-evolutionists and Creationists who have followed him. One of his successors at the Christian Advocate, George Winton, asserted his freedom to believe as he chose "when doctors differ." [Winton], "When Doctors Differ," Nashville Christian Advocate, July 6, 1905, p. 5. For a longer history of this trope, see particularly Ronald L. Numbers, \textit{The Creationists} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

\textsuperscript{15} Roberts, \textit{Darwinism and the Divine in America}, 95. Ronald L. Numbers provides a prosographical approach to the question, surveying the stance of naturalists in the National Academy of Sciences on evolution in "Darwinism and the Dogma of Separate Creations: The Responses of American Naturalists to Evolution," in Numbers, \textit{Darwinism Comes to America},
Having projected their institution as a bastion of science and religion—in their words “to vindicate the existence of a perfect harmony between a sound philosophy and a true religion”—the early Vanderbilt University trustees no doubt congratulated themselves on securing the services of a noted churchman and geologist, Alexander Winchell, for their faculty. Winchell believed in evolution, but as he demonstrated in an 1877 article in the *Methodist Quarterly*, his understanding of evolution left plenty of room for God to act in and through the world. Science, he explained, could not reveal “the nature of causal efficiency at the origin of life” and therefore “the hypothesis of evolution” allowed “the believer in imminent [sic] divine power to posit such power in every term of the evolution.” Many scientists and theologians of the late nineteenth century moved to accept a theory of evolution that owed some allegiance to Darwinism, but stripped it of its most distinctive contribution—the process of random variation and natural selection—and transformed evolution into simply a benevolent and immanent method of creation by which God acted in and on the world.


16 Vanderbilt University *Register* 1875, p. 9. University Archives and Special Collections, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter VUSC). For a more thorough discussion of the purposes of the founders of the university and the difficulties they encountered in trying to fulfill them, see Chapter III above.

17 Winchell, quoted in Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America*, 139. Summers praised Winchell’s orthodoxy in this article and a similar article from a year before, noting his approval in “New Publications,” Nashville *Christian Advocate*, July 22, 1876, p. 2; and June 23, 1877, p. 8.

Despite Summers’s and Winchell’s pronouncements of unity between Genesis and the new biological and geological theories, evolution was another matter when confronted by the Baptist and Methodist rank-and-file of Tennessee. Winchell and his theories of theistic evolution had been for the most part well received by Tennessee Methodists generally and the Vanderbilt leadership specifically, but a new departure, signaled by the publication of his *Adamites and Preadamites* in 1878, eventually cost him his position in Nashville. Notwithstanding Winchell’s efforts to craft a thoroughly theistic interpretation of evolution, he pushed his natural science investigations further than his new southern constituency would allow. Winchell’s suggestion of “Preadamite” races—earthly humans predating the Biblical and historical Adam—tread not just into theology (the Christian plan of salvation posited the origin of sin in Adam’s fall and redemption in Christ’s atoning death; could such a plan work backwards to pre-Adamites?), but also into the racial third rail of southern culture by suggesting an older lineage of non-whites (Preadamites) and therefore possibly challenging white racial superiority (at least as long as superiority was based on age or seniority).19 Summers was the chief prosecutor of Alexander Winchell and chief defender of Vanderbilt University in 1878 when the trustees decided to terminate the prominent scientist’s lectureship.20

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19 Winchell went to great pains, apparently, to argue that his notion of “preadamites” would establish Anglo-Saxon racial superiority and refute polygenesis, but it was apparently misconceptions or misunderstandings of this part of his theory that intensified some of the criticisms against him. [Fitzgerald], “Vanderbilt University and the Critics,” 2.
In the wake of his dismissal, Winchell proclaimed himself a martyr to science, argued his dismissal stemmed from his belief in evolution, and carried on a lengthy self-defense and attack on Vanderbilt in the pages of the Nashville American. Winchell's acceptance of theistic evolution could not have been a surprise to university President H. N. McTyeire and the Board of Trust: before accepting his contract promising $2,500 a year for three months of spring-time lectures in Nashville, Winchell had already published his views in Sketches of Creation (1870) and The Doctrine of Evolution (1874).\footnote{In these books, Winchell had professed a belief in theistic evolution, argued that there could be no conflicting truth because "nature is intended as a revelation of God to all intelligences," and science "prosecuted to its conclusions leads to God."} For their part, the university trustees attempted to justify Winchell's dismissal as a cost-saving measure, unifying the science duties under the chair of Professor Safford, who resided in Nashville year round. It seems more apparent that President McTyeire was feeling the heat from the school trustees and a number of southern Methodist newspapers—negative publicity about an evolutionist professor that threatened the supply of students and contributions for the young university. Defending McTyeire and the board's actions, Oscar Fitzgerald of the Nashville Christian Advocate wrote that “parents who have sons

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\footnote{Quoted in Davenport, “Scientific Interests in Kentucky and Tennessee,” 518.}
to be educated prefer the safety of that atmosphere [of orthodoxy] to genteel infidelity.”

Thomas Summers Sr., Winchell’s colleague at Vanderbilt and former editor of the Advocate, suggested that Winchell’s sin was not in speculating about various “interpretation[s] of the Mosaic cosmogony,” but in crossing the line of propriety in a church institution that was charged with training young ministers by bringing those “speculations” out of his private study and into the lecture room, or in Winchell’s case, the commencement platform. Such infidelity, Summers explained, “ought not to be announced in the pulpit, or indeed from the Professor’s Chair.” Fitzgerlad suggested that Winchell’s announcement of his beliefs in his commencement address was the real sin, explaining that “no brilliant but erratic professor will be allowed to commit the University, though he is free to commit himself, to any side of any question he pleases.”

In the wake of the Winchell case, the Tennessee Baptist and Methodist papers settled back into their patterns of asserting a general, vaguely abstract agreement of science and religion—both rightly understood—and continued their assault on any but the most assuredly theistic explanations of evolution. If any pattern could be said to exist, the Memphis Baptist and its successor the Nashville Baptist and Reflector tended to see less possibility of any sort of accommodation to evolution than did some writers in the state Methodist newspapers. James R. Graves explained his lack of comment on

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23 [Fitzgerald], “Vanderbilt University and the Critics,” Nashville Christian Advocate, July 13, 1878.
25 [Fitzgerald], “Religion and Science at the Vanderbilt University,” Nashville Christian Advocate, August 17, 1878, p. 1. In this sense, Winchell’s dismissal was little different from the contemporaneous dismissal of Edward Joynes on accusations of too liberal a use of alcohol; both were efforts of the young university to protect its reputation. But the dismissal of Joynes would not receive the same national attention from scientists who saw Winchell’s firing as evidence of a total lack of academic freedom in the early Vanderbilt.
evolution in the Baptist because he believed it to be “a form of error so absurd that it would end by a self-explosion,” and therefore he declined to publicize the theory and conflict unnecessarily.26 Several Methodist authors attacked evolutionary theories as well, but editor George Winton’s statement that “from the first we have been of the opinion that there is nothing essentially hostile to Christianity in the evolutionary hypothesis” was more indicative of the tone of that paper at the turn of the century.27 Both papers continued to assert the possibility of theistic interpretations of nature that maintained God’s agency in the special creation of man and rejected the possibility of evolving new species (as opposed to evolution within a specific species).

As had been the case in the school Bible reading campaigns before them, Tennessee evangelicals’ concerns about evolution would take on new importance during and soon after World War I. Editor Thomas Ivey of the Nashville Christian Advocate took as his lesson from the years of bloodshed that “It was the materialistic education of Germany, stripped of Christian ethics and resting on the ethics of the jungle, that was responsible for the war and its horrible methods.” A chief part of that materialism was said to be rationalistic German science; Ivey and other commentators often listed

26 [Graves], Memphis Baptist, February 5, 1881, p. 536.
27 [Winton], “When Doctors Differ,” 5. Tennessee Methodists writing in the Nashville Christian Advocate appeared to have more balance on evolution than Tennessee Baptists, for most anti-evolution arguments in the Methodist paper were quickly answered by professions of the possibility of theistic evolution. See for example, see the assertion by one author that “Evolution and agnosticism are synonymous,” and the answer a “few months later that there was no necessary antagonism between science and religion, and a warning that “there is no surer or quicker way of making the 'agnostics' which [G.W.R.] abhors. Once get it settled in the minds of young people that either Christianity or evolution must necessarily be false, at least one-half of the thoughtful class will become more or less 'agnostic,' and the other half will experience such mental paralysis over the facts as will hinder their intellectual development. If it pleased God in his inscrutable wisdom to make man in his own image and bring him by a process of evolution to his present condition, why should the clay in the potter's hand object?” G. W. R., “The New Learning,” Nashville Christian Advocate, November 14, 1901, p. 5(first quotation) and J. G. Halls, “The New Learning,”” Nashville Christian Advocate, March 6, 1902, p. 9 (second quotation).
acceptance of Darwinism (though Darwin was British) as a prime example of German
atheism. Concern grew among Tennessee Methodists and Baptists of the 1910s about
the possible encroachment of such atheism in their part of the country. In 1915
Methodist Warren A. Candler, the chief promoter of his denomination’s new Emory
University in Atlanta, announced that the American South was the only proper place to
begin the regeneration of America and through it the wider world because “The
degenerate forms of rationalistic religion have never been able to take root in our
section.” Nashville Baptist pastor and denominational leader George A. Lofton was
somewhat less optimistic, warning the Tennessee Baptist Convention in 1910 about the
dangers of “Higher Criticism, Evolution and other forms of infidelity that [had] captured
the schools of the North, and [we]re creeping slowly into Southern schools.”

Part of Tennessee evangelicals’ move to reject all theories of evolution then was
an effort to more clearly distinguish themselves from the national and even worldwide
shift toward rationalism and materialism they saw reflected in the recent war. In his
account of American Protestant intellectuals’ encounter with Darwinism, Jon Roberts
suggests that the minority of thinkers who adopted an uncompromising defense of the

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28 Ivey made clear the application of his warning, continuing his editorial: “our choice is whether
education shall be Christian or heathen, and in that choice we determine the civilization of the
future.” [Ivey], “Is It Worth the Effort?,” Nashville Christian Advocate, January 7, 1921, p. 6.
29 W. A. Candler, “Our Education Work is Now Missionary Work Also,” Nashville Christian
Advocate, August 13, 1915, p. 12.
30 Quoted in [Folk], “Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector,
October 20, 1910, p. 4. Andrew S. Moore, in his study of several East Tennessee Baptist
associations during this period, has noted the importance of the post-war timing of Baptist
concern for the schools and, particularly, the teaching of evolution in them: “In their minds it
became their duty to recreate the pre-war Christian civilization to counteract the rest of
the nation's turning away from God.” Andrew S. Moore, “‘To Advance the Redeemer's Kingdom':
East Tennessee Southern Baptists Amid Social and Cultural Transition, 1890–1929,” (M.A.
Bible and remained unwilling to concede any ground to evolutionary science drew such rigid lines in order to maintain their status as "outsiders" to a larger American culture.  

This suggestive idea takes on a new significance when applied to southern evangelicals who had been, especially in their prohibition and public school campaigns as noted above, working to identify their beliefs and morals with the larger southern society that surrounded them. Their distinction as outsiders, therefore, was meant for all of the South—not just evangelical Protestant members of specific churches. They wanted to preserve the entire South as distinct from the rest of the nation.

Having already identified the public school as the means through which they would shape the rising generation of southerners, most Tennessee evangelicals could be persuaded to support the efforts to ban the teaching of evolution from state as well as denominational schools. Bishop Warren Candler would boast about the Butler bill and Scopes trial in the fall of 1925, rejoicing that the trial had attracted "attention . . . to the fact that evangelical Christianity is the dominant type of religion in the South," which religion and region alone could "maintain unimpaired the faith of historic Christianity, the pure faith of our fathers and the best hope of our posterity." Noting that "the great

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31 Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America*, 236–37 and 327n5. Roberts does not really emphasize regional variations in his assessment of the clerical response to Darwinism, though he does suggest that "a slightly disproportionate number . . . resided in the southern and border states. This was doubtless due in large measure to the strength of Princeton Seminary’s influence in those regions, but it may have also been at least partly the result of the fact that the commitment of clergy and theologians to the epistemological priorities of modern culture was most attenuated in regions further from the levers of cultural power within American society." *Ibid.*, 222. Roberts’s arguments are persuasive for the intellectual activities of these thinkers, and his is perhaps the best account of the mental and ideological responses to Darwinism, but I believe that the southern and particularly the Tennessee response to the anti-evolution campaigns of the early twentieth century had more to do with other cultural concerns—notably the efforts to sanctify southern schools, the lingering sectionalism, and the related necessity of maintaining a belief in southern religious distinctiveness—than the particular legacies of Princeton theology in the region.
revival of 1800” had begun in the South, Candler asserted that the “Southern Churches are abundantly able to defend successfully ‘the faith once for all delivered to the saints’ against the attacks of all the resolute and revolutionary rationalism now current in our country” and must remain “the stronghold of evangelical Christianity in the United States.”

To do so, Candler and many of southern religious leaders seemed to suggest, the South would have to remain outside of the increasingly secular national culture.

In spite of their professions of the unity of religious and scientific knowledge, only a small number of Tennessee evangelicals of the early twentieth century seemed willing to reexamine their theological interpretations in light of new scientific revelations, choosing instead to criticize or dismiss scientists for meddling in philosophy or jumping to erroneous conclusions. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, and especially in the wake of the first World War, the arguments of the minority of theistic evolutionists in Tennessee would become increasingly overwhelmed by the more general perception of the mass of Tennessee evangelicals in 1925 that “evolution is synonymous with rejection of God and the Bible and acceptance of the theory that man has descended from the ape.”

When evidence suggested that evolution was being taught in Tennessee colleges and public schools, most Tennessee Baptists and Methodists lost what little patience they had for efforts to harmonize scientific and religious theories of natural history. Believing that current theories of evolution—and especially those taught in the public schools—were materialistic and not theistic, the great majority of Tennessee Methodists

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33 Black, “Christianity and Evolution,” 7.
and Baptists moved to protect their children from learning about such "science falsely so-called" and to assert their control over the state's educational system.

ANTI-EVOLUTION CAMPAIGNS AND TENNESSEE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Having taken to the pulpit and press in their campaigns to require and justify the use of the Bible in Tennessee public schools so that the schools could be bulwarks of Christianity, state evangelical leaders were somewhat predisposed to join in, and to a certain extent lead, the national campaigns against the teaching of evolution in public schools. As perhaps the most visible markers of a national conservative social and theological resurgence in several mainline Protestant churches, the anti-evolution campaigns of the post–World War I decade really began in the Northeast and Midwest but had their biggest success in the South in the 1920s. Various historians have credited their regional success to a lack of industrialization, the poor quality of scientific education, or the overwhelmingly conservative nature of southern theology. Despite the presence of some high profile believers in various forms of theistic evolution, most evangelical Tennesseans in the first quarter of the twentieth century only knew enough

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34 For the best account of the fundamentalist resurgence as a national movement, see George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). But as I will argue in this chapter, it is important to see the anti-evolution battles in Tennessee as more than just an extension of a national movement; they were grounded in the history of public education and religion in the state.

about the scientific theories of evolution to fear the potential ramifications of
undercutting Biblical literalism. That was sufficient; the anti-evolution campaign and
subsequent Scopes Trial of 1925 in Tennessee had far less to do with scientific
understanding than they did with the same battles religious Tennesseans had been
fighting since the 1870s over the direction of southern society and the control of public
schools.

The process of formalizing education into public elementary schools with
compulsory attendance policies that had led Tennessee evangelicals to argue for a
positive requirement of daily Bible readings eventually led them also to pursue negative
legislation banning the teaching of evolution. Anti-evolution was the more visible of the
two fundamentalist crusades of the post–World War I era, the other being a campaign
against the perceived liberalism in theology and social policy in mainline Protestant
denominations. Tennessee Protestants had only a small number of recognizable
theological or social liberals in their ranks in the early twentieth century and thus were
less concerned with purging their own ranks than fortifying their buttresses against
liberals in other parts of the country. High-brow theological discussions rarely incite
popular protest, much less popular understanding. But because Tennessee evangelicals
had so recently mobilized to Christianize the public schools, they were especially ripe
prospects for the fundamentalists’ anti-evolution campaign. Conceptions of the
especially religious South had not died out and in fact were re-energized during and after
the war. Tennessee evangelicals had in essence sanctified the public school, arguing for
the use of the Bible by suggesting that a failure to do so could lead to the downfall of
Christian America along the same path the atheistic, materialistic Germans had so
recently trod. The same arguments of majority rule, citizen’s rights, and the Christian
nation—arguments that had been so effective in justifying daily Bible reading—were
quickly employed and equally successful in the campaigns to ban the teaching of
evolution in Tennessee schools.

Some Tennessee evangelicals had expressed concerns about evolution, and
especially its presence in public and denominational schools, from the beginning of the
twentieth century. Methodist L. H. Brown urged his fellow evangelicals “to cease
mincing matters with the scientists” and rally “their members and all Christians [to] line
up with all their strength and stand forth for the rectitude and truth of the Bible.” Further,
he implored, “The Christian Churches should at once take such measures as they can
including any efforts “to stop their colleges and universities from teaching the [evolution]
theory to the youth of the nation.”36 Despite Brown’s call to action, little notice was
taken by Methodists or Baptists in Tennessee until after the first World War when three
important issues combined to inflame passions and inspire the successful extension of the
anti-evolution campaign into the state. The first has been discussed in Chapter V above,
namely the fears that parents were failing in their duties to properly educate their children
in religion and that Germany’s lack of religious education had caused the recent war.
Second, the much publicized allegations by a former student that evolution was being
taught in one of the state Baptist universities made Tennessee evangelicals fear that even
their own colleges were unsafe. The third element, and perhaps the most important, was

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36 L. H. Brown, esq., “Evolution and the Bible,” Nashville Christian Advocate, August 22, 1901,
p. 4. As had been the model in nineteenth century Tennessee Methodism, Brown’s article was
answered by another Methodist who saw no danger in evolution, in fact asserting that after close
study he believed in evolution as a theory because he could see in it the “footprints of design” or
the evidence of God’s handiwork. Professor E. H. Randle, “‘Evolution and the Bible,’” Nashville
Christian Advocate, March 6, 1902, p. 10.
the ascent of William Jennings Bryan, a hero to most religious and Democratic
Tennesseans, to the leadership of the national anti-evolution campaigns and his and
others’ well-timed visits to the state to further fan the flames.

In spite of Vanderbilt University’s history of having dismissed a professor in the
1870s for his efforts to explain “Man in the Light of Geology,” Nashville Christian
Advocate editor George Winton argued in the summer of 1908 that “theology and science
go well together, and church schools have some advantages in both.” The former
missionary and fervent supporter of Vanderbilt suggested some of the advantages of a
church over a state school were that “the professor who teaches in the church college the
theories of Lyell and Darwin is not suspected of heresy on that account. In fact, he is
above suspicion. He is a teacher of up-to-date science, but he is also a Christian.”³⁷
In spite of Winton’s perhaps generous view of the situation, allegations in 1921 that Dr. C.
W. Davis, a young professor of agriculture and biology at the Baptist’s Union University
in Jackson, had been teaching about evolution set Tennessee Baptists on a state-wide
search for heresies that were supposedly driving students away from the faith of their
parents. The charges were first levied by a disgruntled former student but gained strength
when Selsus E. Tull, pastor of Jackson’s First Baptist Church and member of the

4–5. Winton did admit that “of course now and then some teacher of science gives offense, but it
is usually because he has tried very hard to do so. The martyr’s crown is hard to win.” The real
thrust of his editorial was a plea to support the church colleges, explaining that “if the teacher of
science in a church school becomes a martyr to his calling, it is not likely to be on account of the
misdirected zeal of his constituency, but because of their utter lack of zeal. He is likely to find
himself in charge of a poorly equipped laboratory or of no laboratory at all. Making bricks
without straw is simple, but teaching chemistry and physics without apparatus is a heart-breaking
task.” “Man in the Light of Geology,” was the title of Alexander Winchell’s address at the 1878
Vanderbilt University Commencement. He delivered it only moments after President McIntyre
asked him to decline reappointment (a university effort to save scientific and religious face) and
less than a day before the board of trust voted to dissolve his lectureship.
university's Board of Trust, continued to press for an investigation within the school and of the school by the Tennessee Baptist Convention. Professor Davis was supported by the faculty, students, and president of the university and, after signing a statement affirming his faith in "the Bible as the fully inspired and infallible word of God" and his assent to "the articles of faith and practice as generally held by Baptists," was allowed to retain his job.  

Davis's predicament is a good example of how, despite the repeated professions of both Baptists and Methodists of the essential unity of religious and scientific truth, the air was getting exceptionally thin for advocates of theistic evolution in postwar Tennessee. The investigating committee appointed by the Tennessee Baptist Convention, after interviewing Davis, his students, and the university president, concluded that the professor was "a thorough believer in the Personal God as the Creator of all things" and "in the Bible as the authoritative Word of God." Professor Davis explained that "he had been educated in, and had taught much in secular schools," and "had at times used the word 'evolution' as applied to variations in species and the development of life in various spheres." The committee reported that the controversy had arisen from Davis's unwise

38 Union University Faculty Minutes, October 10, 1921, quoted in Richard Hiram Ward, A History of Union University (Jackson, Tenn.: Union University Press, 1975), 68. The faculty minutes for this period are no longer available at Union University, having been lost apparently after Ward wrote his history. The student and faculty resolutions in support of Davis's "integrity, Christian character, and orthodoxy" as commendations of "him heartily and fully as being in every way safe and trustworthy as a teacher in Science for youth in a Christian College," were printed in the school newspaper: Union University (Jackson, Tenn.) Cardinal and Cream, February 24, 1922, p. 4. These resolutions, as well as a report of a special investigating committee, were reported to the executive committee of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and through the Nashville Baptist and Reflector, to the larger constituency of Tennessee Baptists. W. L. Pickard, Edward Stubbsfield, and G. T. Mayo, "To the Executive Board," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 6, 1922, p. 7; [Moore], "Union University Matter Settled," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 6, 1922, p. 2; and "Statement by Prof. Davis," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, June 29, 1922, p. 2
use of the term "evolution" so "as to leave his position in doubt in the minds of some," but concluded that there was nothing heretical and "that his teachings are now free from the use of such terms as might lead to doubt as to his position."\(^{39}\) The report of the committee, its acceptance by the state convention's executive board, and endorsement by the editor of the Baptist and Reflector in part may reflect a limited acceptance of the possibility of theistic evolution (though not of man and with no transmutation of species) among some Tennessee Baptist leaders. But Selsus E. Tull, who had first publicized the charges against Davis and would not be satisfied with the results of the investigation, pointedly asked "WHAT SORT OF EVOLUTION IS NOT CONTRARY TO THE BIBLE?" Writing before the results of the investigation were made public, Tull proclaimed his belief that "\textit{any sort of Evolution,} when carried to its logical conclusions and effects, is "contrary" to the Bible, and is a dangerous element to be propagated in the classrooms of any Baptist College."\(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\) Pickard, Stubblefield, and Mayo, "To The Executive Board," 7. Davis produced a longer explanation of his beliefs and the origin of the controversy to the assembled students and faculty of Union University in a chapel service. "Dr. Davis Explains his Position on Evolution," Union University (Jackson, Tenn.) \textit{Cardinal and Cream}, December 16, 1921, pp. 1 and 4.

\(^{40}\) Tull continued his tirade, stating his belief that "As for myself, I feel that the whole question of Evolution is a poison so destructive to the integrity of the Bible and to the real importance of Baptist education that no Evolutionist of any sort ought to be engaged in the faculty of Union University or any other of our Baptist schools." Selsus E. Tull, "The Evolution Issue at Union University," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, October 27, 1921, p. 3. Tull continued his attacks on evolution at the school, but the student newspaper reported that he was satisfied with the outcome of the investigation. "Evolution Issue at Union University Settled," Union University (Jackson, Tenn.) \textit{Cardinal and Cream}, March 31, 1922, p. 1. The \textit{Cardinal and Cream}'s judgment was a bit premature, however, for Selsus E. Tull voted against Davis's reappointment at the May 1922 meeting of the Union University board of trust and, when outvoted, Tull opted to resign from the board himself. Following his resignation, Tull presented the board with a typed list of his reasons for objecting to Davis to be put into the minutes, among them Tull's argument that "Prof. Davis is a confessed Evolutionist of a type which I cannot accept or endorse in a teacher in a Baptist School." Union University Board of Trust \textit{Minutes}, May 29, 1922, II, p. 397. Special Collections, Emma Watters Summers Library, Union University, Jackson, Tennessee.
The mere allegations of evolution at Union brought a firestorm of criticism from Tennessee Baptists, prompting Nashville Baptist and Reflector editor Jesse D. Moore to caution authors to “be considerate of each other” in their exchanges.41 The controversies over the control of Vanderbilt University earlier in the century had already alerted Tennessee evangelicals to the importance of supervising the teachers and curriculum of their colleges, but the Davis affair renewed the calls for vigilance. One Baptist commentator warned his coreligionists to supervise the colleges and “see to it that the men who do the teaching are sound in the faith.” Furthermore, he suggested that “Any Board of Trustees should promptly dismiss any teacher who teaches any science so-called which contradicts the Bible.”42 In a like fashion, Methodist George W. Read asked “What about our Church Schools?” Picking up on the accusations of what was being taught in the public schools, Read suggested that Christians needed to be even more vigilant with the teachers and curriculum of denominational schools and “demand that

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41 Moore’s purpose for caution was evident from his reminder that the purpose of the paper was in part to supervise denominational institutions but also to “build up our institution of learning along lines which are consistent with our established faith.” [Moore], “The Evolution Discussion,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, November 3, 1921, p. 1. Moore continued this theme of caution throughout his short career at the paper, warning his fellow Baptists in 1924 about the dangers of always looking for heresy. A diligent investigator could find heresy wherever he wanted to, but at too great a cost to the denomination and its institutions. Though he did not mention him by name, Moore’s editorial was likely written in response to the growing agitation in North Carolina and the SBC as a whole over the scientific and theological teachings of William Louis Poteat. See [Moore], “Heresy Hunters,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, June 5, 1924, p. 1. For more on the Poteat controversy, see especially Hall, William Louis Poteat, 133–55; Thompson, Tried as by Fire, 101–36; and Willard B. Gatewood, Preachers, Pedagogues, and Politicians: The Evolution Controversy in North Carolina, 1920–1927 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 59–76.

42 T. A. J. Beasley, “Progression or Degeneration, Which?” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, May 12, 1921, p. 7.
nothing shall be taught in the Church school that undermines the very foundations of our religion."\(^{43}\)

Although some conservative evangelicals in Tennessee and elsewhere had expressed concern about the teaching of evolution, it took the leadership of the Presbyterian layman and former politician William Jennings Bryan to focus a variety of vague fears into a nationwide campaign for religiously "safe" schools. As George Marsden has suggested,

the battle for antievolution, the Bible, and civilization was a cause whose time had come; but it is doubtful that it would have become such a deeply engraved line of American thought had it not been for the colorful leadership of Bryan. If nothing else, Bryan's presence ensured wide press coverage, which of course always invited further simplifications of the issue.\(^{44}\)

Besides earning the favor of Tennessee's Democrats and farmers, Bryan had long been noticed, and for the most part praised, by the state's religious press. As early as 1897

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\(^{43}\) Read echoed the taxpayer's rights and popular control arguments so powerfully utilized in the previous Bible-reading and future anti-evolution campaigns, placing ministerial fundraisers as arbiters of doctrine: "Methodist preachers are told that they are the 'key' men when money is to be raised for Christian education, and they are looked to very largely to furnish pupils for our Church schools. Therefore they have a right to demand that the things they preach from their pulpits shall not be nullified by the Church school." Read called for more vigilant school trustees and denominational boards of education to insure that no teachers were employed who could not subscribe to a strict code of belief and practice. George W. Read, "What about our Church Schools?" Nashville Christian Advocate, March 31, 1922, pp. 410-11. In a similar fashion, the Texas Baptist Convention of 1922 unanimously adopted the following resolution: "That the trustees of the institutions of learning controlled and fostered by the Baptist General Convention of Texas are hereby instructed not to employ anyone who denies the deity of Jesus Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, or who holds to the Darwinian theory of evolution or any other theory of evolution that contravenes the teaching of the Word of God, to any official position, or to teach in any of the schools controlled and fostered by the Baptists' General Association." Interestingly, this resolution was printed in full in the Tennessee Methodist newspaper. Nashville Christian Advocate, December 15, 1922, p. 3.

E. E. Hoss expressed his “admiration for [Bryan’s] character and . . . firm belief in his honest patriotism.” Like numerous other evangelicals, Bryan’s faith had been stirred during and soon after the war, believing as he did that German atheism, materialism, and acceptance of Darwinism had led to their military aggression. But what most galvanized Bryan’s attention was a study by Bryn Mawr psychologist James H. Leuba that showed religious belief in youths declining with each additional year of education they received. Bryan first turned to a Biblical metaphor, inquiring “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain all the learning of the schools and lose his faith in God?” Bryan, who had remained in the public eye after resigning as Woodrow Wilson’s Secretary of State by traveling on the lecture circuit, added two new anti-evolution speeches to his repertoire and aptly titled them “The Menace of Darwinism” and “The Bible and Its Enemies.”

In his speeches, Bryan echoed many of the themes that had driven the Tennessee Bible-reading campaigns of the previous decade, but he offered little more than a rehearsed version of the “home rule” compromise as a solution: he encouraged parents and local communities to be vigilant of their schools and teachers. Kentucky Baptists


\[\text{[Leuba], The Belief in God and Immortality (Boston: Sherman, French, 1916), quoted in Larson, Summer for the Gods, 41.}

\[\text{[Bryan], In His Image (New York: Revell, 1922), 118, quoted in Larson, Summer for the Gods, 41.}

\[\text{[Larson], Summer for the Gods, 42–43.}\]
had a more specific plan; a plan that Bryan would latch onto and champion until his death in 1925. At their annual meeting in late 1921, the Kentucky Baptist State Board of Missions debated and passed a resolution imploring the legislature to prohibit the teaching of evolution in the state public schools. With Bryan’s endorsement, and even an address before both houses of the Kentucky legislature in 1922, an anti-evolution bill came within one vote of passing in spite of the courageous and vigorous opposition from University of Kentucky president Frank L. McVey. Tennessee Baptists and Methodists both paid attention to the debates in the bluegrass state and noted the bill’s defeat. Baptist editor Jesse D. Moore expressed some concern over the legislation, admitting his dismay “that the lines have been drawn at the point of legislation. Kentucky schools now have state license to teach Darwinianism.” Moore seemed to be hearkening back to the days of the “home rule” compromise and feared that legislative battles, especially unsuccessful ones like the recent one in Kentucky, would weaken the movement.49

In the summer of 1922, O. L. Hailey, a prominent Tennessee Baptist minister and former co-owner of the Nashville Baptist and Reflector, published an article in the state Baptist paper effectively drawing the lines for battle in Tennessee. Choosing a title that spoke volumes, Hailey posed a rhetorical question in bold type: “Church or State, Who

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[Moore], “Evolution in Kentucky,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, March 23, 1922, p. 1. The Nashville Christian Advocate responded to the Kentucky evolution matter with contradictory articles and editorials, the first being a lukewarm endorsement of an article by Lyman Abbott suggesting that there were several ways to interpret evolution, not all of which would contradict the Bible. The second was a reprint from evangelist Bob Schuler staunchly supporting the anti-evolution movement. “Evolution—‘God’s Way of Doing Things,” Nashville Christian Advocate, March 3, 1922, p. 4; and Rev. R. A. Schuler, “Bob’ Schuler on Evolution,” Nashville Christian Advocate, March 24, 1922, p. 4. Bill L. Weaver, “Kentucky Baptists’ Reaction to the National Evolution Controversy, 1922–26,” Filson Club Historical Quarterly, 49 (1975), 266–75, gives an account of the Baptist situation in Kentucky, but does not report on the 1921 resolution by the state mission board.
Shall Define the Education of Our Children? Shall the State Teach Evolution?” Hailey, as had so many Tennessee evangelicals before him, recognized the importance of education to both church and state, and he sought to justify the prototypical Christian’s concern about his child’s soul: “Since [the] Christian must look to the word of God, and in that word finds that he will reap what he sows, he knows he must guard the education of youth for the future.” Questions about evolution may have been new, Hailey admitted, but as for the bigger issue of “who shall decide the sort of education that shall be aimed at?” Hailey noted that “this is a question as old as Christianity, but it has become more acute in these latter days.” In part, Hailey’s criticisms were aimed at the teaching of evolution in denominational schools, still accusing Union University President H. E. Watters of harboring a known evolutionist on his faculty. But Hailey warned that evolutionary teaching was more widespread than a few schools: “more and more the doctrine of evolution is taking possession of our schools and we are growing a generation of infidels and skeptics.”

Hailey’s article apparently expressed the concerns of many Tennessee Baptists, rehashing the arguments of the Bible-reading campaigns and setting the agenda for the anti-evolution campaigns in Tennessee that would eventually lead to Dayton in 1925. He did find some opposition within the denomination, much of it from defenders of Union University. E. E. Northern, a former professor at Union University and apparently a believer in some form of theistic evolution, addressed an “Open Letter to Dr. O. L. Hailey” in which he professed his desire, like Hailey, to combat “materialism wherever

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we find it." But, Northern warned, Hailey may have been simplifying the issue too much in his campaign against evolution. He asked Hailey for more specific definitions of Christianity, evolution, and materialism and further implored Hailey to name names: "From your article the only fair inference is that all professors in all state schools are teaching the dreadful things you and I are fighting .... Now evidently you did not intend to make such a broad charge as this."\textsuperscript{51} Hailey and Northern exchanged several letters through the paper, but it was Hailey's second letter that set the groundwork for the campaigns of the next three years within the church and the legislature.

As for Northern's questions about where evolution was being taught, Hailey warned that it was everywhere. Simply by "examining almost any text-book on science which is taught in our schools above the grammar grades," one could see where in the state evolution was being taught.\textsuperscript{52} Hailey was building on suggestions that had already been presented in May of 1921 by T. A. J. Beasley, who had argued that "The Southern Baptists should have a text-book committee composed of competent men who are sound to the core on the doctrines of the Bible, and whose business it should be to supervise the selection of text-books for our schools."\textsuperscript{53} Tennessee Methodist editor Thomas Ivey, though not a party to the Hailey-Northern exchange, would certainly have agreed with

\textsuperscript{51} Northern and Hailey's correspondence grew increasingly ungracious, much of it hinging on Northern's condescension for Hailey's unscientific understanding and non-specific allegations: "Some of us are already fighting materialism wherever we find it, but have not been able to locate it as definitely as you seem to have done. If we knew better where to locate this octopus our efforts would be more efficient. Some of us have heard broad statements and, undertaking to act on them have found ourselves shelling the woods where no enemy existed. Some of us have been shelled by those fighting for the same cause that we were supporting." E. E. Northern, "An Open Letter to Dr. O. L. Hailey," Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, September 7, 1922, pp. 4–5.

\textsuperscript{52} O. L. Hailey, "In Response to Professor Northern," Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, October 26, 1922, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{53} T. A. J. Beasley, "Progression or Degeneration, Which?" Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, May 12, 1921, p. 7.
Hailey’s arguments. A few years before, in the midst of the campaigns to require Bible reading in the public schools, Ivey had stated unequivocally his belief that “while the enemies of our Christian religion are laboring so assiduously to prevent the teaching of the Bible in public schools, it would be well for us all to see that no atheistical books are being used.”

Hailey’s second justification, one that had been pressed into service in the Bible reading campaigns and would continue to be prominent even after the Scopes trial, was about majority rule. Hailey again elided constitutional prohibitions of an establishment of religion by making control of the schools (and thus enforcement of religiously-based curriculum) subject only to the will of the majority. As Hailey explained, “Evangelical Christians, . . . who constitute the majority of the citizens of the United States, have a right to object, and do object to the teaching of anything in the schools which are supported by the state, which is contrary to the doctrines taught in the Bible.” The majority of parents and taxpayers, as William Jennings Bryan would also argue, should control the teachers and curriculum of the schools. Campaigning against evolution in West Virginia, Bryan told the state legislature that “The hand that writes the pay check rules the school.” Bryan’s and Hailey’s arguments were well received and utilized by both Baptists and Methodists. In the weeks before the Scopes trial, Tennessee Baptist educator J. L. Campbell would explain that “the claims of the tax-payers have a right to be respected.”

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55 Larson, Summer for the Gods, 44. Note here the room for interpretation of who is ultimately writing the check, the parents or the legislature.
56 J. L. Campbell, “Dr. Campbell Defends Tennessee,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, July 2, 1925, pp. 6–7. Campbell was a professor at the Baptist’s Carson-Newman University in East Tennessee, not all that far from Dayton, the site of the trial.
evolution law and the legislature that enacted it. Such laws, he argued, were a legitimate use of power of legislature, acting on "sacred rights of parents and guardians over their children and their charges."\(^{57}\)

Hailey and other Tennessee leaders of the anti-evolution campaign also restated their earlier arguments that America was a Christian nation and it was the job of the public schools to uphold that heritage. As such, any teachings that might undercut that heritage could and should be barred from the schools. As Alfred F. Smith explained to Tennessee Methodists, "American education must be Christian if we are to preserve our Christian inheritance." In his endorsement of American Education Week, Smith praised the chosen motto "A godly nation cannot fail" and urged "ministers of all denominations" to "make the most of this opportunity" to remind parents and lawmakers of their duties to uphold the country through the schools.\(^{58}\) Baptist editor Jesse D. Moore went even further, explaining that the country was not only Christian, but "Evangelically Christian," and therefore not only should the Bible be read daily in the public schools but also

> legislation among us can, and should take account of certain phases of Christian doctrine and practice. It must do that or else it would sanction irreligion and would be opposed the Christianity. The absence of legislation is either a witness to the lack of necessity for it or else it means the reign of free-love and the disregard of all law.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{58}\) American Education week was a joint production of the American Legion, National Education Association, and U. S. Bureau of Education, neatly assimilating post–WWI anti-German, anti-Communist, and generally Nativist movements. Smith further endorsed the week's program, explaining that "The proper observance of the week will bring to the school themselves a remarkable opportunity to teach every boy and girl his responsibility to help maintain in this nation an educational system that will perpetuate the Christian ideals of our pioneer educators." [Smith], "American Education Week," Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, October 24, 1924, p. 4.

\(^{59}\) [Moore], "Bible in Public Schools," Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, April 24, 1924, p. 2.
Methodists, Baptists, and Bryan argued that since the majority of American, or at least Tennessee citizens, were evangelical Protestants, they could properly pass legislation that reflected that belief and preserve what they considered the Christian foundations of the nation.

In addition to all of these arguments recycled from the Bible-reading campaigns, William Jennings Bryan added another theme that moved from majoritarianism toward a populist embrace of the elusive concept of fairness. In an argument that seemed more suited for the rest of the country than to a Tennessee that had so recently required daily Bible reading, Bryan proclaimed that if Christians “cannot teach the views of the majority in the schools supported by taxation, then a few people cannot teach at public expense their scientific interpretation that attacks every vital principle of Christianity.” But Bryan’s argument played well among Tennessee evangelicals because they did not think they were teaching Christianity, or at least not any objectionable form of Christianity. As they had so often proclaimed, daily Bible reading, prayers, and devotions were acceptable because they were “non-sectarian” activities. O. L. Hailey went along with arguments that Bible reading was non-sectarian and attacked the teaching of evolution in public schools as the teaching of a form of religion: scientific sectarianism, as it were. As he explained in 1922:

The Christian portion of the commonwealth has accepted their part of the agreement, and refuse to teach in the public schools, any particular doctrine which impinges upon the rights of their fellow citizens who hold to a different view from them. But the State has violated that compact, and is doing so every day. By parity of reasoning, those who are estopped

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from teaching Christianity, out of regard for their neighbors, are also
estopped from teaching anti-Christianity upon the same ground. 61
Such arguments were staples in Hailey and Bryan’s arsenal, and were repeated even after
the Scopes trial of 1925, when the Watchman Examiner erroneously reported that
“Tennessee, like many other States, has a law prohibiting the teaching of the Bible in the
public schools.” If that were true, the paper explained, “is it fair that the Bible shall be
attacked where the Bible cannot be taught and defended?” 62

The national anti-evolution campaigns of William Jennings Bryan and the local
efforts of O. L. Hailey in Tennessee led to the introduction of anti-evolution measures in
six states in 1923. 63 A Tennessee state senator introduced a act “to make it unlawful to
teach or permit to be taught in any institution of learning, supported by public taxation,

61 Hailey, “In Response to Professor Northern,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, October 26,
1922, p. 4.
62 The argument continued, with the paper answering its own question: “The legislature of
Tennessee says: ‘No, if the Bible cannot be taught and defended in our schools, no science can be
taught which attacks the Bible and says that its teaching is untrue.’” The article was reprinted in
the Tennessee Baptist paper: “The Law Against Teaching Evolution,” Nashville Baptist and
Reflector, August 20, 1925, p. 6. As far as I can tell, there was no law in Tennessee to prohibit
the use of the Bible in the public schools; in fact the 1915 Bible reading law required its use. In
part, this contradiction might arise because of vague understandings of “teaching” the Bible in the
public schools. Even in their arguments for daily Bible reading, most Tennessee Baptists and
Methodists remained squeamish about the notion of “teaching” the Bible in the public school.
Any effort at explaining the Bible would invariably involve sectarian or doctrinally debatable
issues, so both Baptists and Methodists objected to “teaching” the Bible except perhaps in week
day “release-time” Bible classes. On the if you can’t teach religion you can’t teach evolution
argument, see also Hailey, “Professor Northern Again,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector,
November 9, 1922, p. 6; [Moore], “Evolution Legislation,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector,
February 19, 1925, p. 2; [Moore], “Evolution Legislation,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector,
March 29, 1923, p. 2; J. H. Thomas, “Tennessee’s Evolution Law,” Nashville Baptist and
Reflector, June 25, 1925, 9; and J. L. Campbell, “Dr. Campbell Defends Tennessee,” Nashville
Baptist and Reflector, July 2, 1925, pp. 6–7.
63 The bills were defeated outright in four of the six, while Oklahoma “added a rider to its public-
school textbook law providing ‘that no copyright shall be purchased, nor textbook adopted that
teaches the ‘Materialistic Conception of History’ (i.e.) the Darwin Theory of Creation versus the
Bible Account of Creation.’ The Florida legislature chimed in with a nonbinding resolution
declaring ‘that it is improper and subversive to the best interest of the people’ for public school
teachers ‘to teach as true Darwinism or any other hypothesis that links man in blood relationship
to any form of lower life.’” Larson, Summer for the Gods, 47.
atheism, agnosticism, Darwinism, or any other hypothesis that links man in blood relationship to any other form of life.” After an attempt to table the measure, it was referred to the Senate Education Committee, which rejected the bill.⁶⁴ Although the Senate passed a resolution inviting William Jennings Bryan to address a joint session of the Tennessee General Assembly in favor of the measure, the House did not concur.⁶⁵ There appears to have been little organized support for or against the measures; Nashville secular newspapers seemed most concerned that such a bill would lead to lengthy and acrimonious debate that would divert attention from more important legislation.⁶⁶ Editor Jesse D. Moore of the Nashville Baptist and Reflector expressed some misgivings about the concept of legislating against teaching evolution, explaining that “It is not for us to say whether some other approach to a solution of the problems would be better; but since the bill has been introduced, the alternatives are: whether we shall favor the measure or oppose it.”⁶⁷ After rehashing most of the arguments, Moore stated that Tennessee

⁶⁴ The senate bill was introduced by Hervey Whitfield, who represented Montgomery and Robinson counties with a post office at Clarksville. Whitfield labeled the bill “by request” but I have not found who made the request. A House bill met a similar fate. The original Senate Bill 681, is filed in the legislative archives, TSLA. The fate of the two bills can be found in Tennessee General Assembly, House Journal, 1923, pp. 666, 719, and 720; and Senate Journal, 1923, pp. 599, 617, and 668.


⁶⁶ In a March 20 editorial, the Nashville Tennessean noted that “Legislative leaders profess to see great danger in the bills as regards consumption of time. They are fearful the debate on the mooted question may continue for days.” Quoted in Bailey, “Antievolution Crusade,” 79.

⁶⁷ Moore leaned on many of the arguments of Hailey and Bryan, especially of majoritarianism and the concept that if the state cannot teach religion it cannot teach irreligion: “Orthodox belief as to the origin of man does violence to the religious scruples of nobody, although it may affront the intellectual pride of some. While the state can not say that it should be taught in the public schools, it is clearly within the province of the state to say that anything which is dangerous thereto shall not be taught.” [Moore], “Evolution Legislation,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, March 29, 1923, p. 2.
Baptists should support the law and not give evolutionists and modernists strength by allowing them to defeat it.

The lack of organized support doomed the 1923 bill in Tennessee. In an editorial at the beginning of the 1923 legislative session, Jesse Moore listed three pieces of "important legislation" that Baptists hoped to secure from the Sixty-Third General Assembly. The list—which included better enforcement of prohibition laws, Sunday observance (blue) laws, and restricting divorce to "Scriptural grounds"—most notably omitted any mention of anti-evolution legislation, despite the much publicized efforts in Kentucky a year earlier.68 Also, the bill was not introduced until well into the legislative session in the middle of March, further suggesting a lack of preparation or support. Finally, the bill may have also lost because of its wording. In linking the prohibition of teaching Darwinism with atheism and agnosticism, and further in explaining evolution as only a "hypothesis that links man in blood relationship to any other form of life," the 1923 bill lacked the important Biblical authority that would be cited in the successful 1925 law.69

Despite the inglorious fate of the 1923 bills, Tennessee anti-evolutionists launched a full-scale campaign to insure that similar legislation would be introduced and enacted at the next session in 1925. As one supporter explained in a letter to the Nashville Banner, the anti-evolution cause was not lost, for "like the prohibition question—it is coming. ... God is not dead, and the Christian people of this state will not

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68 Interestingly, Moore utilized some of the same arguments, but in favor of Sunday observance laws: "Legislation regarding Sunday may not be so easy. But Tennessee is a Christian commonwealth, and it has a right to enforce such regulations governing Sunday which may be thought needful to the peace and success of the State." [Moore], "Important Legislation," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, January 11, 1923, p. 2.
69 Tennessee General Assembly 1923, Senate Bill 681, TSLA.
stand supinely by and see the Bible trampled under foot while they are forced to pay the bills."  

Bryan and other national fundamentalists like William Bell Riley, T. T. Martin, John Roach Stanton, and J. Frank Norris toured the state, while super-evangelist Billy Sunday held revivals in the state in both 1923 and during the 1925 legislative session. The most direct offensive came from Bryan himself, in a rendition of his "Is the Bible True?" speech, delivered to a crowd of supporters in Nashville's Ryman Auditorium. Not just a gathering of religious fanatics, the crowd included a former governor as well as the sitting governor and prominent Baptist layman Austin Peay. Alfred Smith applauded Bryan's speeches in the Nashville Christian Advocate, especially how "He eloquently defended the Scriptures against evolution and . . . rightly advocated the protection of our children against those who would disturb their belief in the supernatural and the miraculous." Bryan supporters and anti-evolution advocates, led by Nashville attorney W. B. Marr, published and distributed copies of the speech in an effort to stir up opinion in advance of the 1924 state elections. Marr and his associates made sure to send copies to the newly elected legislators before the opening of the 1925 session.

As a result of the efforts of Bryan, Sunday, Marr, and others, two different legislators introduced anti-evolution bills to the 1925 General Assembly. John Washington Butler, a farmer, a former teacher, a Primitive Baptist, and an occasional

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70 Nashville Banner, April 1, 1923, quoted in Bailey, "Antievolution Crusade," 81.
71 Larson, Summer for the Gods, 48.
72 Peay was obviously swayed by Bryan's speech; much of his own special message to the legislature upon signing the Butler anti-evolution bill borrowed largely from Bryan's themes.
73 Smith stopped short of openly endorsing an anti-evolution statute by name, but seemed to imply that at least some form of protection was necessary. A year later, in the midst of the Butler bill debates and the Scopes trial, Smith would be much more ambivalent about the necessity of such legislation, fearing that the debates would harm both church and state. [Smith], "Mr. Bryan on the Bible," Nashville Christian Advocate, February 1, 1924, p. 3.
newspaper essayist from Macon County, submitted House Bill 185, "An act prohibiting the teaching of the Evolution Theory in all the Universities, Normals and all other public schools of Tennessee, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, and to provide penalties for the violations thereof." Butler was a second-term legislator who had long been interested in education and rural life in his native Upper Cumberland region. Like many other Tennesseans, Butler mourned the loss of local control over questions such as teacher qualifications, textbook adoption, and curriculum. Like Bryan, Butler latched onto the symbolic, though still meaningful issue of evolution, which Butler feared undermined a proper education in Christian citizenship.\textsuperscript{74} Butler’s bill quickly passed the House with only five dissenting votes and then went to the upper chamber, which had already rejected a similar Senate bill.

Butler’s bill looked sure to suffer the same defeat until Speaker of the Senate Lew D. Hill of Sparta announced his support and managed to delay consideration of the bill until after the legislative recess so the anti-evolution forces could mount a campaign to sway votes.

\textsuperscript{74} Jeanette Keith provides by far the freshest and most sympathetic view of Butler and his anti-evolution stand in her rural studies book on Butler’s native Upper Cumberland region (north of the Cumberland river, in Middle Tennessee, bordering Kentucky, and including Macon, Clay Pickett, Smith, Jackson, Overton, Fentress, Putnam, Dekalb, White, and Cumberland counties). Much as I have tried to do in this chapter, she argues that efforts to require Bible reading and ban the teaching of evolution were reactions against the formalization of education and the perceived lack of control over schools and curriculum by local communities. Further, she notes how local people such as Butler reacted to modern centralizing legislation by co-opting state power to enforce their local values, such as a belief in the literal truth of the Bible. We differ in opinion, however, on the ‘value’ of Butler’s bill. Keith sees it as a victory for local control, whereby local values reasserted themselves through the machinery of the state school system so that “in the end the traditionalists won—and won in such a way that their influence, reflected in the Butler Act, was extended nationwide.” I would however suggest that the Butler bill, if it was a protest against the loss of local control, ended up imposing the rural or local values of some on the whole state. The Butler bill, like the Bible reading statutes, succeeded by obscuring constitutional protection of minority religious, scientific, or social views behind the democratic smokescreen of majority rule. Keith, \textit{Country People in the New South: Tennessee’s Upper Cumberland} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 183–210.
It apparently worked, for when the Senate reconvened, the education committee reported in favor of the bill and, after a spirited debate, the Senate passed the measure twenty-four to six.\textsuperscript{75}

The Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector} praised the Butler bill and the House for passing it, stating that "We are convinced that the Legislature is not only within its powers but also within its duty in this matter." The editor rehashed several of the arguments of the campaign, stating forcefully that "While the state cannot teach religion, it is clearly not the duty of the state to teach irreligion."\textsuperscript{76} The legislation passed more quietly beyond the notice of the Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, although one correspondent expressed approval of the measure in June: "My hat's off to the Tennessee Legislature for having enough Christian courage to take an initial step in a heroic effort to drive out this would-be usurper in the field of American education."\textsuperscript{77}

During the legislative recess before the Butler bill passed and before Governor Austin Peay signed it into law, supporters and opponents of the measure mobilized letter-writing campaigns to legislators, the governor, and local newspapers. Opponents variously argued that evolution was not necessarily irreligious, that an anti-evolution statute would violate the constitutional protections of freedom of religion and separation of church and state, or that such a law violated academic and intellectual freedom.\textsuperscript{78}

Vanderbilt Professor Edwin Mims drafted a petition and solicited the signature of

\textsuperscript{75} The most succinct account of the bill’s legislative career can be found in Bailey, "The Enactment of Tennessee’s Antievolution Law," 472–90. See also Larson, \textit{Summer for the Gods}, 49–59.

\textsuperscript{76} [Moore], "Evolution Legislation," Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, February 19, 1925, p. 2.


\textsuperscript{78} Bailey, "Antievolution Crusade," 92–94.
prominent ministers, educators, and politicians in the state. He earnestly sought the support of University of Tennessee President Harcourt Morgan, explaining that he was reluctant to lead the opposition because “Vanderbilt is of course already branded as heretic, modernist, etc.,” and “we have held back because we thought we might hurt the cause.” Morgan did not support the petition, explaining the university’s position to Mims and Peay: “The subject of Evolution so intricately involves religious beliefs, concerning which the University has no disposition to dictate, that the University declines to engage in the controversy.”

Opposition to the bill from religious quarters showed both the persistence of belief among some state Protestants in the possibility of theistic forms of evolution and the quickly evaporating room for holding or expressing such opinions. Methodist M. M. Black restated his belief in some form of the day-age theory of the Mosaic cosmogony, and reiterated the old mantra that “the Church no less than science must be a seeker of the truth, nor has she anything to fear from the discovery of truth in any realm.”

University of Tennessee President Harcourt Morgan, in a draft of a private letter to the governor in

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80 Morgan’s ducking of the issue is difficult to swallow, especially in light of the courageous stand taken by his counterpart at the University of Kentucky only a couple of years previous. Morgan was a botanist who taught evolution in his classes, but in 1925 he was confronted with a very difficult choice: speak out for a long-term concept and risk financial and administrative ruin of the university or quietly allow a symbolic bill to pass unnoticed and, hopefully, unenforced. In an era when the university had to depend almost exclusively on the state legislature for support, Morgan was perhaps wise not to oppose so powerful a figure as Senate Speaker Lew Hill. But the negative public opinion piled on Tennessee during and after 1925, when the bill was enforced and the nation took notice of Tennessee’s supposed intellectual backwardness unfortunately stamped a seemingly indelible image on the state and its university for decades to come. Morgan to Peay, February 9, 1925, reprinted in Montgomery and Gaither, “Evolution and Education,” 151.

March 1925, still declined to speak against the law but urged the governor to ensure that
the statute distinguished exactly what kind of evolutionary teaching was to be
prohibited. Some prominent Nashville religious figures protested against the bill. In
addition to members of usually ‘suspect’ and liberal denominations such as the
Episcopalians, many prominent Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Christians
signed a petition, including Dr. John L. Hill of the Baptist Sunday School Board and Dr.
Stonewall Anderson of the southern Methodist Board of Education. Dr. Richard L.
Owenby of Columbia’s First Methodist Church criticized the House action, explaining in
a sermon that they “were making monkeys of themselves at the rate of 71 to 5” and that
“the missing link … might be found near Capitol Hill.” Some other Methodist laymen

82 Morgan wrote Peay: “Can not the term ‘teaching of evolution’ as used in this bill be restricted
to what the authors and supporters intended, that of teaching of man’s ascent from a monkey, and
thus not involve the plan of civilized man by breeding and selection to improve as many forms of
plants and animals as are economically worthwhile. … I hope you can see the authors and leading
supporters and suggest an amendment providing an interpretation that will not prohibit
investigations and studies designed to improve and perfect the present strains of plants an
animals.” Morgan even went so far as to provide the text for the proposed amendment: “The
prohibition of the teaching of evolution as provided for in this bill shall be interpreted as the
prohibition of the teaching that man descended from a monkey. It shall not be interpreted in any
way to restrict the promotion of plant and animal breeding and improvement which has made
possible the various classes of plants and animals that are the outcome of selective processes for
the improvement of native species.” The Butler bill was specific in its text (but not its caption)
about what kind of evolution was to be prohibited. Morgan to Peay, March 18, 1925, reprinted in
Montgomery and Gaither, “Evolution and Education in Tennessee,” 151–52. Montgomery and
Gaither report that Morgan’s letter apparently never reached Peay, having been “removed from
the mail, apparently by someone in the Governor’s Office, and its contents were never divulged
to Governor Peay.” Ibid., 151n32.
83 Bailey, “Antievolution Crusade,” 93.
84 Bailey, “The Enactment of Tennessee’s Antievolution Law,” 477. After the bill passed the
legislature, Owenby made a more direct appeal to Governor Peay himself, writing that “you have
a great opportunity to serve the State of Tennessee by vetoing the ‘anti-evolution’ measure.” He
continued, noting that “To the really intelligent people of the State this action of the Senate was a
great surprise” and concluded by imploring Peay “in the interest of real freedom in Tennessee
you will not allow this measure to become a law excepting over the protest of your veto.” Richard
L. Owenby, Pastor, First Methodist Church of Columbia, Tenn., to Peay, March 17, 1925. Box
43, Folder 1, Peay Governor Papers, GP-40, TSLA.
and ministers criticized the bill and the logic of taxpayers' rights. In a defense of
scientific expertise and intellectual freedom, Rev. Rembert G. Smith, a Methodist,
suggested that "It were as sensible for a man to tell the doctor what sort of medicine to
give his sick child on the ground that he was going to pay the bill as for the State
absolutely to dictate to the teacher what he shall teach."\textsuperscript{85} A fellow Methodist strongly
rebuked Smith in the \textit{Christian Advocate}, reinforcing his support for the bill with a
repetition of the postwar fears and explaining that evolution was "on a par with
Bolshevism, anarchy, and even atheism" and therefore had to be opposed by any honest
American.\textsuperscript{86} The Baptist Pastors Council of Nashville, claiming to speak for "ten
thousand laymen of twenty local churches," supported the bill, and called on Governor
Peay to sign it.\textsuperscript{87} The actions of some of the denominational leaders and urban pastors to
oppose the bill, when contrasted with the overwhelming legislative support (in a rural-
dominated General Assembly that numbered Methodists as its largest number
representatives)\textsuperscript{88} reminds us of the still-divided opinion of some state evangelicals about
the theory of evolution and the growing urban and rural tensions within Tennessee
Methodist and Baptist denominational structures. But the unfolding actions of the
months leading up to and following the Scopes trial are indicative as well of the power of

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\textsuperscript{86} Mann, "Partial Review of 'King Knut Redivivus,'" 30.
\textsuperscript{87} Bailey, "Antievolution Crusade," 96. Bailey also cites support from the Church of Christ at
Hohenwald and a criticism of the original Nashville minister's petition against the bill from the
pastor of the Eastland Baptist Church who wrote that "fathers and mothers resent the action of the
preachers who signed the letter asking the state senate not to pass the anti-evolution bill." The
votes on the bill do not break down into any easy to categorize pattern, but there was a greater
tendency of legislators from urban districts and especially Memphis/Shelby County to oppose the
bill.
\textsuperscript{88} Herman A. Norton, \textit{Religion in Tennessee, 1777–1945} (Knoxville: University of Tennessee
arguments for the control of the public schools as even some of the most vocal defenders of theistic evolution eventually conceded state power to regulate school curriculum.

Both the Baptist and Methodist papers expressed some misgivings about the legislation, especially in the wake of the onslaught of correspondence and public address for and against the measures. Baptist and Reflector editor O. E. Bryan, after announcing that the bill had passed and giving it a half-hearted endorsement, warned that neither “Culture” nor “Legislation” could “save a people; if so, Rome would not have fallen. She surpassed the world in legislation. Rome fell because of the absence of character.” As southern evangelicals had so often done before when faced with social conflict, O. E. Bryan returned to the oldest evangelical theme: What was most needed, he argued, was the “regeneration of the individual.”\textsuperscript{89} His Methodist counterpart, faced with a denomination far more divided over the evolution issue than were Tennessee Baptists, made similar calls for a social and theological big-tent policy for the church: “The Church has in it people of many shades of opinion upon all possible questions. If one group should throw out all others who do not agree with them, they would not only damage the body of Christ, but would also manifest such a spirit of intolerance as Christ could not approve.”\textsuperscript{90}

In the days following the Butler bill’s passage by the Tennessee Senate, concerned citizens showered Governor Austin Peay with letters and personal entreaties

\textsuperscript{89} [Bryan], “Evangelicalism Fundamental,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 2, 1925, p. 2. \textsuperscript{90} [Smith], “The Case of Evolution,” Nashville Christian Advocate, July 31, 1925, p. 4. On a similar note, Smith urged his readers to not agitate over questions of evolution, but to “prove their confidence in the unconquerable Christ and go straight on in their labors to establish his kingdom in all hearts and in all lands. Is this pacifism? No, it is the strategy of the kingdom of love and faith; it is the way of the Master and the method of the founder of Methodism.” [Smith], “The Single Aim,” Nashville Christian Advocate, July 24, 1925, p. 3.
for and against the bill. Peay had built his gubernatorial campaigns on promises of
government reform, new highways, and better education for the Volunteer state, and he
would win election to three consecutive terms (most Tennessee governors only served
two).91 Opponents of the bill looked at his progressive record and outspoken support for
the University of Tennessee and public education in general and believed he would veto
the bill. Supporters of the anti-evolution measure took heart in his southern Baptist
background, frequent recourse to populist and majoritarian themes, and his conspicuous
presence at William Jennings Bryan's 1924 Ryman Auditorium fulmination against the
teaching of evolution. Peay's political biographer has described him as a "latter-day
agrarian" in businessmen's clothing who "conceived of his particular mission as the
rescuer of Tennessee's numerical majority, the farmers."92 At his second inaugural (in
1925), Peay had praised the people of Tennessee who voted for him, reminding himself
and his opponents that "Sovereignty is theirs in this country."93 Pastor W. M. Wood of
Nashville's Edgefield Baptist Church, identifying himself as a "friend and supporter" of
the governor, implored him "to sign the present bill and help us in Tennessee who are

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making a desperate fight against the inroads of Materialism to protect our children and make our public schools safe places for the next generation.""94 Rhea County School Superintendent Walter White wrote Peay on official Board of Education letterhead, stating that "I am of the opinion that this is the greatest step Tennessee has taken since the saloon was abolished. You deserve the thanks of all honest people."95 Opponents from a variety of religious, educational, and occupational grounds urged Peay to "veto the fanatical measure," arguing that "Ignorance is rank enough around here now. Conditions will change for the worse when the State's Scientific, progressive men and women go elsewhere to invest their services."96

With all of the correspondence he received both for and against the Butler bill, Governor Peay surely recognized that whatever his decision, he would be criticized. As a politician he had to be accustomed to it. Various contemporaries and later historians have criticized Peay's religious reactionism and intellectual shortcomings or attempted to absolve him by explaining his signature was politically expedient, necessary to ensure the passage of his massive General Education Bill and expanded appropriation for the University of Tennessee.97 The governor had to have noticed the large majorities in both

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94 Wood to Peay, March 14, 1925, Box 43, Folder 1, Peay Governor Papers. Writers from Mississippi and Texas, in addition to commending his support of the bill, asked him for copies of the measure so they could introduce them in their own states. L. Walter Evans, Edinburgh Miss., to Peay, October 1, 1925; and W. H. Fortney, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Port Neches Texas to Peay, March 24, 1925, Box 43, Folder 1, Peay Governor Papers.
95 White to Peay, April 15, 1925, Box 43, folder 1, Peay Governor Papers.
96 A. C. Hardy, of Aspen Hill, Tenn, to Peay, March 5, 1925 (first quotation) and Jeanette Moore King, County Superintendent of Public Instruction, Rutherford County to Peay, March 23, 1925 (second quotation), Box 43, Folder 1, Peay Governor Papers. A variety of other opponents wrote Peay, including Bishop Coadjutor James M. Maxon of the Protestant Episcopal Church, T. W. Talley, Professor of Chemistry, Fisk University; N. W. Dougherty, Professor of Civil Engineering, University of Tennessee Knoxville; and James L. Graham, Dean of Fisk University.
97 Expatriate Tennessean Joseph Wood Krutch excoriated Peay in 1925 in an article titled "Tennessee: Where Cowards Rule," Nation, 121 (1925): 88–89. Steven V. Ash suggests that Peay, "though favorably inclined toward the old-time religion, disliked the obscurantist spirit of
houses of the General Assembly who had supported the bill and would presumably override a veto. Furthermore, he announced that the bill was a symbolic “protest,” and that “nobody believes that it is going to be an active statute.” In the absence of significant surviving private correspondence, it is difficult to say with certainty what were Peay’s “real” motives in signing the bill, but he did take the unusual step of writing an explanation to accompany the signed bill. Besides displaying his at best oversight if not downright naïve or dishonest statement that he could “find nothing of consequence in the books now being taught in our schools with which this bill will interfere in the slightest manner” and that “it will not put our teachers in any jeopardy,” Peay’s language clearly shows that he was not only paying attention to Bryan’s 1924 Ryman address but apparently taking notes as well. Taking pages from Bryan, Peay explained that since “comments on the Bible are forbidden; hence any theory which disputes the integrity of the Bible is forbidden also.” Additionally, Peay echoed Bryan’s populist theme of majority rule over the schools: “the people have the right and must have the right to regulate what is taught in their schools.”

the bill and agonized for days before signing it.” Ash, “Austin Peay,” 79. Joseph Tant Macpherson, who has written the only full-length biography of Peay (at least of his legislative career), concluded that Peay was more in sympathy with the Butler bill than many of his latter-day supporters have been willing to concede. Macpherson, “Democratic Progressivism in Tennessee,” 387. Paul Conkin suggests that Peay was “reluctant” but signed the bill “to gain legislative support for his reform package.” Paul K. Conkin, When All the Gods Trembled: Darwinism, Scopes, and American Intellectuals (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 81–83. Edward Larson depicts Peay as “trapped between fundamentalism and progressivism,” mildly criticizing him for convincing himself that “majoritarianism [w]as an excuse for the law. Caught in the same bind, Bryan saw it as the law’s ultimate justification.” Larson, Summer for the Gods, 58.

98 Austin Peay, “Special Message of March 23, 1925 To the Honorable House of Representatives,” in Ash, ed., Messages of the Governors of Tennessee X: 171–74. As governor, Peay was a member of the state textbook commission, which was charged with choosing authorized books for state schools (with the goal of lowering costs to districts with bulk purchases and to prevent fraud by local districts). The commission had approved Hunter’s Civic Biology, the book John T. Scopes admitted to having taught evolution from. John Randolph Neal, a
His justification for the measure echoed both Bryan and the decade-old Baptist and Methodist arguments in favor of Bible reading, even to the point of using the existence of the 1915 Bible reading law to justify the anti-evolution measure. Since the state constitution “recognized God,” and a state law required daily reading of “His holy word,” and the Bible “teaches that man was created by God in His own image,” Peay supported a ban on teaching evolution which, he explained “is at utter variance with the Bible story of man’s creation.” Arguing first that the Bible-reading statute was constitutional because it was “non-sectarian,” Peay further justified the anti-evolution statute because it did “not require any particular theory or interpretation of the Bible regarding man’s creation to be taught in the public schools.” As for the establishment clause in Tennessee’s constitution, Peay explained that the Butler bill could not infringe on freedom of thought or religion” because a teacher “has the undoubted right to believe and think on the subject without restraint from any human authority, but the constitution

former University of Tennessee law professor and part of Scopes’s defense team, wrote Peay a letter of warning in the months before the trial. Neal sarcastically cautioned Peay that were the Butler bill to be upheld, and were the textbook commission to select any book “containing any reference to the theory of Evolution, it would be in our opinion a violation of the law on the part of the Commission, and criminal prosecution will be immediately initiated against every member participating in said act.” Neal to Austin Peay, June 1, 1925, Box 43, folder 1, Peay Governors’ papers, TSLA.

99 The State Constitution of Tennessee did explicitly recognize a belief in God in Article 9, Section 3: “No person who denies the being of God or a future state of rewards and punishment, shall hold any office in the Civil Department of this State.” State lawyers in the Scopes trial and the appeal before the Tennessee Supreme Court utilized this part of the Constitution to justify the law. To do this, they had to confront Tennessee’s religious establishment clause in Article I of the state constitution, which stated “That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience; that no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship or to maintain any minister against his consent; that no human authority can in any case whatever control or interfere with the rights of conscience; and that no preference shall ever be given by law to any religious establishment or mode of worship.” Peay and the state’s lawyers and most of the Butler bill’s supporters argued that the law was no infringement of individual liberty or freedom of thought—the teacher could think whatever he wished, but as an employee of the state he had to teach what he was told to teach.
does not accord to the teacher the right to teach in our schools in matter whatever he may choose.” Teachers, explained Peay, Bryan, and the anti-evolution advocates, were employees of the state and in their official capacity could be restrained from teaching evolution even if they believed it to be true themselves.100

Peay’s ultimate justification for the bill, one in which he strayed from his usual reserved and analytical language toward a more emotional theme, is perhaps the most revealing of his and others’ support for the measure. The governor explained that the Butler bill was “a distinct protest against an irreligious tendency to exalt so called science, and deny the Bible in some schools and quarters—a tendency fundamentally wrong and fatally mischievous in its effects on our children, our institutions and our country.” Furthermore, the bill was a reaction to the “deep and wide-spread belief that something is shaking the fundamentals of the country, both in religion and morals,” and that “an abandonment of the old fashioned faith and belief in the Bible, is our trouble in large degree. It is my own belief.”101 Peay’s signing of the anti-evolution bill, although it elicited a firestorm of protest from some critics within and without the state, nonetheless garnered the support of many members of disparate denominations. As Baptist editor John D. Freeman reported from Dayton in the summer of 1925, “Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Disciples of Christ, Adventists, and Catholics have joined hands for once in a concerted effort to defend the Lord Jesus Christ against unlicensed propagation of the doctrine of brute ancestry and denial of supernatural religion.”102

102 John D. Freeman, “Putting the Day at Dayton,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, July 16, 1925, p. 3.
The anti-evolution campaign was so successful at uniting conservative Christians and fundamentalists precisely because it was a symbolic protest. The unsuccessful 1923 anti-evolution bill attempted to specify on scientific terms what was to be prohibited (a "hypothesis that links man in blood relationship to any other form of life"), while the Butler bill specifically prohibited "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 animals." Both bills discussed human relation to other creatures, but the Butler bill specified Divine authority for human creation. There may have been some confusion or debate about man's relation to other animals, but believers of many different creeds could line up behind "the story of the Divine creation of man as taught in the Bible," especially if one did not get too specific about that story. In other words, Biblical authority was a powerful slogan; as long as one did not try to parse out exactly what was meant or how to interpret the Bible, Christians of many stripes could support the bill.\(^\text{103}\)

One way to uncover the symbolic importance of the Butler bill is to compare its fate with that of a similar, but unsuccessful bill also submitted to the 1925 General Assembly. House Bill 252, "An act to make it unlawful to employ atheists as teachers in Public Schools of the State of Tennessee," though recommended for passage by the House education committee, was opposed by the Judicial committee and eventually tabled after several attempts to amend. The bill, which would have required a teacher to believe "in the existence [sic] of God and the deity of His Son Jesus Christ," incited protests to the governor and legislative attempts to amend in favor of a denomination.

\(^{103}\) In this argument, I have been strongly influenced by Barbara Jean Fields' explanation of "white supremacy" as a slogan in her seminal essay "Ideology and Race in American History," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (eds.), *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143–77.
“which teaches the Divinity of God, alone.” Members of the General Assembly, like the
rest of the state, were overwhelmingly Protestant, but even they quibbled over the
theological questions of God or Christ’s “divinity” or “deity.” The bill was too
specific to be a slogan, and therefore it lost 41-33 in the House.

In his message accompanying the signed bill, Peay stated his hope that “probably,
the law will never be applied.” He did not count on the combination of circumstances
that eventually led to Dayton: a nascent American Civil Liberties Union anxious for
justice if not just attention, enterprising boosters desiring to put Dayton on the map, and
an aging Populist leader eager to defend his principle of Christian majority rule. After
the publicity surrounding the passage of the Butler bill, the ACLU advertised its
willingness to fund the defense of a case to test the new law. A group of Dayton citizens,
perhaps more from a desire for notoriety than out of any deep support or opposition to the

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104 A Chattanooga rabbi wrote Peay about the proposed law, complaining that it would deny an
“American citizen the right granted to him in the first amendment to the Constitution of the
United States which clearly prohibits the passing of laws respecting the establishment of religion
and laws that prohibit the free exercise thereof.” Rabbi Samuel R. Shillman, Mizpah
Congregation, Chattanooga, to Peay, February 4, 1925, Box 96, folder 1, Peay Governor Papers.
Responding to a similar protest from a Chattanooga Jewish woman, Peay responded that he had
not seen the bill, but encouraged her to contact her state senator since the bill was now pending in
that house. Peay to Miss Sarah Rudoff, Sec., Y.W.H.A. of Chattanooga, Reel 2, Peay Governor
Papers.

105 64th General Assembly, House Bill 252, Tennessee General Assembly, House Journal 1925,
pp. 225, 233, 318, 42–24, and 439. The original bill and amendments are filed in the legislative
archives, TSLA. Kenneth Bailey refers to this bill, but suggests its importance was that a
majority of the House were not willing to regulate what a teacher thought, only what s/he taught
as a state employee. Bailey, “Antievolution Crusade,” 102–103. There were however, efforts by
several county boards of education to pass similar requirements, at least on local levels. In June
1925, The Carroll County School Board, meeting in Huntington, announced that “the board will
inquire into the religious beliefs of candidates to teach in the schools before electing the teachers
in July.” See “School Board Will Apply Religious Test to Teacher Applicants,” Nashville Baptist
and Reflector, June 11, 1925, p. 7. To some degree, such resolutions might have been merely
formalizing procedures or expectations members of the school boards had previously used in
making hiring decisions.

law, persuaded Rhea County High School teacher John Scopes to be charged with the crime of teaching evolution. For eleven days in July 1925, the whole world seemed to converge on the small East Tennessee town of Dayton: fundamentalists and modernists, newspaper men and WGN-Chicago radio reporters with microphones, William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow, among others.

Much of the attention at the trial and since has been on the issue of evolution, characterizing the trial as a confrontation of religion and science. But if Bryan and the other state's attorneys had had their way, the trial would have avoided any lengthy discussion of evolution. In their correspondence before the trial, Bryan and Prosecutor S. K. Hicks discussed their strategy and attempted to anticipate the arguments of the defense. Expecting that "quite a number of noted scientists and Modernists will attend the trial and give testimony in behalf of the defendant[']s" claim that "the theory of evolution does not conflict with the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught by the Bible," Hicks asked Bryan to suggest a number of "prominent" "able men and Fundamentalists" who could testify "that the theory of evolution does conflict with the

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107 The origins, conduct, and historical representation of the trial have been more than adequately represented in Edward J. Larson's *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (1997). Larson gives an excellent depiction of many of the religious, political, scientific, and social issues surrounding the trial, but even he falls into the trap of seeing the trial as spectacle, to be examined as an incident. In fairness to Larson, he gives the trial an admirable level of context in *Summer*, and in his previous contribution *Trial and Error* situates the trial within the preceding and following debates on the legal and legislative efforts to deal with evolution. I have tried to argue that the trial, however important, is less important than the Butler bill. Both make more sense when seen in the context of the fifty years of contention and debate over control of the schools.
Bible.” Although Bryan had often spoken strongly that evolution was not true, he warned Hicks away from such a strategy:

While I am perfectly willing to go into the question of evolution, I am not sure that it is involved. The right of the people speaking through the legislature, to control the schools which they create and support is the real issue as I see it. If not the people, who?  

O. E. Bryan, the acting editor of the Nashville Baptist and Reflector, picked up on Bryan’s argument, explaining to state Baptists that the upcoming trial was not about evolution but rather about the powers of a legislative majority in a democracy:

Tennessee has a right to pass laws to prohibit the teaching of Anarchy in her tax-supported schools. She has a right to prevent the teaching of infidelity in her schools. She has a right to pass a law-compelling the reading of the Bible in her schools. ... Let every preacher and layman keep before the public the fact that the thing on trial is not a doctrine, not a scientific hypothesis, but a fundamental principle of Democracy. If Tennessee has no right to pass a law preventing the teaching of Darwinian Evolution in its public schools, then it has no right to pass any law regulating its public school system. If the recently enacted Anti-evolution law is unconstitutional, then every law in the state that sets forth what shall and what shall not be taught in the public schools is unconstitutional. The court of Dayton ought to rule out of order every speech, every effort to bring before the juries discussions of the doctrine of evolution per se,

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109 W. J. Bryan to S. K. Hicks, May 28, 1925, reprinted in Eigelsbach and Linder, eds., “‘If Not the People Who?’” 118. Edward J. Larson has discussed the origins and legacies of Bryan’s majoritarian arguments in “The Scopes Trial and the Evolving Concept of Freedom,” *Virginia Law Review*, 85 (April 1999), 508-29. Bryan thought his strongest legal arguments were on this majoritarian ground, but he did nonetheless desire that the trial would vindicate his campaign on religious and scientific grounds by “surprising” the defense with overwhelming evidence not just of the Tennessee law’s constitutionality, but to take advantage as well of the national stage and media attention in disproving the theory of evolution.
and compel the attorneys to stick to the one relevant point, namely Did or
did not the defendant-teacher violate the law? ¹¹⁰

The trial judge seemed to agree, disallowing expert testimony on evolution before the
jury at the trial. The defense attorneys prepared briefs of the testimony to be entered into
the record for appeal, proved (perhaps erroneously) that Scopes had taught evolution, and
then asked for a guilty verdict. After the shortest of deliberations, the jury returned a
unanimous guilty verdict and Judge Raulston fined Scopes $100. ¹¹¹

Methodist minister M. M. Black, writing to the Nashville Christian Advocate in July 1925 a vain protest that there was still room for a theistic version of evolution,
argued that “while the testimony of science is that higher forms of life have developed
from lower forms, yet God is needed at every step of the process.” Strongly denouncing
some materialistic interpretations of natural history and the evolution of life on earth,
Black nonetheless reminded readers that truth—scientific and religious—came from the
same source and thus could not contradict. “Science without religion” may be “a curse to
society and a frightful menace to civilization,” he conceded, but cautioned “on the other
hand, religion without science becomes fanatical and bigoted and dogmatic and engages
in wars and persecutions of the most relentless type.” Yet in spite of his concerns for the
long-term compatibility of science and religion, Black saw in Germany the perfect
example of why science and religion needed each other: because Germany during the last

¹¹⁰ [O. E. Bryan], “Tennessee’s Evolution Trial,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, May 28, 1925, pp. 2–3. This was a common theme in the Baptist paper, as can be seen in the similar arguments from S. M. Ellis that “The right of the State to teach includes primarily the right to determine what shall be taught, and who shall teach,” and “The teacher in a public school is in his sphere an official of the State, as truly as a judge or a sheriff.” Ellis, “State Authority in Public Education.” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, July 9, 1925, p. 4. See also [Freeman], “Evolution Issue Warm,” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, July 9, 1925, pp. 2–3.
thirty years "divorced culture and religion, her science became the ally of death and destruction of the most diabolical character. Science untamed by the gospel is the greatest destroyer known to man." In such a climate, Black admitted that he could support the Tennessee anti-evolution law and the majoritarian principles of state governance that buttressed Butler's bill and Bryan's prosecution. Regardless of his long-term aspirations for the free association and long-term reconciliation of science and religion, Black "venture[d] to express the opinion that a State has the right to forbid any form of teaching or instruction in its schools and colleges which the majority of its citizens regard as hurtful to morals and the Christian religion."

**Conclusion**

The trial was over and the prosecution had won the legal contest. If the case was really only about whether or not Scopes had taught evolution, eight days was far too long to reach a verdict. Defense counsel Clarence Darrow had wanted the trial to vindicate evolution, a goal shared by many of the national press correspondents who crowded into Dayton in July 1925. Because of the monumental confrontation of Darrow and Bryan on the last day of the trial—Bryan's "expert" testimony on the Bible in which Darrow got Bryan to admit to the possibility of differing interpretations of the Bible—the contemporary press and many later historians have labeled the trial a stunning defeat for the anti-evolution movement. Such an interpretation has been

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112 Black, "Christianity and Evolution," 8–9.
substantially reinforced by the popularity of the *Inherit the Wind* stage and screenplay with its stunning dramatic focus on Bryan and Darrow’s confrontation and fictive depiction of Darrow explaining to Scopes that he had actually won the case in the all-important court of public opinion.\(^{113}\) Bryan did not aid his historical case much by dying five days after the trial in Dayton, supposedly a “broken” man. H. L. Mencken, who had covered the trial with ruthless invective at first from Dayton and then, when threatened by the local townspeople, wisely from afar, taunted the anti-evolution advocates, suggesting that God might have “aimed at Darrow,” but he “missed, and hit Bryan instead.”\(^ {114}\)

Bryan did not die a broken man, and the anti-evolution campaign did not end in Dayton with the Scopes Trial or Bryan’s death. If anything, his supposed “defeat” at the hand of Darrow only served to reinforce fundamentalists’ and many other Tennesseans’ understanding of the harm that came from disbelief of divine Creation and therefore the necessity of controlling the public school curriculum. George Fort Milton, a New South liberal, editor of the Chattanooga *News*, and outspoken opponent of the Butler bill, rallied to Bryan’s defense in the wake of the trial and agreed to publish the Great Commoner’s undelivered closing address in his newspaper. In the days immediately following the trial, Bryan revised his address, gave portions of it to crowds in Jasper and

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\(^{114}\) In an even more explicit expression, Mencken supposedly exclaimed “we killed the son-of-a-bitch!” Mencken, quoted in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 200.
Winchester in southeastern Tennessee, read the galley proof, and led Sunday morning prayers at Dayton’s southern Methodist church before dying in his sleep that afternoon.\textsuperscript{115} Both the Baptist and Methodist state papers lamented Bryan’s passing and carried resolutions of various religious and secular gatherings, professing, as the McMinn County Baptist Association did, that they could “join the vast majority of East Tennessee Baptists, and we think, Southern Baptists, in indorsing whole-heartedly the law which forbids the teaching of the Theory of Evolution in the Schools maintained by the tax payers of Tennessee.”\textsuperscript{116}

Bryan’s death may have deprived the anti-evolution campaign of a clearly recognized leader, but the movement continued, now with the memory of a martyred leader to drive it onward.\textsuperscript{117} Mississippi passed similar anti-evolution legislation in 1926, more than a dozen states debated statutes in 1927, and Arkansas passed an anti-evolution law in 1928.\textsuperscript{118} Bryan’s arguments for the movement lived on: in the state’s

\textsuperscript{115} Ray Ginger describes Bryan’s post-trial days as “feverish” ones that signified “desperation, a forre [sic] presentiment that the current of fundamentalist adulation was about to dump him on some exposed and arid mud flat.” Ginger also recognizes the “galvanic” importance of Bryan’s death: “In these bitter circumstances Bryan did the most effective thing possible to regain his fundamentalist support—he died.” \textit{Six Days or Forever: Tennessee vs. John Thomas Scopes} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 192–93.

\textsuperscript{116} McMinn County Baptist Association, “McMinn County Resolutions,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, October 15, 1925, p. 7. Editor Alfred Smith praised Bryan, noting that “He was always the champion of the right as God gave him to see the right, and in the broad conceptions of the right he made no compromises.” [Smith], “William Jennings Bryan,” Nashville \textit{Christian Advocate}, August 7, 1925, p. 3. Similar support for the anti-evolution statute came from Shelby County Baptists: “Shelby County Uncompromising,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, July 30, 1925, pp. 5–6.

\textsuperscript{117} T. H. Farmer, “A Plea for Clarence Darrow,” Nashville \textit{Baptist and Reflector}, February 4, 1926, p. 6 compared Bryan to a previous martyr to Tennessee evangelical causes: Edward Ward Carmack, the martyred champion of Prohibition whose death mobilized support to finally secure passage of the state-wide prohibition law.

\textsuperscript{118} Numbers, “The Scopes Trial,” 88. Larson reports further that regional opinion in favor of the Butler bill and similar measures had so solidified that in 1926, after Mississippi passed its anti-evolution law, the ACLU could not find a Mississippi teacher willing to stand for a test case. Larson, \textit{Summer for the Gods}, 212.
brief for Scopes's appellate trial, the prosecution banked heavily on the same themes of majority rule and taxpayer control of the schools through the legislature. They presented a brief from Bryan's son, defending the statute—much as his father had done—as the effort by a Christian majority to "protect the children of the state in the public schools in their common belief." A majority of the state supreme court agreed, upholding the constitutionality of the statute, but overturning the conviction on a technicality and thus preventing an appeal to the United States Supreme Court. The Butler anti-evolution law would remain on the books until 1967.

Tennessee Methodists, who were more divided over the propriety of the anti-evolution legislation than their Baptist counterparts, had nonetheless come to favor the bill out of their continued belief in the necessity of religion for education. Thomas Summers had argued in 1872 that "there can be no education without religion," and his editorial successor Alfred Smith echoed the same theme in 1925: "Since education in the South has always been dominantly Christian, it is proper and to be expected that care should be exercised to keep it so, especially by the Church, which is the chief agency of educational protection." Though worried about the repercussions of "questionable enactments for the control of teaching," Smith nevertheless argued that "The State itself

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119 Quoted in Larson, Summer for the Gods, 217.
120 Scopes v. State 154 Tenn. 105 (1927). There had been some efforts to repeal the law through the Tennessee legislature, but the law remained in effect, even if not formally enforced, until the General Assembly repealed the law just one year before the U. S. Supreme Court decision struck down a similar Arkansas anti-evolution law in Epperson v. Arkansas 393 U.S. 97 (1968). Larson, Summer for the Gods, 237. George E. Webb, The Evolution Controversy in America (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 145–49. For the legacy of the Scopes trial and its influence on the opinion of Justice Abe Fortas, who had been a Jewish schoolchild in Memphis, Tennessee, at the time of the Scopes trial, see Larson, "The Scopes Trial and the Evolving Concept of Freedom," 524–27.
knows that it cannot continue to exist without the imperatives of God.”¹²¹ Tennessee Baptists and Methodists believed they had a divine calling to educate the present and future generations, hoping to shape society into the model religious South they had apotheosized since the late antebellum era. Even in the wake of the Scopes trial, they continued to assert that both religion and education—properly the functions of the church, even if performed in state-funded schools—were necessary to the survival of church and state alike. Science “falsely so-called” was the immediate cause of the current controversy, but the real enemy was a perceived secularism of the public schools and the larger southern and American society in general. Most Tennessee Baptists and Methodists remained convinced of the necessity of controlling the public schools so that they would be, in effect, handmaidens to the churches in creating and sustaining a Christian society.

¹²¹ [Summers], “New Publications,” Nashville Christian Advocate, November 2, 1872, p. 9. [Smith], “Education in the South,” Nashville Christian Advocate, June 26, 1925, p. 5. Smith was making a lengthy introduction to a special issue of the paper on southern education.
CHAPTER VII:

Conclusion:
Southern Social Christianity, Formal Education, and the Scopes Legacy

In the spring of 1921, the Nashville Christian Advocate presented a special thematic issue on education. Although the paper was most concerned with boosting the educational endeavors of the church itself and especially the many denominational schools, institutes, and colleges associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, several of the articles nonetheless reveal the immense importance Tennessee evangelicals placed on education in its many forms as a natural extension of their religious mission. Dr. W. J. Young began one essay in the volume by proclaiming that “the mission of the Church is the salvation of the world.” Although the exact meaning of “the world” is unclear in his first sentence—did he mean the “world” as in all of the people in the world or did he mean the “world” as in present conditions and society—his expansive view of the Christian mission soon becomes clear. “We are coming to see that this salvation is a much broader work than we at one time supposed and looks to the development and use of every ransomed power of our common humanity. In this work and purpose education has a prominent part.” Young then recorded his belief that the future leaders of the world would be an educated class and that if the church wanted to maintain and expand its influence in the world it would need not just educated members but a say in the process of education as well. Such observations led Young to conclude that

The Church, then, has two important tasks before it—to develop its own schools, emphasizing more loyally and definitely the religious side, and to put itself in such relation to the secular schools as to be able to exert its
influence for service of a denominational, though certainly not of a sectarian, sort, so that it may keep itself supplied with workers in its chief task of saving the world.

According to Young and many of his contemporaries, the mission of the southern evangelical Christians to save the world required an active engagement in both state and denominational education.¹

Clearly, part of Young’s and other Tennessee evangelicals’ interest in education was based on a desire to replicate and possibly enlarge individual denominations. But there was also a second desire, namely, to reform and improve the surrounding society—not simply to convert isolated individuals within that society. Members of the Tennessee Baptist Convention had reached a similar conclusion at least as early as 1883 when they endorsed state-funded public schools as capable of accomplishing far more than a few scattered denominational institutions could on their own:

Where Public Schools are fostered and made efficient, the people are intelligent, society is desirable, crimes are less frequent, Sunday Schools flourish, Churches are prosperous, and denominational Schools for the higher education of men and women command the support, as well as the endorsement of the denomination. Let the Baptists of Tennessee take a bold stand in favor of Public education, as the only sure foundation upon which to base hopes of future prosperity to our denominational Schools.²

“Public education” would not only aid the denominational colleges, but expanded education in all its forms would also make for a more intelligent, law-abiding, and

² Tennessee Baptist Convention Minutes 1883, p. 11. Microfilm publication no. 239, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville.
generally "desirable" population. Twenty years later an association of East Tennessee
Baptists asked rhetorically if it were not the mission of the church "to help in the
betterment of the social conditions of the country?" and called on fellow evangelicals to
lend their moral, physical, and financial support to both denominational and public
schools as a means of improving both the church and society.\(^3\)

The preceding examination of the foundation, growth, and disagreements over the
content and control of Tennessee schooling offers an insight into some of the more
important cultural contests of the New South period. The growth of educational
institutions can only be part of the story. What is more important and more interesting
for the historian is how debates about the process, content, and control of
education—based consciously or unconsciously on a forward looking attempt to shape
the future of society—illuminate larger cultural issues.\(^4\) It is my argument that the

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\(^3\) Tennessee Association of Baptists Minutes 1904, quoted in Andrew S. Moore, ""To Advance
the Redeemer's Kingdom": East Tennessee Southern Baptists Amid Social and Cultural

\(^4\) James D. Anderson, in his excellent cultural and institutional history of black education in the
New South, takes a similar approach to the concept of education that I have found instructive and
helpful. Anderson utilizes debates over black education—from white, black, northern, southern,
religious, industrial, and other varied perspectives—as "a better lens through which to
comprehend the separate and distinct social visions of a New South. For it was through differing
forms of training the young that each class and race tried to shape its own future and translate its
particular experiences, ideas, values, and norms into a legitimate projection of broader social
relations. Inherent in the idea of universal education was the opportunity to engage in long-term,
systemic, public discourse to make particular forms of experience and projections of social life
dominant. The postbellum crusade for control over the educational process was indissolubly
linked to the struggle to weld the separate elements of southern life into a single vision of the
South's future." The "educational sphere in the postbellum South," Anderson explains, "was,
among other things, an ideological medium through which northerners and southerners posed and
apprehended fundamental questions of class, culture, race, and democracy." James D. Anderson,
The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 1988), 279. It has been my goal to similarly utilize the "educational sphere" to investigate
the role of religion in the New South period; to reveal both the growing understanding of many
white southern evangelicals of the place of themselves and their religion in the culture and
governance of the region and the effects of injecting explicitly religious goals into education and
governance.
changing relationship of Tennessee Baptists and Methodists to public education—from opposition, to accommodation, to efforts at control—reveals the growing social consciousness and mission of southern white evangelicalism. There were, obviously, limits to democratic religious groups’ ability to sit in judgment of the society in which they were enmeshed, as their meager and often problematic endorsements of or provisions for the education of women and black Tennesseans so often revealed. But their agitation for expanded public education (even for blacks and women) also signified a hope for progress—not merely in an industrial or material measurement—but also in matters spiritual. As Methodist educator Stonewall Anderson warned in 1926, “general education with the element of religious education left out is incomplete, unsound, and may be dangerous because its products are unsound, defective, and dangerous,” but “religious education integrated with a sound general education” was the key to both individual and social salvation.\(^5\) Expanded public education, especially when infused with religious imagery and spread by Christian teachers, would fuel the growth of the church, aid the establishment of a truly religious New South superior to the materialism of the rest of America and the world, and form the nucleus of a new evangelical reformation.

Evangelical interests in religion as a proper subject and basis for education predated the rise of public schooling in Tennessee. As discussed in Chapter II, most antebellum education occurred in the home or the church and continued in religiously

affiliated academies, if at all. Education in reading, writing, and arithmetic may have, depending on a family’s circumstances, paled in comparison to other necessary lessons; what, when, and where to plant or how to construct a corn crib could be equally important. So too could parents consider more social concerns such as the racial and honor codes of southern community life or, even more importantly, instruction in religion and how to strive for eternal life as necessary components of their children’s education. Antebellum families played a crucial role in determining what kind of education was necessary, proper, and possible for their charges. Postbellum Tennessee families would continue to be essential to the educational process, but the creation and gradual growth of a state-wide system of public education eventually transformed the cultural landscape and moved education from a personal to a political process.

Formalizing the process of education into tax-supported public schools offered promises and pitfalls for parents and churches in postbellum Tennessee. While providing opportunities for math and language literacy (and thus, supposedly, access to economic, social, and spiritual growth) to many children who would otherwise be dependent upon what they could glean from their often undereducated parents, formalized education also subtly undermined parental authority. With the establishment of a special place and time for “education,” children came gradually to recognize at least two alternate sources of authority or sources of knowledge: parent and schoolteacher. This distinction was by no means absolute or immediate, for both the secondary literature and many teachers’ diaries are full of accounts of parents and even students asserting their control over nineteenth-
century teachers. Parents still wielded powerful influence in the curriculum and choice of teachers, but a wedge had nevertheless entered between parents and the direct control of and responsibility for their children's education. With schools lasting for such brief periods and not penetrating into much of rural Tennessee until well after Reconstruction, parents did retain a great deal of responsibility for children's education in the home as well as through their influence upon the newly emerging, communally responsive public schools.

In the minds of many nineteenth-century Tennesseans, education would remain, even if formalized into public schools, intricately related to the same concerns that had driven previous processes of informal education. As the public schools continued to grow into formal institutions attended by more and more Tennessee children, they increasingly assumed responsibilities previously reserved for parents and churches. One early state superintendent of schools reported in 1874 that the public schools were not "merely civil organizations, subject only to political government." Education, even if delegated to the new schools, remained "too close to the family circle not to be subject in a great degree to social laws and influences." But what would happen as the systems of public education grew in availability and influence through the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries? How would "the family circle" continue to exert its influence over the education of children? One aspect of this education—training in

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morality and religion—has been discussed above in the account of religious efforts to require daily Bible reading in the public schools. What had been treated as a local issue, subject to Oscar Fitzgerald’s “home rule” compromise, became a legal affair once Progressive-era school reforms both removed the discretionary power of local school officials and provided an attractive mechanism to religious leaders eager to spread Biblical familiarity and morality more widely among Tennessee schoolchildren.

There was not just a decline in the direct family influence on education, but there was a similar sense of decline among state religious leaders and a perception that their influence on children’s education was likewise waning. One Tennessee Methodist noted that “the school-teacher has fallen heir to the largest share of the minister’s former mantel of influence in the community.” A Chattanooga Baptist minister in turn used time as a measure of educational influence, noting that “the Church only” had the “children for instruction for about an hour once and week and the public schools [had] them most of the remaining time.”\(^8\) By the first decades of the twentieth century, parents’ or religious leaders’ control of children’s education had become much more indirect. Elementary schools were in nearly every community and high schools were sprouting up all over the state by the 1920s, while district school directors had been replaced by county boards of education that had to choose books from a list of state-approved texts and hire teachers with certificates from state-approved teacher certification programs. While education was spreading and becoming more accessible, control of education was threatening to

\[^8\] Prof. W. W. Richeson, “Will the Church Rise to the Needs of the Hour, and Will the Colleges of the Methodist Church, South, Take the Lead?,” Nashville Christian Advocate, February 27, 1925, pp. 6–7 (first quotation); and W. T. Callaway, “Shall the Bible be Read in Our Public Schools?” Nashville Baptist and Reflector, April 29, 1926, p. 6.
become more centralized and, in many cases, less accessible to individual parents or local community leaders.

Education—whether in the home or the public schools—nonetheless remained important to various groups as the way to shape the future of society. Industrialists, landlords, blacks, and religious leaders might all have had differing goals for education, but all likely could have agreed with Oscar Fitzgerald’s 1880 assessment that “Those who educate the present generation of children in these United States will hold the reins of power when they are grown.” As public schools grew, as more and more children attended, their potential power—and consequently the stakes of control—also continued to grow. Just as Fitzgerald had warned his fellow Methodists in 1880 that “If we turn over the education of our children to others, we renounce our hold upon the future,” a schoolteacher from Pulaski, Tennessee, cautioned in 1916 that “the future of the land we love depends upon what we make of our public school system.”

As has been suggested in Chapter V above, the growing size and importance of the formalized system of public education meant that these competing interests and visions for education increasingly had to turn to legislative efforts to control education. Progressive, centralizing, and bureaucratizing reforms to the of nineteenth-century public education system undermined Fitzgerald’s home rule compromise by lessening the local community’s discretion. At the same time, the reforms potentially offered religious leaders, or whomever else could seize the chance, more power over formalized public education by securing legislation to further their ends. State religious leaders recognized

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the new power of the school bureaucracy to shape the minds of the future generation but, as one Baptist educator explained, they would have in the future "to enter ... into politics to preserve the rights of the little child"; rights that most Tennessee evangelicals believed included a "right" to religious instruction and, later, protection from the supposedly irreligious instruction of evolution in the public schools.\textsuperscript{10}

Southern education historian John Hardin Best has suggested one way to track this process of formalization of education within the schools themselves: by examining the use (or lack of use) and selection criteria for textbooks. When asked by James Silver why there were few if any southern-specific textbooks in the antebellum period, Best suggested that the late antebellum and post-war emergence of textbooks could be indicative of not just regional identity formation, but also of increasingly formalized education. Antebellum education, he suggested, did not require separate textbooks because it was such a uninstitutionalized cultural process. Informal sources of education—specifically parents, churches, and community leaders—were expected to supplement any texts and instructors in the local schools, and denominational colleges and academies were expected to put their "correct" interpretation on the histories and philosophies of the texts. The postbellum formalization and expansion of public education, combined with the obviously lingering sectional tensions, created a new market for regionally acceptable textbooks.\textsuperscript{11} Unsure of how the history of the Civil War was being portrayed, the United Confederate Veterans in the 1890s launched a campaign

\textsuperscript{10} Rufus Weaver, "The Obligation of Southern Baptists to Improve the Rural Elementary School and the Method Which Ought to be Employed to Secure this Result," Nashville Baptist and Reflector, January 31, 1918, pp. 1 and 4.

aimed at "securing a true and reliable history of the late civil war" to be taught in state schools. Likewise, the State Teacher's Association at its 1902 annual meeting encouraged members to use texts and literature written by southern authors in their classes.

The concern over textbooks increased in the early twentieth century, as state religious leaders encouraged parents to examine the texts being used in public and church schools. The Tennessee Baptist Convention created a commission to examine the books in the denomination's schools, while the editor of the Nashville Christian Advocate warned parents "to see that no atheistical books are being used" in either Methodist colleges or in the state public schools. After Dr. Davis, the young agriculture professor at the Baptist's Union University in Jackson, Tennessee had weathered several accusations that he was teaching atheistic evolution to his students, the school president explained his belief in Davis's innocence and announced that the professor was "engaged in writing a textbook on biology that will be absolutely free of any objectionable statements or teachings." President Watters further explained the need for Davis's book because there was "no such book in print that [was] both scholarly and teachable," Baptist schools had been forced "to use objectionable texts." Revelations in 1925 that John Scopes had taught evolution from the state approved biology book, Hunter's Civic Biology, unleashed a new round of criticism and oversight. In reality, Scopes admitted

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that he was not sure he had actually taught evolution, but finally concluded that since he had taught from the book, and since the book covered evolution, then he must have violated the law. Porter Claxton, the son of Tennessee Progressive-era school reformer P. P. Claxton, wrote his father just days after Governor Peay signed the Butler anti-evolution law, relating Sawney Webb’s advice on how he could “make a million” by writing “a science book without evolution in it. It will be the only one of its kind on the market, and Tennessee will be forced to adopt it.”16 No longer, apparently, were teachers considered capable of putting their own interpretation on those “objectionable” parts of common national textbooks. Now the books had to be as morally and religiously “safe” as the antebellum and nineteenth-century teachers had been.

The anti-evolution campaigns and the Bible reading legislation that preceded them suggest that while the formalization of education into state public schools provided greatly increased opportunities for more people to receive at least some sort of education, it also had several unfortunate, if unintended consequences. For one, it removed from many parents a sense of direct responsibility for children’s training. Education, many of them came to believe, was what occurred during set hours and in another place—the schoolroom. Secondly, by putting so much weighty responsibility on the public school for teaching youth and shaping the future, society set up the school as a location for seemingly insoluble and interminable conflict. Instead of concentrating on local solutions, would-be reformers in early twentieth-century Tennessee reinforced parental alienation by working to change education from the legislature down. Witnessing the

failure of their temperance and prohibition campaigns to change the hearts or behavior of adults, Tennessee evangelicals of the early twentieth century refocused their attention on teaching religion and morality to the captive and impressionable children of the public schools.

Formalizing education went beyond establishing public schools as training grounds in reading, writing, and arithmetic—the schools soon took on other responsibilities as well. Horace Mann, the influential nineteenth-century Massachusetts school superintendent, had expressed his understanding of the public school mission to teach lessons in non-sectarian religion, morality, and civility in the late 1840s. While many Tennessee religious leaders of the early twentieth century approved of the expansion of public schooling as a means for providing at least a minimum level of moral and religious training, some others feared that parents would grow dependent on the schools and become negligent in their responsibility to train their children. Noting the danger of “the public school” “supplanting the home and its sacred duty” to look after “the moral training of the child,” a 1914 essay in the Nashville Midland Methodist warned readers of the serious future consequences to children, families, and the state itself. It is interesting to note just what kind of moral education had elicited such an editorial, however. Tennessee Methodists and Baptists had both supported efforts to require public schools to teach lessons on health and hygiene, especially as it related to the harmful effects of alcohol and smoking, and their efforts bore fruit in an 1895 state law requiring such classes. But it was the Methodist editor’s notice of an article in the Ladies Home Journal advocating the introduction of lessons on “sex hygiene” that led to his criticism of the schools for trying to do too much and of the parents for abdicating
their moral responsibility. The sex and health education continues to provide a cogent example of the lingering effects of placing such previously private issues into a centralized public education system; questions of whether a school should teach abstinence or disease prevention continue to plague not just parents, but teachers, school administrators, legislators, and courts in the twenty-first century.

The clearest effect of the formalization of public education and politicization of moral questions that had previously been settled on familial and local community levels, as discussed in Chapter VI above, was the anti-evolution efforts of the 1920s. Indeed, if searching for continuing legacies or resonating issues from the period under study in the dissertation, this issue of evolution in public schools looms large. Though both the title and the organization of chapters put discussion of the Scopes trial at the end of the dissertation and thus suggest an ending point to the controversy, such a placement is unintentionally misleading. It is apparent that many of the same tensions and arguments that drove the enactment of the Butler bill and set the stage for the trial in Dayton refuse to go away even seventy-five years later.

Ronald L. Numbers, Edward J. Larson, George E. Webb, and others have provided compelling accounts of the continuing struggles over the teaching of evolution in the public schools of America. They correctly point to some of the changing beliefs and tactics within the Creationist camps, including the near monopoly Young Earth Creationists have had on the post-1960s movement and the shift from absolute opposition to teaching evolution to endorsements of Intelligent Design, Creation Science, and

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campaigns to require “equal time” for alternative explanations to be presented in the schools. At the same time, a survey of recent anti-evolution campaigns leaves me willing to assent to the Little Rock Arkansas Democrat Gazette’s recent editorial observation that “the problem—well, one of the problems—with these evolution trials is that they don’t seem to have evolved at all.” The editorial comments resulted from Arkansas state Representative Jim Holt’s introduction of House Bill 2548, which would have banned the use of textbooks that presented evolution as any thing other than an unproven theory. The bill, which passed committee but not the full House in March 2001, utilized many of the stock resources of anti-evolutionists in both 1925 and today by attempting to discredit evolution as “only a theory” and a “fraudulent” one at that. Trading on popular misconceptions of the meaning of a scientific “theory,” modern Creationists continue to search for any small scientific disagreement about the particulars of evolution and elevate them to the status of crippling indictments of the “scientific guess” of evolution to predict that the whole evolutionary house of cards is about to fall down. Representative Holt, while denying that his purpose was to insert Creationism into the school curriculum or to single out the theory of evolution exclusively, nonetheless brought along a “Visiting Expert” to testify on flaws in evolutionary theory. The witness was even from Florida of all places, William Jennings Bryan’s retirement home before

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his fatal trip to Dayton as an prosecutor and perversely the defense’s "expert" witness on the Bible.

Beyond similarities in tactics and other coincidences, contemporary discussions of evolution and public education seemingly cannot avoid references to Tennessee's famous 1925 trial. In its editorial on the proposed Arkansas house legislation, The Arkansas Democrat Gazette explicitly references the infamous "Monkey trial" in its title and much of the article while only briefly mentioning Arkansas's own role in the anti-evolution saga. Indeed, it was Arkansas's anti-evolution law of 1927 that actually made it all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court (although not until 1968) where it was found unconstitutional. Scopes-trial references are perhaps more appropriate for Tennessee, whose legislature has gone out of its way to keep its own connection fresh in the public mind. Even before the festivities in Dayton in the summer of 2000 to commemorate/celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the trial, the Tennessee state senate only narrowly defeated (voting 20-13) a law which would have empowered school boards to dismiss teachers for presenting evolution as a fact instead of an unprovable theory. Dubbed "Scopes II" or "Son of Scopes" by opponents, the legislation ensured an onslaught of national media attention, much legislative and religious posturing, and, of course, plenty of short clips and longer showings of Inherit the Wind on television and even a new Broadway revival of the stage production.

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21 Epperson v. Arkansas 393 U.S. 97 (1968). Arkansas subsequently passed an equal time law in 1981 that was also found unconstitutional and the state had to pay the ACLU's legal fees. The issues in the Arkansas case—McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education, 529 F. Supp. 1255 (1982)—were finally reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court in a similar case from Louisiana, Edwards v. Aguillard, 482 U.S. 578 (1987).

22 Edward J. Larson, Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion (New York: Basic, 1998), 262–64. In the debates over amending or repealing the Butler anti-evolution law in 1967, Tennessee legislators worried about a pending
Despite all of the continuing media attention and hand-wringing about the continued "warfare" between science and religion, the issues in Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, or wherever still boil down to a basic question of who controls the public schools. U. S. Supreme Court rulings in *Epperson* (1968) and *Edwards* (1987) would suggest the high court remains the final arbiter, at least as far as First Amendment questions about an establishment of religion are raised by state anti-evolution laws. But the Creationist movement is turning in a slightly different direction, evolving backward, as it were, by returning to the strategy championed by Oscar Fitzgerald in the 1880s to allow Bible reading in the public schools. Fitzgerald's "home rule" compromise avoided Constitutional questions by not passing top-down legislation and letting "each community . . . settle the question for itself." In a similar manner, many of the most recent anti-evolution efforts have returned to the strategy of demanding "local control" of schools.

Recent agitation in Kansas over the state school board's 1999 decision to remove evolution from the listing of science standards required to be taught in public schools fits this mold. According to historian Edward J. Larson and journalist Larry Witham, "the state Board of Education members who rejected evolution were also trying to strike a blow for local control and against national education standards." Although part of a larger trend of opposition to the still-growing movement towards national educational standards pushed by the George H. W. Bush administration and copied by many state

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lawsuit to challenge the law—dubbing the case Scopes II, the teacher was to be defended by ACLU attorney William M. Kunstler—and repealed the law to spare the state "the ordeal of another trial in which a proud state is required to make a monkey of itself in a court of law." *Ibid.*, 252–53.


school boards, the new cries for local control can often seem, as they were in Fitzgerald's hands, an expedient rhetorical and political tool. The formalization, bureaucratization, and standardization of education that began in the Progressive era gave various groups of Tennesseans desiring to shape the education of the next generation a more centralized target for changing all of the state schools. The school reforms of the early twentieth century no less that those at the end of the millennium set the state school boards and curriculum up as lightening rods of controversy between populist pleas and the authority of scientific and education experts. When nineteenth-century local control arguments were found to work against them—as in the larger and more ethnically and religiously diverse cities like Memphis which rejected city school Bible-reading plans and repeatedly voted against prohibition—religiously motivated reformers had turned instead to invocations of "majority rule." John Washington Butler promised his rural Tennessee constituents that he was fighting for their local values, but his 1925 anti-evolution bill enforced those values on the state as a whole.
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