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"Sparks From Law's Anvil": The Evolution Controversies in New Mexico, 1925-2008

Peter Incaudo

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**“SPARKS FROM LAW’S ANVIL”: THE EVOLUTION
CONTROVERSIES IN NEW MEXICO, 1925-2008**

BY

PETER HOWARD INCAUDO

**B.A., HISTORY,
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA, 2006**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS
HISTORY**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2009

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DEDICATION

For my grandparents: Peter & Helen, Edward & Elaine

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ABSTRACT

After attaining statehood in 1912, New Mexico witnessed an influx of American people, culture and controversies. This thesis tracks the development of controversies over the theory of evolution in the public schools of the state of New Mexico during the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Beginning with the state’s reaction to the 1925 Scopes trial, I discuss the reasons that the evolution controversy remained largely muted in 1920s New Mexico. Next, I examine the brief, but unique, 1927 evolution controversy sparked by a rumor of legislation to mandate the teaching of evolution. From there, I describe New Mexico’s high-profile role in the ongoing modern debate. By placing New Mexico within the context of the national debate, this thesis explores the ways in which New Mexicans received and adapted the controversy to the conditions in their state. In the process, we can see the transformation of New Mexico into a state fully immersed in American culture and controversy.

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Introduction

A powerful agent of both creation and destruction, science can illuminate our lives, and it can set the world ablaze. Scientific discoveries often have unintended or unforeseen consequences once they are released for general consumption. History can attest that science is no stranger to controversy. The process of evolution, by way of natural selection, pierced the world's consciousness as a result of Charles Darwin's 1859 publication of *On the Origin of Species*. "I see no good reason," Darwin mused in a later edition of the work, "why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of anyone."¹ Good or bad reasoning aside, the theory of evolution *has* elicited religious consternation over the past 150 years.

The fact that Darwin's argument centered on the origin of "species," and not the origin of "life," has often been lost in the controversy. Answering doubts about the development of the eye, he explained, "how a nerve comes to be sensitive to light hardly concerns us more than how life itself originated."² A dedicated naturalist from England, Darwin sought only to explain observable earthly phenomena. Yet in some religious circles, Darwin's name, and the theory with which he was inexorably linked, represented a direct assault on fundamental beliefs. In America, a nation formed in the midst of religious revolution and scientific enlightenment, evolution entered a situation ripe for conflict.

¹ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, 6th ed., vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899), 294. After the first edition of the book in 1859 Darwin deleted "On" from the title. This particular passage on the theological implications of the theory appeared in the second and all subsequent editions of the book's concluding chapter. Darwin was surely aware that the theory had implications for religious doctrine. *The Origin of Species* appeared in six English editions, in which Darwin made corrections and addressed criticisms.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 224.

This thesis will analyze the heretofore untreated evolution controversy in the state of New Mexico. Measuring New Mexico's level of involvement in the evolution controversies allows us to track the development of a distinctly American cultural trend in a state with a unique and diverse cultural heritage. Both the state and the terms of the evolution controversy adapted to changing environments over the course of the twentieth century. For New Mexicans, the unique circumstances within the state often meant innovative ways of viewing the clash. While other states seriously debated the measure and several passed laws banning evolution in the 1920s, New Mexico's evolution controversy began over a rumored proposal to *mandate* teaching the theory in the state's public schools. Competing visions between the material and spiritual future of New Mexico guided the state's links to the national evolution controversies. These ranged from the state's limited involvement in the 1920s to persistent and vociferous debate during the early twenty-first century. In a strange sense the shifting participation in the national evolution controversies helps mark the growth of the "Americanization" process in New Mexico.

About a decade before the *Origin of Species* first appeared, the Mexican Cession of 1848 transferred the large majority of the territory known as New Mexico to the United States. Located in the southwestern region of the expanding nation, the incorporation of New Mexico as a U.S. territory officially began the process of Americanization. The people, ideas, and technology of America followed the railroad into New Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Statehood in 1912 marked an important milestone. As the forty-seventh state admitted to the

Union, New Mexico continued to integrate mainstream American culture into the state's eclectic mix of Native American, Spanish, and Mexican heritage. New Mexico entered the evolution controversies of the twentieth century because of this gradual infusion of mainstream American political, social and cultural institutions.

Although the word means simply “change over time,” the term *evolution* applies to many scientific fields when referred to more broadly. The ideas of evolution in geology and astronomy occasionally attracted religious dissenters. However, biological evolution, as introduced in Darwin's *Origin of Species*, has drawn the most attention and controversy in New Mexico and elsewhere in America. The theory of biological evolution suggests that the astounding variety of plant and animal life on earth descended, through billions of years of modification from common ancestry. Natural selection, whereby the traits most beneficial to survival in a given environment are the very traits that pass on to subsequent generations, acts as the primary mechanism that drives biological evolution.³ Opponents of evolution often brush it aside as “merely a theory.” It is important to note that the term *theory* as used in scientific lexicon constitutes a meaning different from the term as used in casual conversation. The National Academy of Sciences defines a scientific theory as “a well-substantiated explanation of some aspect of the natural world that can incorporate facts, laws, inferences, and tested hypotheses.”⁴ As a result of discoveries

³ Eugenie C. Scott, *Evolution vs. Creationism: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 23-28. Scott provides an introduction to biological evolution and the science behind the evolution-creationism controversy in general. Note that natural selection is the *primary* mechanism, but not the only means of evolution. Gregor Mendel pioneered the field of genetics, which later gave science the ability to observe the inheritance of traits by tracking DNA through generations of organisms. Genetics is the mechanism that allows natural selection, and therefore evolution, to work.

⁴ National Academy of Sciences, *Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998), 7, quoted in Scott, *Evolution vs. Creationism*, 14.

in genetics, the fossil record, and other modes of inquiry after Darwin, the theory of evolution has become, and has remained, the only viable *scientific theory* to account for the development of the diverse forms of life humans see on earth today. Telling a biologist that evolution is “merely a theory” is akin to telling a Christian theologian that the Bible is “merely a book.”

For the most part, the reaction in America to Darwin’s epochal publication awaited the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865. At first, several clergymen and scientists in America dismissed evolution as guesswork and a misinterpretation of facts, with many gaps and inconsistencies.⁵ Still, they recognized that should evolution gain wide acceptance, conflicts in theology would surely follow. The process of natural selection, guided by chance, seemed incongruous with the belief in a purposeful divine plan. Conversely, others immediately recognized a way to reconcile Darwin’s theory with natural theology. Harvard botanist, dedicated Christian and Darwin supporter Asa Gray stated that if evolution could be proven, it “would leave the doctrine of final causes, utility, and special design just where they were before.”⁶ The more scientific evidence compiled in evolution’s defense, the more opposition it faced from American evangelical Protestants.

Evolution in regard to plants and birds did not engender much reproach. When applied to humans, however, the theory of evolution created many dedicated enemies. In the *Descent of Man*, published in 1871, Darwin confirmed Protestant

⁵ George E. Webb, *The Evolution Controversy in America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 7-15. Among America’s best known scientists in the late-nineteenth century was Louis Agassiz, geologist from Harvard. Agassiz’s dismissal of the science behind evolution had great impact on the manner in which Americans received the theory of evolution.

⁶ Asa Gray, “Darwin and His Reviewers,” *Atlantic Monthly* 6 (1860), 424-425, quoted in Jon H. Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America: Protestant Intellectuals and Organic Evolution, 1859-1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 19.

theologians' suspicions that the theory would provide an alternative human history to the one found in the Biblical account of Genesis. Just as he had argued that all living things shared common ancestry in *Origin of Species*, Darwin explained how humans shared a more recent and common ancestry with primates in the *Descent of Man*. Shared ancestry did not mean, however, that humans evolved from the “monkeys” that inhabit the earth today.⁷ Nevertheless, the connection between humans and “beasts” provided religious opponents with ammunition to fight evolution in the public arena. The battleground became America’s public-school system.

The economic ills of the Gilded Age and the monumental destruction of Victorian values by the bloodbath in World War I alarmed many Americans, who wondered, “What is the cause of all this immorality in the modern industrial world?” For many Protestant evangelicals in America, the problem lay in the modern focus on the material world and the natural explanations of it. The remedy, they argued, required a return to the “fundamentals” of the Christian faith. Evolution became one of the main targets of this growing fundamentalist movement in early-twentieth-century America. The focus of the movement turned to the place where science disseminated its findings to future generations of Americans—science classrooms in the tax-supported public-school system. If America’s children learned that they had evolved from “beasts,” fundamentalists reasoned, they could be expected to lose their faith in divine creation and act on base instincts without moral reservations. Following this line of reasoning, fundamentalists set out to eliminate the instruction of evolution from the public schools.

⁷ Scott, *Evolution vs. Creationism*, 43.

Famous and legendary politician William Jennings Bryan emerged as the most visible, and most remembered, champion of the fundamentalist antievolution cause. Bryan built his political career on the Populist platform of fighting economic injustice on behalf of the average American, particularly its rural farmers. Convinced that the theory of evolution destroyed faith and that natural selection had led directly to German militarism, Bryan declared that Darwin laid “the foundations for the bloodiest war in history.”⁸ When the 1925 antievolution Butler Act in Tennessee needed a prosecutor to argue for its legitimacy, Bryan answered the call. Extolling the virtues that had given him the label of “Great Commoner,” Bryan argued that even in the face of modern science, *vox populi vox Dei*—the voice of the people was the voice of God.

The sparks from Tennessee’s widely publicized antievolution law ignited the flames of controversy in many states across America. It is in the 1920s, therefore, that this study begins to examine New Mexico’s role in the national evolution controversy. Chapter one provides a survey of the significant antievolution movements that occurred in the states neighboring New Mexico during the 1920s. The chapter then turns to the state’s coverage of, and reaction to, the Tennessee Scopes trial. In addition, the introductory chapter gives a brief overview of the public-school system in New Mexico.

Chapter two describes the circumstances surrounding the proposal of Albuquerque commercial organizations to mandate the teaching of evolution in 1927 and the antievolution response from the state’s Southern Baptist community.

⁸ William Jennings Bryan, *In His Image* (New York: Revell, 1922), 94, quoted in Edward J. Larson, *Trial and Error: The American Controversy over Creation and Evolution*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47.

Although the controversy remained limited in 1927, it demonstrated New Mexico's increasing involvement in national questions concerning science and religion in American culture. The third and final chapter briefly traces the changes in the national debate during the Cold War and then picks up the revived struggle in New Mexico during the 1990s. New Mexico's high-profile participation in the still-ongoing modern debate highlights the critical need to understand the history of the evolution controversy in the Land of Enchantment.

The antievolution argument in America and New Mexico almost always originated in Protestant fundamentalist churches. These churches held a strict interpretation of the Bible as the source of literal truth about the natural world. Since the present study is focused on the evolution controversy in New Mexico, the state's Protestant denominations will receive the overwhelming amount of attention. But New Mexico has long maintained a strong Catholic presence and heritage as well. The Catholic Church accepted the teaching of evolution as a scientific theory in the Gilded Age. Tim Martinez, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, described the Church's position on the theory to the *Santa Fe New Mexican* in 2005:

Regarding the theory of evolution, there does seem to be abundant evidence to indicate that life on this planet evolved. The Catholic Church has said many times it is not a sin to teach or believe this theory. However, what we believe is that God is behind it all. Whatever hidden mechanism exists behind the creation of the human beings, it is God, and only God, who infuses the soul at that moment. I also believe that theology presents the immeasurable, unfathomable, mystery of God – and science, as it is today, will not be able to disprove (or prove, for that matter) whether God made the world.⁹

⁹ Tim Martinez, "My View: Five Locals Speak Out," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 16, 2005. A future study might be useful to illuminate specifically how Catholics and the variety of Native religions in New Mexico reconciled their beliefs with evolution. Since they were unlikely to stridently support either antievolutionism or secular science, the voices of these groups are conspicuously muted in this study.

Martinez confirmed the common interpretation that evolution and Catholicism are not in conflict, but he made sure to emphasize that religion serves New Mexicans in a way that science cannot.

The source of the spark that created life and set evolution in motion remains a mystery to this day. Much like Darwin's line of inquiry, this study is not required to answer that particular question. Just as various species adapted to survive in the converging habitats found in New Mexico, so too did the evolution debate adapt to the social and cultural environment in the state. To find the spark that ignited the controversy over evolution in New Mexico, however, one must first turn to the decade of the 1920s in the Southwest.

Chapter 1

Neighboring Controversy and the Scopes Trial in New Mexico

When describing New Mexico to Americans in the 1920s, reporter Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant found the recently constituted state to have “an austere and planetary look that daunts and challenges the soul.” A journalist from the Northeast, recovering in Taos from serious wounds received while touring a World War I battlefield, Sergeant described New Mexico as a “relic of ancient America” and declared that “even Albuquerque, the only bustling modern city of any size, gives no effect of proud assertion: Sandia Mountain, floating above, carries off all the magnificence.”¹⁰ Social changes during the 1920s, however, would soon transform New Mexico into something far more recognizable to the modern America that Sergeant used as her standard of assessment.

Indeed, during the post-war decade, the entire American Southwest began to resemble modern America not only in physical manifestations but also in the issues that the region discussed and debated. The battles over evolution in the public schools of the East also echoed in many of the states of the Southwest. The highly publicized Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925 helped to fuel antievolution sentiment throughout the region. Even though New Mexicans received updates on the trial and discussed the proceedings, no antievolution legislation was ever seriously considered in the New Mexico legislature. This restraint toward the Scopes trial in New Mexico reveals much about the priorities of the nascent state in a decade of

¹⁰ Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, “A Relic of Ancient America,” *The Nation*, 21 November 1923, reprinted in Daniel H. Borus, ed., *These United States: Portraits of America from the 1920s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 249-250.

immense change. New Mexico's educational system struggled with the far more basic issues of reaching a largely Spanish-speaking, rural population. The relatively moderate coverage of the Scopes trial in New Mexico's print media, plus the higher priorities of organizing the new school system, prevented a widespread evolution controversy in the 1920s.

Just as railroads had cut through the American Southwest in the late-nineteenth century, filled not only with people but also with the products and ideas of modernity, paved roads for automobiles opened the region up even further in the early twentieth century. The most famous example of this expansion of America's road system, U.S. Route 66, was commissioned in the 1920s and charted a course from Chicago through New Mexico and on to Los Angeles. Following the rails and paved roads, religious institutions, conservative Christian evangelical denominations in particular, tried to keep up at every stop to ensure that traditional "American" beliefs would counter the rampant "modernism" they saw spreading across the West.

Over the years, both historians and American popular memory have too often ignored the presence and importance of fundamentalism in the West, instead viewing it as mainly a southern phenomenon.¹¹ In fact, one of the first to sound the alarm over the dangers of teaching Darwinism in America's public schools was a Colorado minister, Henry Beach. In an essay titled "The Decadence of Darwinism," which was included in the conservative manifesto, *The Fundamentals*, Beach declared that "the

¹¹ Michael Lienesch, *In the Beginning: Fundamentalism, the Scopes Trial, and the Making of the Antievolution Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 3. Lienesch builds upon Ron Numbers' assertion that certain "myths and misperceptions" have clouded historians' accounts of the evolution and creation controversy. Among the myths Lienesch and Numbers discuss are the tendency to focus too much on the Scopes trial, to ignore the manifestations of fundamentalism in regions other than the South and Tennessee in particular, and to give too much weight to William Jennings Bryan while ignoring other important individuals. Also see Ron Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 23.

teaching of Darwinism, as an approved science,” was “the most deplorable feature of the whole wretched propaganda.”¹² First printed between 1910 and 1915 and distributed widely across America, *The Fundamentals* forged the identity of the fundamentalist movement in opposition to modern secular society.¹³ It is no surprise then, given the rapid modernization taking place in the heavily rural, traditional, and conservative American Southwest, that some of the earliest and most spirited crusades against evolution in the beginning of the twentieth century occurred in the states bordering New Mexico.

Throughout the 1920s, Utah mirrored the reaction of New Mexico to the evolution controversy in many ways. The churches most likely to react against the teachings of evolution comprised a small but vocal minority of the population in both states. Utah media coverage of the events in Tennessee also tended to be moderate, even mildly pro-Scopes.¹⁴ However, Utah had experienced a modest evolution controversy well before the rest of the country. In 1911, Brigham Young University in Provo employed new biology professors and hosted a series of lectures that addressed the teachings of Charles Darwin. A special Latter-day Saints (LDS) Church committee formed to discuss these proceedings and eventually presented an ultimatum to the professors in question: either discontinue their instruction on evolution or leave the university. Professors Ralph Chamberlain and Joseph and

¹² Henry Beach, “The Decadence of Darwinism,” *The Fundamentals* vol. 4 ch. 5 (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1912), quoted in Lienesch, *In the Beginning*, 31.

¹³ Lienesch, *In the Beginning*, 8. Lienesch notes that although antievolution ideas had been around since Darwin’s time, *The Fundamentals* provided the basis for the antievolution movement by creating the impetus for fundamentalism. Lienesch interprets fundamentalism as an identity, in contrast to earlier historians who have viewed it as an ideology based on the core “five points”: the inerrancy of the Bible, Christ’s divinity, atonement, resurrection, and the second coming.

¹⁴ Ann Weaver Hart, “Religion and Education: The Scopes Controversy in Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1983): 185.

Henry Peterson resigned as a result.¹⁵ Although LDS Church president Joseph F. Smith did not foresee further conflict between Mormon doctrine and evolution, the church's actions in the Brigham Young University controversy set a precedent. One of Utah's major private universities excluded evolution well before the 1920s controversies swept the nation.¹⁶ In the public schools, the state of Utah harbored a strong sense of educational professionalism that promoted the notion of a secular approach to science in the classroom. In 1924 and 1925, Utah's Board of Education made no mention of the evolution issue.¹⁷

In contrast to Utah, Oklahoma's evolution controversy occurred amidst the nationwide tension of the 1920s. Shortly after Kentucky's antievolution law suffered a narrow defeat early in 1923, Oklahoma's state legislature passed its educational appropriations bill, with an amendment mandating that the textbooks used in public high schools not include "the materialistic conception of history or the Darwinian theory against the Bible conception of creation."¹⁸ The legislature's actions triggered an intense debate among the state's Christian denominations. The Oklahoma Baptist Sunday School Convention supported the amendment and admonished the more liberal state Methodist and Congregational Churches for believing in evolution and supporting the forces of modernism. In response, Methodist leaders charged the Baptist Convention with being a backward-looking group of militant

¹⁵ Ibid., 190.

¹⁶ Ibid., 189. Hart quotes Smith as stating that the theory of evolution was "not vital from a doctrinal standpoint."

¹⁷ Ibid., 194-195. Hart interviewed teachers who worked in the Utah public school system during the time of the Scopes trial, and none recalled restrictions on the manner in which they presented modern science in the classroom. Hart shows how Utah trained more science teachers per capita than any other state in America in the twentieth century.

¹⁸ Elbert L. Watson, "Oklahoma and the Anti-Evolution Movement of the 1920's," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 42, no. 4 (1964): 397.

fundamentalists.¹⁹ One antievolution spokesman even claimed that the president of the University of Oklahoma, Dr. William Bennett Bizzell, had received compensation from communists in Russia to allow the teaching of evolution in the state's college.²⁰ Although the legislature repealed the antievolution amendment in 1926, the Oklahoma Baptist Convention persisted in its efforts to remove evolution from the state's schools.

In November of 1926, the Baptist Convention of Oklahoma passed a resolution to cut off funds to their own Baptist schools until all faculty members signed the McDaniel Statement, which declared, "This convention accepts Genesis as teaching that man was the special creation of God and rejects every theory, evolution or otherwise, which teaches that man originated or came by way of a lower animal ancestry."²¹ Most Baptist faculty appear to have done so. In the public-school system, however, the fundamentalists were less successful. J. Frank Norris, an influential Baptist pastor from Dallas, Texas, who visited the state in 1929, echoed the majoritarian argument used by William Jennings Bryan at the Scopes trial when he avowed: "As for atheists, let them teach if they want to. But let them finance their own schools."²² The moderate forces of Oklahoma Protestantism stood in the way of the more bellicose wings of the Baptist Convention. They insisted that as long as science refrained from outright atheism, they would not back antievolution legislation. The acrimonious nature of Oklahoma's evolution debate reflected the

¹⁹ Ibid., 398.

²⁰ Ibid., 403.

²¹ Ibid., 402. This call to endorse the McDaniel Statement was inspired by the national Southern Baptist Convention's Tull Resolution, passed in May, 1926.

²² Ibid., 406.

deep fissures between the fundamentalists and the moderate Protestant denominations in America in the 1920s.

The Southern Baptist church provided the key stimulus for the evolution debate in Arizona as well as Oklahoma. In 1924, Richard S. Beal, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Tucson, Arizona, took exception to a lecture delivered by University of Arizona astronomy professor A. E. Douglass to members of the Grace Episcopal Church in Tucson. Local newspapers covered the lecture and reported that Douglass had called for Christians to shed their literal interpretations of the Bible in favor of a modern concept of faith that accommodated science.²³ Reverend Beal condemned the modernist rhetoric of Douglass's speech. He declared that teaching materialism, especially evolution, should be tolerated in no publicly supported institution. In addition, Beal argued that evolution itself was a "religion." If the Bible could not be taught in the public schools, he argued, neither should evolution. Inspired by the guilty verdict returned in the Scopes trial, Reverend Beal led in 1927 a push for a similar law to ban the teaching of evolution in Arizona's public schools.²⁴ The campaign for antievolution legislation in Arizona met stiff resistance from both the University of Arizona and local ministers. Nine out of thirteen ministers polled by the *Arizona Daily Star* rejected Beal's plan for banning evolution. The powerful Presbyterian Synod of Arizona ultimately refused to back Beal's proposed legislation, effectively ending the controversy.²⁵

²³ George E. Webb, "Tucson's Evolution Debate, 1924-1927," *The Journal of Arizona History* 24, no. 1 (1983): 2-3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

In addition to Utah, Oklahoma, and Arizona, neighboring Texas also experienced a backlash against evolution. This crusade was led by the same Rev. J. Frank Norris who had traveled to Oklahoma in 1929 to spread his fundamentalist message. Norris was a long-tenured and successful pastor of the First Baptist Church in Fort Worth when he led the assault on the science establishment in Texas.²⁶ After his church hosted the World's Christian Fundamentals Association gathering in 1923, Norris planned and carried out a mock "trial" of several Texas schools using mainly students who were paid to testify against the schools in question.²⁷ Inspired by the initially successful passage of the Oklahoma antievolution legislation in 1923, the Texas legislature debated a bill that would have similarly outlawed the teaching of evolution and all textbooks that included the theory. After receiving a great deal of support in the state's House of Representatives, the measure ultimately failed in the Senate.²⁸ In spite of this defeat of antievolution legislation in his home state of Texas, Norris remained an influential fundamentalist minister fighting the forces of modernism across the country.

Considering the polemical discourse materializing in the Southwest during the early years of the twentieth century, it seems safe to assume that geography did not form a significant barrier to antievolutionary sentiment in New Mexico. During the same era, the blossoming field of anthropology had made the Southwest into a laboratory for scientific discovery and inquiry into the theory of cultural evolution,

²⁶ George E. Webb, *The Evolution Controversy in America* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 71.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

news of which fostered a sense of scientific enthusiasm across the region.²⁹ The arrival of new roads during the 1920s advanced the process of introducing mainstream American institutions into some of the final hold outs from American culture on the continental frontier. The contrast between modernism and fundamentalism in the region seemed as distinct and volatile in the Southwest as in many other regions of the United States. The angry response to evolution in neighboring states makes New Mexico's limited evolution debate of the 1920s all the more intriguing.

Newspapers in New Mexico, as well as across the country, enthusiastically covered the clash between religious fundamentalism and modernism in Dayton during the summer of 1925. The Tennessee Legislature had passed the antievolution Butler Act on March 12, 1925. The bill outlawed the teaching of "any theory that denies the story of Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible." The Butler Act specifically banned the theory "that man has descended from a lower order of animals" from Tennessee's public schools.³⁰ In John Thomas Scopes, a mathematics and science teacher at the local Dayton high school, the American Civil Liberties Union found a Tennessee teacher willing to be the defendant in a case testing the constitutionality of the Butler Act. The Scopes trial provided all the drama of a heavyweight boxing match. Three-time presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan, and his opponent, prominent defense lawyer Clarence Darrow, both descended on Dayton. Each came to prove to the public that his interpretation of freedom should prevail. The so-called

²⁹ Don D. Fowler, *A Laboratory for Anthropology: Science and Romanticism in the American Southwest, 1846-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 15. When Anthropologists established the actual "Laboratory of Anthropology" in 1927, they chose to build it in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

³⁰ Webb, *The Evolution Controversy*, 82.

“monkey trial” decision convicted Scopes of teaching evolution and levied a small fine, forcing the defense to appeal to a higher court. Inspired by Bryan’s passionate defense of the Bible and his majoritarian argument, many antievolution crusaders launched legislative initiatives in other states.³¹

Understanding New Mexico’s restrained public reaction to the Scopes trial requires examining how the news from the trial reached state residents. By July 1925, the Scopes trial had garnered front-page status in the state’s main paper, the *Albuquerque Morning Journal*. The print media immediately recognized that the Scopes trial had created a sensational battle of epic proportions. The *Journal* printed a cartoon by artist Windsor McCay on July 2 with the headline, “Barnum Outdone, Greatest Show on Earth! Evolution Trial at Dayton, Tennessee Court House!”³² On July 3, the paper even informed readers about two victories for modernists in the Northern Baptist Convention in Seattle, Washington, when “fundamentalists who sought to prevent delegates from the Park Avenue Baptist Church of New York went down to defeat, 910 to 364. A resolution asking the recall of modernist missionaries from foreign fields was voted down, 734 to 594.”³³ The interest in the Scopes trial seemed to highlight the fact that all across the country a battle was raging between modernism and fundamentalism. The *Journal* hoped to keep New Mexicans informed on all fronts.

Amidst Independence Day celebrations, the *Journal* also carried word from the Associated Press that the citizens of Dayton were concerned that the trial might be

³¹ Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 123.

³² *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 2 July 1925.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3 July 1925.

moved to another venue before it could even begin.³⁴ On the same day, an article expressed pride in the recent archaeological discovery of artifacts in the Southwest:

These instances are but illustrative of the intense human interest in the archaeological investigations going on about us in New Mexico, Arizona, Southern Colorado, and Utah. Their scientific [significance] is another story and an important one. But what we want to urge on the readers of the *Journal* is that nowhere else in the world are discoveries being made of such vast human interest as right here among us.³⁵

Whether the *Journal* printed this article as a cynical response to the “human interest” story in Dayton, or merely as an expression of pride on Independence Day, cannot be determined. However, on July 6, the *Journal* said that “whatever the outcome, the trial will settle nothing. Evolution will remain true or untrue just as it was before.”³⁶ On the issues of freedom and authority, the paper took a middle ground: “Certainly the state has a right to control its agencies. Certainly no state legislature has the slightest right to throttle the freedom of speech, or prevent the freedom of academic inquiry. The line between in this case is a close one.”³⁷ Along with these brief opinions, the *Journal* also printed detailed descriptions of the arguments entered and developed by the state of Tennessee and the defense. One front-page article dealt with John Washington Butler, whose antievolution bill in the Tennessee legislature had set the events in motion. Butler proclaimed that he was “content with the ‘old, old story’ of divine creation and eternal glory.” The author, however, pointed out that Butler had once dreamed of being a medical doctor, a

³⁴ Ibid., 4 July 1925. Article from the Associated Press titled, “Dayton Citizens Aroused over Darrow’s Move to Take Scopes Evolution Case to U.S. Courts.”

³⁵ Ibid., This quote comes from an article titled, “Signing in 1776 and Now.” The article affirmed both New Mexico’s stance as a patriotic American state as well as fertile ground for modern scientific inquiry.

³⁶ *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 6 July 1925. From an article by Clark Kinnaird, Central Press Staff Correspondent.

³⁷ Ibid.

profession for which he most assuredly would have needed a strong background in biology—something he now sought to deny to other children of Tennessee.³⁸ As the trial unfolded in Dayton, the *Journal* regularly published statements from the prosecution and defense, as well as specific details such as motions filed by both sides and the numbers of recesses.

By mid-July, the *Journal* began to issue even more opinions on the trial. It suggested that Bryan's interpretation of the Bible was overly narrow and that his presence in Dayton was nothing more than a publicity stunt. On July 11, for instance, the *Journal* addressed Bryan directly in an article titled "A Matter of Interpretation":

It is not the Bible but certain interpretations of it that the trial imperils. . . . In Mr. Bryan's view the evolution trial at Dayton, Tenn., is of immense importance. On it depends whether ultimately the Bible will have to go as a religious authority. Many devout believers in the Scriptures see the trial in a different light. They say that what is at stake is not the Bible, but a particular interpretation of it.³⁹

Every Sunday edition of the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* carried a column by humorist and social commentator Will Rogers. Rogers also heaped harsh criticism on Bryan and the prosecution, declaring that "it's the most publicity any politician ever got in an off-year." Rogers also observed, "Tennessee claims they didn't descend from a monkey, but their actions in this case prove otherwise."⁴⁰ Even in the Sunday Churches section of the paper, support for the fundamentalist cause foundered. In the "International Sunday School Lesson" on July 19, William T. Ellis offered advice to Christians in New Mexico:

³⁸ Ibid., 10 July 1925. The title of the article read "Ape Law's Author Tells Why He Made it."

³⁹ *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 11 July 1925.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19 July 1925. From an article by Will Rogers titled, "We Might as Well Be Monkeys, As Long As We Act Like Them."

The “Fundamentalist-Modernist” disagreement or conservative versus liberal controversy, is as old as the Christian Church itself. Frantic folk who fear that our faith is being wrecked by the current controversies should take a long look back through the ages, to the first church council. Christianity has survived many a disagreement and debate; and it will survive many more. . . . “Keep your eye on the ball!” is the commonest council of athletic leaders. Churchmen need it most. For the bane of this mood of controversy is that it tends to turn the church aside from her primary purpose of applying Christ to life.⁴¹

As the trial came to a close, the *Journal* continued to publish daily reports on the evolution controversies brewing outside the confines of Dayton, Tennessee. On July 22, the paper printed reports of clashes within the California legislature over what textbooks would be used in their classrooms.⁴² The *Journal* deemed the possibility of a federal antievolution law unlikely; many politicians expressed their desire to leave the issue up to the states.⁴³ Bryan’s unexpected death shortly after the trial, on July 26, 1925, also received a good deal of press coverage in the *Journal*. Soon after his passing, the Scopes trial faded from view.

The *Aztec Independent*, published in the northwestern corner of the state in San Juan County, utilized the Scopes trial wire services in a manner similar to that of the *Albuquerque Morning Journal*. In addition to reporting on the events in Dayton, the *Aztec Independent* printed articles on the major scientific discoveries of the day, including a leading work on evolution. On July 17, 1925, the paper reported that Dr. Herbert Spencer Jennings of Johns Hopkins University was the first man “actually to see and control the process of evolution among living things.”⁴⁴ The article suggested

⁴¹ Ibid., Article by William T. Ellis in the Sunday Church section titled “New Fashions in the Early Church.”

⁴² Ibid., 22 July 1925. Article titled “Scientists and Theologians in Evolution Row.”

⁴³ Ibid., 23 July 1925. Article titled “Upshaw Won’t Introduce Anti-Evolution Bill.”

⁴⁴ *Aztec Independent*, 17 July 1925. The article began, “Perhaps fresh ammunition for the Scopes defense is provided in a newly published report on biological researchers at Johns Hopkins.”

that the defense council for Scopes could perhaps use the findings to aid its case, which clearly indicated an editorial opinion on the matter. The paper also included some clues regarding the public reaction to the trial. Later in the month the publication ran an article reporting from a local Methodist revival meeting to which a minister said: “when a man declares he came from a monkey, don’t argue with him. Maybe he did, you don’t know.”⁴⁵ The title of the article, “Sparks from Law’s Anvil,” indicates that some discussion of the Tennessee case surely occurred at the revival. However, the paper printed nothing to indicate that New Mexicans from Aztec supported a similar antievolution measure for their state.

Other newspapers from New Mexican towns provide a similar window into local public reaction to the Scopes trial. Interestingly, two papers that appear to have supported Bryan’s cause did not print regular reports of the trial. *The Clovis Journal*, based in eastern New Mexico’s Curry County, opposed the theory of evolution, as seen in the heading above the paper’s title on July 9, 1925: “The Dayton Trial, in Our Opinion, Only Lends Unwarranted Dignity to the Far-Fetched Theories of the Evolutionists.”⁴⁶ For whatever reason, this publication chose to print multiple statements on the trial in its headings but nowhere else in the paper. On July 2, a heading read: “We Hope the Trial in Tennessee Will Forever Settle the Question of Our Kinship with the Monkey.”⁴⁷ On July 16, the paper printed the heading: “They Might Summon an Ape to the Witness Stand at Dayton and See If There Is Anything

⁴⁵ Ibid., 24 July 1925. The unnamed author also declared, “A lot of people mistake dyspepsia for religion. The devil will advertise a cucumber for a watermelon every chance he has.”

⁴⁶ *The Clovis Journal*, 9 July 1925.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2 July 1925.

In His Family History We Ought to Know!”⁴⁸ This last heading could refer to either Bryan or Darrow, given that both were rumored to be taking the stand. Bryan, of course, famously did serve as a witness, but Darrow did not.

On the same day that the paper printed its most obvious antievolution heading, *The Clovis Journal* reported that the local First Christian Church planned an evening of worship under the subject, “not monkey and the Bible, but monkeying with the Bible.”⁴⁹ The *Gallup Independent*, from McKinley County in western New Mexico, informed citizens that on July 31, the pastor from the local First Methodist Church planned to address Darrow’s answers to “Bryan’s nine questions” posed after the trial’s conclusion.⁵⁰ Although *The Clovis Journal* and the *Gallup Independent* did not report on the Scopes trial directly, the nature of their coverage suggested that New Mexicans knew about the controversy and discussed it during various religious services. However, neither paper provides evidence that citizens at any point proposed similar antievolution legislation for their state.

Bryan and his argument found ardent support in the pages of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico’s weekly publication, the *Baptist New Mexican*. Like Bryan, this paper believed that Tennessee’s citizens had the right to dictate what was to be taught in their tax-supported schools. The *Baptist New Mexican* acknowledged that “this case has nothing to do with whether or not evolution is true.” But the paper also added, “Our contention is that if a state has a right to legislate against teaching the Bible in the public schools, then another state has the right to prohibit teaching

⁴⁸ Ibid., 16 July 1925.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Evening worship at the First Christian Church began at 7:45 p.m.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 31 July 1925. Since Bryan was unable to query Darrow on the stand, he carried on the debate on in public by submitting nine questions which Darrow answered, and newspapers published, just before Bryan’s death on July 26, 1925.

that which is opposed to the Bible.”⁵¹ The publication, which claimed that it had the highest percentage of circulation of any Southern Baptist state paper, supported the passage of an antievolution statement at the Southern Baptist Convention in Memphis, Tennessee in May 1925. Taking a fundamentalist stand, the paper proclaimed that “no statement against evolution can be too strong for us.”⁵² On the eve of the trial, the *Baptist New Mexican* wholly supported the Tennessee legislature’s right to pass the law and to enforce it. The editorial opinion argued that “he [Scopes] should suffer the consequences” of teaching evolution.⁵³ However, the paper stopped short of suggesting a similar antievolution statement or even proposing legislation for the state of New Mexico in 1925.

As the Scopes trial reached its conclusion, the *Baptist New Mexican* expressed great animosity toward the Scopes defense team. “The questioning of Darrow by Mr. Bryan,” the paper affirmed, “revealed the fact that the defense had secured famous agnostic and infidel support.”⁵⁴ Support for Bryan filled the pages of the Baptist publication, especially after his death:

We think much credit should be given Bryan for the great fight he made for fundamentalism and for states rights in his advocating the principle that Tennessee had a right to make its laws, and also to enforce them. We will all anxiously await the decision of the Supreme Court of Tennessee on this case in September.⁵⁵

Bryan’s perceived martyrdom in defense of the Bible made an impression on the Baptists in New Mexico. A few weeks after the Scopes trial, the *Baptist New*

⁵¹ *Baptist New Mexican*, 9 July 1925, Baptist Convention of New Mexico Archives, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 28 May 1925. For the paper’s circulation claim, which is impossible to confirm, see *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 June 1925.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9 July 1925. The publication’s editor in 1925 was C.W. Stumph.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 July 1925. “The questioning” refers to Bryan’s nine questions posed to Darrow after the trial.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Mexican, in response to what they termed “intense interest” on all matters concerning evolution, published a list of books on the subject that could be ordered through the paper. “The Menace of Evolution” and “Hell in the High Schools,” two titles recommended by the publication, illustrate clearly where the Baptists in the state of New Mexico stood on the issue.⁵⁶ Months after the trial’s conclusion, however, the *Baptist New Mexican* turned to humor in regard to the evolution controversy, reprinting this verse from *Life*:

Said a monk, as he swings by his tail,
To the little monks, female and male;
‘From your offspring, my dears,
In a few million years,
May evolve a professor in Yale’!⁵⁷

Instead of mounting an assault on evolution in the state’s public schools in response to the Scopes trial, the *Baptist New Mexican* offered much more moderate advice to New Mexico’s Baptists: “The need is not so much to emphasize the idea of anti-evolution as we need to preach a positive gospel, setting forth the Deity and efficacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us stick to the Word.”⁵⁸ Throughout the summer of 1925, New Mexico’s Baptist publication never wavered in its support for Bryan and the prosecution. Ultimately, however, the paper refrained from leading an antievolutionary movement within the state.

None of the state’s newspapers sent correspondents to Dayton; every one had to rely upon wire services, like the Associated Press, for their information. The papers seldom voiced an opinion on the issue, but when they did, they conveyed the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 13 August 1925. Other titles of note recommended by the *Baptist New Mexican* included “Atheism in our Universities,” “The Bankruptcy of Evolution,” and “The Absurdities of Evolution.”

⁵⁷ Ibid., 8 October 1925.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 27 August 1925.

feeling that the trial was more for show than anything else. The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* and *Aztec Independent* criticized Bryan far more than Darrow; *The Clovis Journal* and the *Gallup Independent* reported only on the public awareness of the controversy. Rural and religious publications in the state printed many indicators of fundamentalist sympathies, but did not abstractly apply the antievolution sentiment to their own state. The state's Baptist publication distrusted the newspapers' accounts of the Scopes trial, believing that the papers "doubtless gave many false reports, and so it will be difficult for those of us who are so far away ever to get the real facts furnished in the case."⁵⁹ Despite the *Baptist New Mexican's* suspicions regarding the facts of the case made available, the paper never suggested launching an antievolution crusade in New Mexico in 1925. In sum, New Mexico's print media did little to fan the flames of fundamentalism in the state during the Scopes trial.

One of the key components in New Mexico's quest to become a truly "American" domain involved revolutionizing the public school system. Beginning with the incorporation of New Mexico as a U.S. territory in 1850, Anglo Americans recognized the importance of local and national perceptions of education. More specifically, the American ideal of widespread free education required the establishment of nonsectarian public schools. During the entire territorial period, Anglo American Protestants battled the entrenched Catholic school tradition in order to impart "American" ideals to the state's youth.⁶⁰ The "menace of evolution" paled in comparison to the challenges that public education faced in New Mexico. The

⁵⁹ Ibid., 30 July 1925.

⁶⁰ Diana Everett, "The Public School Debate in New Mexico, 1850-1891," *Arizona and the West* 26, no. 2 (1984): 107.

New Mexico public school system grappled with much more basic issues, like the need for bilingual education and adequate funding in the 1920s. These daily challenges prevented the state school leadership from confronting specific questions of the curriculum taught in science classes. The impoverished status of New Mexico's school system forestalled antievolutionary sentiment from emerging from within.

The establishment of a publicly supported school system in New Mexico included an intense debate over religion and language. Anglo American Protestants argued that because New Mexico had become an American territory, its children should be instructed in English and without any presence of the Roman Catholic Church. Those who supported New Mexico's appeals for statehood sought an American educational policy to combat the stereotypes of New Mexico's citizenry as "backwards" and wholly "foreign." Since an overwhelming majority of the population of New Mexico practiced Catholicism and spoke Spanish as a first language, the Catholic Church countered this position by arguing that the territory's school lessons should be taught in the majority's native language and should also include Catholic doctrine.⁶¹ In 1884, the tension within the Catholic population reached a crescendo when the territory's archbishop, John B. Lamy, threatened to deny the sacraments to Catholics who sent their children to public schools that lacked a Catholic presence.⁶² The public school battle raged through decades of ineffectual education laws. The schools relied upon local control until 1891, when the territorial legislature finally passed a law mandating the creation of a territory-wide secular

⁶¹ Ibid., 114.

⁶² Ibid., 126.

school system, in which all teachers spoke and taught the English language. To ensure that the legislature's wishes came to fruition, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction was created to oversee the activity of all the schools. The effort that New Mexico's Anglo American Protestants poured into creating a separation between the state's public school curriculum and the religious doctrine of the Catholic Church, placed them in poor position to dictate any curriculum based on their own Christian beliefs in the 1920s.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the educational system in New Mexico struggled to live up to nationwide American standards. By 1920, nearly three decades after the official creation of a common school system, the census records show that only about 64 percent of the state's school-age children attended classes. This statistic meant that nearly fifty-thousand children were without formal education.⁶³ The rural nature of New Mexico's population distribution created a difficult situation for educational reformers. A significant portion of the population in neighboring states Oklahoma and Arizona also lived in rural areas, but not to the extent of New Mexico. In Oklahoma, 27 percent of the population resided in urban centers; in Arizona, 37 percent of residents lived in urban regions. New Mexico's census returns indicated that in the same decade only 18 percent of the state's citizenry lived in urban areas.⁶⁴ Reaching the Hispanic, Spanish-speaking and Native

⁶³ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922). New Mexico's school attendance records revealed that out of 128,765 school-age students (ages 5-20), 63.8 percent attended.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, The raw data from the 1920 census for Oklahoma: Total Population-2,028,283; Rural-1,488,803; Urban-539,480. Arizona: Total Population-334,162; Rural-216,635; Urban-117,527. New Mexico: Total Population-360,350; Rural-295,390; Urban-64,960.

American children of rural New Mexico required large amounts of time and resources to create an effective public education system.

New Mexico's educational reformers of the 1920s faced a population spread over a vast territory. Their attention focused not on the nationwide debate on evolution's place in the classroom but on the establishment of a comprehensive system to provide the basics of education to all of the children in the state, Hispanics in particular. In 1928, Governor Richard Dillon described the public school effort as "an heroic struggle on account of the sparse population, scattered over a vast empire of territory where distances seem endless, making it most difficult to secure sufficient funds for the equipment of schools in rural sections, where there were only a few children, but who, nevertheless, could not be neglected."⁶⁵ The 1925 New Mexico legislature grappled with basic issues that jeopardized access to quality education. The body passed an extensive Child Welfare Act that restricted the employment of New Mexico's children that established age limits and maximum hours of work allowed, and established an executive government position to ensure compliance with the law.⁶⁶ The legislature understood that curriculum was a concern secondary to putting children in the classroom.

Bilingual education remained, perhaps, the most important day-to-day operational issue in New Mexico's schools. Removing Spanish from schools seemed like an expeditious way of "Americanizing" the population during the territorial period, but reformers of the 1920s experimented with bringing the language back in

⁶⁵ "Statement on Education," November 19, 1928. Governor Richard C. Dillon Papers, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico, box 1, folder 25.

⁶⁶ *Laws of the State of New Mexico Passed by the Seventh Regular Session of Legislature of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: Valiant Printing Co., 1925), Chapter 79.

the classroom. Surveys of the quality of education in the state revealed that far too many children fell behind the rest of the nation, especially in reading. The 1923 School Code removed any mention of language from the required teaching methods, leaving many teachers free to use whatever means they found best to convey information to their pupils.⁶⁷ More local autonomy at the classroom level made uniform methods and curriculum nearly impossible.

Surrounded by states where fundamentalists battled modernists over the issue of evolution around the time of the Scopes trial, antievolution sentiment in New Mexico remained largely muted. As a reflection of the state's overall reaction, the newspaper media covered and discussed the Scopes trial, but it refrained from applying the concern to New Mexico. The state's rural and religious publications tended to support Bryan more than the urban-based secular papers, but none expressed a desire to incite controversy during or after the trial. The spirit of reform in the secular public school system of New Mexico only helped to temper the flames of fundamentalism from cropping up within the educational system. Although twenty state legislatures debated thirty-seven antievolution bills between 1921 and 1929, New Mexico was not among them.

As in all of the other states of the Southwest, however, the Southern Baptist community in New Mexico continued to harbor the passion and will to combat modernism, should it crop up. In 1926, the *Baptist New Mexican* printed an article by Reverend Fred Clark entitled "Incomplete Scholarship." Clark denounced modern science:

⁶⁷ Lynne Marie Getz, *Schools of Their Own: The Education of Hispanos in New Mexico, 1850-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 36-38.

The Bible is the only trustworthy textbook on science or philosophy; all other books on these and allied topics are only collateral reading, and a lot of the collateral reading is mere trash. Let the skeptics hoot and the evolutionists shrug their shoulders, but let Baptist scholars, men who know God, let them build an altar on Mt. Carmel and put to shame the Priests of heresy, and then the heavens will shower the countryside with blessing undiminished . . . there is too great a readiness on the part of outstanding scholars among the church leaders to compromise with skepticism, evolution, and infidelity, when science is under consideration.⁶⁸

Firm opposition to evolution served as a hallmark of Southern Baptist beliefs in the 1920s. The Baptists in New Mexico held plenty of antievolution sentiment.

However, it required a spark greater than the highly publicized Scopes trial to ignite it. The Baptist community's efforts to turn New Mexico into a battleground for an antievolution controversy will be discussed in the following chapter.

After the Scopes trial, the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* declared that "the search for knowledge, scientific and religious, will go on eternally and as new truths are developed in either field there must be an adjustment with the old. The trial at Dayton was merely an incident in the constant struggle to adjust new truths to old beliefs."⁶⁹ As the "constant struggle" adapted to new realities, the forces of modernization and Americanization in New Mexico worked to further connect the controversy to the state. Still, the intense, yet detached, interest in the evolution controversy and the Scopes trial planted the seeds for a minor conflict in the late 1920s and for even greater debates later in the twentieth century.

⁶⁸ *Baptist New Mexican*, 18 February 1926.

⁶⁹ *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 23 July 1925.

Chapter 2

The 1927 Evolution Controversy: Southern Baptists and Advertising the State of New Mexico

At the 1927 National Southern Baptist Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, church leaders asked the president of the Convention to form a committee of five to investigate the “perplexing situation” in New Mexico. The situation seemed especially disconcerting due to “the insignificant Baptist constituency in the state of New Mexico, and the strong Roman Catholic environment in which this state must build its future.”⁷⁰ The committee intended to assess the “educational and missionary conditions,” in order to give recommendations to ensure that Southern Baptists approached the situation in the most advantageous way. The possibilities of further extending the Baptist faith into the American Southwest remained alluring. The proposal noted, “Southern Baptists face an opportunity to construct a Baptist commonwealth out on our far flung western horizon. May our land of the setting sun shine in the twilight with the brightness of the sun of righteousness.”⁷¹ Baptists residing in the state knew the stakes all too well. When confronted by a proposal to mandate the teaching of evolution in the state in early 1927, New Mexico’s Baptists rallied to combat it.

Other groups with interests in New Mexico focused on harnessing more material opportunities available in the state. The numerous Chambers of Commerce and advertising clubs in New Mexico hoped to attract tourists and permanent residents to bolster business and transform the state into a more modern destination

⁷⁰ *Baptist New Mexican*, 21 April 1927.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

point. According to many influential leaders at the time, not only did the state's infrastructure—such as roads and schools—need to be vastly expanded but the cultural image held by those outside the state required transformation as well. Commercially minded New Mexicans sought a popular nickname for the state and pushed for “The Sunshine State”—but they explored other more innovative and controversial ideas as well.⁷² One reform called for the complete renaming of the state. Another sought to take advantage of the antievolution laws in neighboring states and establish New Mexico as a land of scientific exploration, where public schools *required* the teaching of evolution. Within this setting, New Mexico lived through a sudden, but fleeting, controversy over evolution in the late 1920s. The proponents of modern science and business initiated the evolution mandate proposal in hopes of presenting New Mexico as a progressive American state with a bright economic future. Southern Baptists, however, believed that the mandate was a challenge to their faith and were not prepared to sacrifice their Christian beliefs for the possibility of material gain.

Early in 1927, events unfolded to expose briefly the passionate antievolution sentiment in the Baptist community of New Mexico. On January 29, the *New Mexico State Tribune*, printed in Albuquerque, reported that preliminary drafts of two bills—supported by two anonymous Albuquerque commercial organizations—were in preparation for consideration by the State Legislature. The first measure proposed changing the state's name from “New Mexico” to either “Golconda” or “Eldorado.”

⁷² Albuquerque and New Mexico Pamphlet Collection, Center for Southwest Research, General Library, University of New Mexico, box 1, folder 3. Most of the materials used to advertise both Albuquerque and the state of New Mexico in general paid particular attention to the number of sunny days in a year. Hereafter the Center for Southwest Research will be referred to as CSWR.

Both proposed replacement names referred to abundant wealth, a theme pushed by the commercial organizations. The other bill called for the mandatory inclusion of evolution in the science curriculum of the state's public schools. The *Tribune* reported on the front-page:

Two Bills shortly to be introduced in the State legislature are expected to touch off stores of oratorical thunder hitherto untapped by that body. Committees from two Albuquerque commercial organizations were bending over tentative drafts of the measures at 2 p.m. Saturday.

If these preliminary drafts are closely followed, one bill will call for a change of the state's name. Framers of the bill set forth that "New Mexico" carries a mental association in the minds of people outside the state that this commonwealth is a part of the republic of Old Mexico and not part of the United States. The names "Golconda" and "Eldorado" are suggested in the measure as more fittingly descriptive.

The second measure to be sponsored by the local organizations calls for the compulsory teaching of evolution in all public schools and universities. The committees advance the argument that evolution is being taught in a surreptitious manner and that it might as well be done above-board. Also, they claim it would have the effect of drawing heavily on populations elsewhere, since there are many people who subscribe to the belief.⁷³

Both pieces of potential legislation aimed at improving the state's image in the rest of the nation and at attracting the "right kind" of people and businesses. The report named the source of the information as the secretary of the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, a Mr. Carr. Carr explicitly denied any involvement by the Chamber of Commerce in drafting the measures but claimed to have direct knowledge of budding plans in other organizations. The *Tribune* regretted that "efforts to ascertain what two organizations are behind the bills were fruitless."⁷⁴

Another New Mexican paper, however, *The Santa Rosa News*, reported on February 11, 1927 that "the Albuquerque Advertising Club has launched a movement to

⁷³ *New Mexico State Tribune*, 29 January 1927. This information appeared in an article titled, "Bills Changing Name of New Mexico And Providing For The Compulsory Teaching of Evolution Are Prepared."

⁷⁴ Ibid.

change the name of the State of New Mexico to Coolidge. After a discussion in a recent meeting of the club, a resolution was unanimously adopted, indorsing a bill that had been prepared and will be presented to the legislature.”⁷⁵ Whether one of the anonymous organizations in the first report was indeed the Albuquerque Advertising Club remained uncertain. At the very least, commercial organizations in Albuquerque explored the possibility of introducing legislation to improve the appeal of the state to outsiders. Some clearly seized on mandating the teaching of evolution in New Mexico’s public schools as a means to that end. They may have even floated the story to newspapermen to gauge public reaction. The *New Mexico State Tribune’s* assertion that the story would cause controversy proved prophetic.

Many New Mexicans denounced both ideas in no uncertain terms. The proposal to change the name of the state met immediate disapproval from both the general public and from the leaders of the government. One woman, Eloisa Armijo y Chavez, quickly penned a letter to Governor Richard C. Dillon to protest the name change. Interestingly, Armijo y Chavez sent her passionate letter all the way from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she had heard the news.

Sir!-

I request you to exert your influence to prevent a change in the name of our state of New Mexico in reverence to the memory of our native citizens of Spanish extraction who suffered derision – privations – defamation and death . . . and especially to those who at great hazard and personal discomfort were compelled to take charge of the commerce previous to the coming of the rail road and who were never repaid because of losses incurred by Indian depredations – prairie fires – floods and fraud.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *The Santa Rosa News*, 11 February 1927.

⁷⁶ “Eloisa Armijo y Chavez to Gov. of New Mexico,” February 3, 1927, Governor Richard C. Dillon Papers, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico, box 1, folder 29. Hereafter the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives will be referred to as NMSRCA.

Armijo y Chavez relented somewhat, by stating that if the state's name truly required change, she preferred something honoring President Abraham Lincoln, because he "suffered martyrdom not only to free the slaves but (as I understand) for equality of opportunity!"⁷⁷ Governor Dillon replied that he was of like mind, noting that "here in New Mexico we have not regarded this proposition as being at all serious; in fact, it has about blown over now -- simply newspaper talk."⁷⁸ Just as Dillon predicted, the idea evaporated. Although the Eighth New Mexico Legislature remained in session at this time in Santa Fe, the question of changing the state's name received no further attention. Meanwhile, in Albuquerque, a different influential group took aim at the evolution legislation rumored to be brewing in the minds of Albuquerque's commercially minded citizens.

On January 30, 1927, the very day after the *New Mexico State Tribune* ran the first article reporting on the planned legislation, the Baptist Church of Albuquerque adopted an "Anti-Evolution Resolution." Printed in the *Baptist New Mexican* on February 3, the document stated that the Baptists of Albuquerque passed the Resolution without a dissenting vote.⁷⁹ The firm language of the Resolution reveals the deeply held resentment by Albuquerque's Baptists toward this particular legislation, as well as their disdain for evolutionary science in general.

The following resolutions were adopted by the First Baptist Church of Albuquerque without a dissenting vote at the morning service on Sunday, January 30, 1927.

Since it has been brought to our attention that a bill now in process of formation is to be introduced in the State Legislature of New Mexico calling

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Governor Richard C. Dillon to Miss Chavez," date unknown, Governor Richard C. Dillon Papers, NMSRCA, box1, folder 29.

⁷⁹ *Baptist New Mexican*, 3 February 1927.

for compulsory teaching of evolution in all public schools and universities of the State; and

Since the doctrine of evolution as commonly held has not, and cannot be proven, but is merely a theory; and

Since we believe it to be in direct opposition to the Bible teachings concerning the origin of man, and that the Bible as God's Word is the original history of the beginnings of the human race; and

Since we accept God's Word and God's history in preference to any and all man-made theories; and

Since we believe that this theory tends to corrupt the morals of man, in that it teaches his relationship to the lower animals, thus giving undue emphasis to what is generally termed his brute nature, which attitude in the end tends to destroy the sanctity of the home and the marriage relation; and

Since it leads to a belief in the non-existence of hell and tends toward cultivating the thought of no future punishment for man's sin, which we regard as instrumental in helping to break down moral law and the proper respect for all law; and

Since such a law would be opposed to the great American ideals of religious liberty in that it would force people to teach a doctrine which they believe to be directly opposed to the teachings of God's Word and their conscientious religious belief; and

Since the enforcement of such a law would thus discriminate against many of our best citizens because of their religious convictions; and

Since such a law would, instead of increasing the population, make our fair state a hiss and a by-word amongst honest persons of other states, not merely those who would be opposed to the doctrine of evolution, but all who have a true conception of fair play and who believe in religious liberty;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

First, that the First Baptist Church of Albuquerque, New Mexico, with a membership of about 800, and with a constituency of about 2,000, at a regular Sunday morning service, hereby places itself on record by standing vote as unalterably opposed to the doctrine of evolution as commonly held and taught.

Second, that we protest most vigorously against the passage of any law that would force the teaching of this damnable heresy, thus discriminating against thousands of Baptists in the State, as well as many thousands of other people who do not believe in this foolish man-made theory.

Third, that we earnestly call upon all fair minded and liberty loving people to join with us in this protest.

Fourth, that a copy of these resolutions be given to both Albuquerque daily papers and to the Baptist New Mexican with a request for their publication, and that copies be furnished the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, as well as to all the representatives of Bernalillo County in the State Legislature.

Fifth, that a committee be appointed and a definitive move inaugurated at once to inform all the Baptists of New Mexico to arouse them to the seriousness of this situation.⁸⁰

Local papers reprinted the Baptists' Resolution as requested. The Baptists of Albuquerque deliberately made their plea not only to other Baptists but to all "fair minded and liberty loving people." Most responses to the Resolution, however, came from other Baptists. The state-wide circulation of the *Baptist New Mexican* prompted Baptists all across the region to express the support of their local congregations. Members of the First Baptist Church of Hope, New Mexico, wrote the editor of the Baptist publication stating that they "heartily endorse and adopt your resolutions regarding the teaching of Evolution in the schools of the state." Other Baptist churches in New Mexico also quickly fell in line. The editor of the *Baptist New Mexican* noted, "We have had a number of churches which passed resolutions something like the one above. Our people certainly got busy."⁸¹ Representative Albert Simms, who was supposed to introduce the legislation according to the *New Mexico State Tribune*, denied the report that he had been involved with the proposals. He did so in a letter printed in the same edition of the *Baptist New Mexican* as was the Resolution. In the section entitled "That Evolution Bill," the paper explained:

The New Mexico State Tribune of last Saturday gave considerable prominence to an article in which it was stated a bill would be introduced into the present State Legislature to compel the teaching of evolution in the public schools of the State and other State educational institutions. The article stated that such a movement would give New Mexico considerable advertising and attract many people to this state from states where there is more anti-evolution sentiment. . . . Believing that we expressed the sentiment of the Baptists of the State, we wrote Mr. Simms our protest against the bill. We have a splendid letter from Mr. Simms today, in which he denies that he has had any connection whatever with such a bill and expresses his regret that his name

⁸⁰ *Baptist New Mexican*, 3 February 1927.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1927.

has been connected with the movement and that he had not been consulted about such a bill and knew nothing about it. . . .

We do not know whether there are members of the Legislature who would be willing to introduce such a bill or not, but if there are organizations working to get such a bill introduced it is nothing but right that our people make protest. Such a thing might be possible as there being no further steps taken regarding the bill. Sometimes such things are just newspaper talk.⁸²

The *Baptist New Mexican* dismissed the possibility of a pro-evolution law in the same way that Governor Dillon brushed aside the measure to change the state's name—as simply “newspaper talk.” Two days before Simms' denial appeared in the Baptist publication, he addressed the New Mexico House of Representatives in Santa Fe to convince his fellow representatives of the same thing. In response to what Simms described as “being deluged with letters” from his friends, “who take this unauthorized story as a serious matter,” he denied any connection with, or knowledge of, a bill mandating evolution. Simms echoed Governor Dillon and the *Baptist New Mexican* by stating, “my personal opinion is that the story which appears to have originated with the secretary of the Albuquerque chamber of commerce, is a hoax designed for the purpose of trying to get some advertising of an unenviable nature for the good of the state.”⁸³ The Baptist Resolution and the letters Simms received left no room for interpretation about overall public opinion on the matter. Simms was wise to categorically deny any association with the measure.

The combined outrage over both the evolution mandate proposal and the name-change idea immediately turned on the Albuquerque Advertising Club. Albuquerque resident G. A. M. Wilson declared to the editor of the *Santa Fe New*

⁸² Ibid., 3 February 1927.

⁸³ Santa Fe New Mexican, 2 February 1927. From an article titled “Simms Denies He Has Monkey Bill.”

Mexican, “The Ad Club does not by any means represent Albuquerque in this crazy stunt. Let our fair state of New Mexico understand this, for already on every side out of town citizens are meeting we Albuquerque residents with, ‘what is the matter with you Albuquerque folk, are you crazy?’”⁸⁴ The *Roswell Record* confirmed that “that Ad club over at Albuquerque is off its feed.”⁸⁵ In an effort to attract Americans from other states, the Albuquerque commercial organizations that supported these two ideas alienated the citizens of their own state.

Opposition to an evolution-mandate bill continued even after Simms’s denial on the floor of the legislature. Mimicking the Baptists of Albuquerque’s Resolution, the Baptist congregation from Hot Springs, New Mexico, wrote the New Mexico Senate to express their “hearty detestation of this awful heresy.” The Hot Springs resolution kept the evolution issue lingering in the legislature. In a letter to the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, an anonymous observer, who preferred to be known simply as “A. Listener,” highlighted the pointlessness of discussing a bill that no one intended to introduce:

I happened to be at the senate the other day and listened to a resolution of protest addressed to our legislators opposed by the First Baptist Church of Hot Springs. It seems there is a bill pending making the teaching of evolution in our schools compulsory. It is to be feared that if any serious attention is paid to this bill the unseemly spectacle of our legislators fighting a man of straw is very likely to happen.

Does it seem necessary to point out that “Evolution” (which name covers a number of things) cannot be taught at any school or college. What our teachers must be teaching in our schools is some elementary science, elementary embryology, or biology, or even geology. It seems too funny for words to suppose that anyone would object to the teaching of the facts of up-to-date science. Why do we send our children to school if it is not to learn

⁸⁴ Ibid., 5 February 1927, 8. This excerpt came from a letter to the editor from G. A. M. Wilson of Albuquerque.

⁸⁵ Ibid., The *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported on the reaction of various state papers to the name-change proposal.

facts? If any youngster deduces from these facts any theory, as the great majority of our scientists do, who can prevent them.⁸⁶

This observer's desire to remain anonymous indicates that the evolution issue had become acrimonious. Given the outcry from the Baptists and citizens across the state, it is no wonder that Representative Simms, a Republican, wished to dissociate himself quickly from any legislation of this kind.

Simms proved to be an adroit politician. He rose all the way to the United States Congress by 1929 before being swept out in the initial tide of the Great Depression. During his time in Congress, however, Simms championed the causes of science and advertising in New Mexico. He introduced the bill that made Carlsbad Caverns, in the southeastern corner of the state, a National Park. In his speech to the United States Congress celebrating the measure, Simms revealed his staunch support for science and his thorough knowledge of the geological processes that had created the caverns:

Mr. Speaker, time is for mortals but not for the processes of nature. Doubtless through millions of years the infinite, patient, and powerful action of nature through erosion by subterranean waters has been used to produce this present sublime group of caverns. For the speaker it is a pleasant and happy thought to think that he has been able to be the humble instrument for the creation of the Carlsbad Caverns National Park, which is now established to perpetually furnish interest to the scientist and tourist alike.⁸⁷

Simms's address to Congress clearly showed that he did not subscribe to the literal interpretation of the Bible in regard to the age of the Earth. He also expressed the importance that Carlsbad Caverns would have to science and to attracting people

⁸⁶ Ibid., 11 February 1927. From an article titled "Baptists Agin [*sic*] Evolution."

⁸⁷ "Extension of Remarks of Hon. Albert G. Simms of New Mexico in the House of Representatives," 9 May 1930, Governor Richard C. Dillon Papers, NMSRCA, box 1, folder 13. Simms included his remarks to the United States Congress in a letter to Governor Dillon on June 14, 1930.

to the state. Both of these goals correlated directly with the potential piece of state legislation mandating evolution a few years earlier. Clearly Simms was not a fundamentalist. He supported science and commerce in New Mexico and it is not inconceivable that the commercial organizations implicated in the *New Mexico State Tribune's* story planned to count on Simms's leadership, should sufficient support for the idea of compulsory teaching of evolution surface. The Albuquerque Commercial Club sold its building in the downtown area in 1932. The building that replaced it, the "Simms Building," became New Mexico's first modern international style high-rise building. It stills stands today bearing the name of the man who bought it from the Club—Albert G. Simms.⁸⁸ The reaction of New Mexico's Baptists to the idea probably convinced Simms, and the organizations implicated, that a quick retreat from, and denial of, the rumored legislation would be the safest course of action.

New Mexico's newspapers printed nothing further on the topic of legislation mandating the teaching of evolution after the second week of February 1927. The immediate outcry from the Baptist community forced the architects to shelve the measure and search for new ideas to attract newcomers and reformulate the image of the state. New Mexico's advertising and commercial organizations returned to more traditional methods of improving the state's educational system.

The business leaders in the city of Albuquerque produced numerous pamphlets during the 1920s. All were intended to entice Americans to relocate to the city, a haven for tuberculosis sufferers and a place where one could become

⁸⁸ This information can be found on the plaque outside of the Simms Building on 400 Gold Ave SW, Albuquerque, NM, 87102. The Simms Building is in the National Register of Historic Places.

successful in business and raise a family.⁸⁹ New Mexico's Baptists returned to the more pressing challenges of maintaining their somewhat tenuous foothold in the largely Catholic state. Clear from the challenges facing New Mexico's Baptists is that concerns other than evolution superseded their desire to combat modernism in the public school system.

The Southern Baptist Convention's expansion from the Bible Belt states into the Southwest forged important doctrinal continuities between the two regions in the 1920s. As indicated by the evolution controversies in New Mexico's neighboring states, Southern Baptist leaders often initiated the push to bring antievolution laws before state legislatures in the West. New Mexico's Baptist leaders did not initiate a call for antievolution legislation in the 1920s, but they did share a common distaste for what they perceived as "modernism." In August 1912, the Southern Baptist Convention officially shifted the Baptist Convention of New Mexico away from the Northern Baptists, which had founded most of the early institutions.⁹⁰ The Southern Baptist takeover provoked hostile schisms in existing churches and brought forth bitter accusations. Pro-Southern Baptist advocates stirred up the passion of New Mexico's Baptists by charging that Northern Baptists were largely modernists who preached with "all the doctrinal unsoundness of Chicago University."⁹¹ The affiliation of New Mexico's Baptists with the Southern Baptist Convention ensured a

⁸⁹ Albuquerque and New Mexico Pamphlet Collection, CSWR, box 1, folders 3 and 4. See "Albuquerque: Commercial Center of New Mexico," 1925, Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce. See also, "Putting 4-Wheel Brakes on Tuberculosis," 1925, Albuquerque Civic Council; and, "A Greater Albuquerque: Four Years of Progress 1926-1929," 1930 compiled by Robt. L. Cooper, City Manager.

⁹⁰ Daniel R. Carnett, *Contending for the Faith: Southern Baptists in New Mexico, 1938-1995* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 24.

⁹¹ Stephen Martin Stookey, "The Impact of Landmarkism upon Southern Baptist Western Geographical Expansion" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994), 132. This quotation Stookey attributed to Eugene Perry Alldredge, a central figure in the Southern Baptist takeover of New Mexico.

foundation of belief, including literal interpretations of the Bible and the autonomy of the local church, in preserving Baptist fundamentals.

Understanding the concept of local autonomy is central to comprehending the work of Southern Baptists in New Mexico. The local Baptist church was said to have “no organic relation to any other church or governing assembly from local churches.” The affiliation with a state and national convention was “voluntary, and for advisory and administrative purposes only.”⁹² In fact, histories of the Southern Baptist expansion into the West note the great importance of Landmark ideology, which argued “the local, visible church as the lone institution possessing the right and responsibility to administer Christ’s commands.”⁹³ The ideal of a local, autonomous church sheds light on some of the reasons that Baptists did not instigate an antievolution conflict in New Mexico in 1927. Local churches received advice from the state and national conventions but could invoke their right to carry on the faith in any the manner they saw fit. Several concerns, other than evolution, consumed the thoughts and actions of the many autonomous Baptist churches in New Mexico.

During the height of America’s evolution debate, Southern Baptists struggled to simply stay afloat in New Mexico, thus preventing any large-scale public pronouncements of antievolution sentiment. Recognizing the challenges that Baptists in the state faced in the 1920s, a representative from the Oklahoma Baptist Convention, Reverend J. B. Rounds, referred to New Mexico as “the one remaining

⁹² Howard R. Steward, *Baptists and Local Autonomy: The Development, Distortions, Decline and New Directions of Local Autonomy in Baptist Churches* (Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1974), 45.

⁹³ Stookey, *The Impact of Landmarkism*, 69.

destitute frontier field, helpless and lost without liberal aid from her sister states.”⁹⁴

Another observer of the situation stated: “The loyal little band of Baptists in New Mexico has put one of the bravest fights known by our people in modern times. No state has labored under greater difficulties and possibly none have made greater progress.”⁹⁵ But great progress in New Mexico required many small steps first.

A large majority of the state’s population, 81 percent practiced Roman Catholicism. Therefore, Baptists found local financial assistance hard to come by. Only 4 percent of the population was associated with the Southern Baptist Church.⁹⁶ In Oklahoma, where Southern Baptists championed the antievolution cause, they comprised the largest denomination—23 percent of all religious adherents.⁹⁷ Protestant hostility towards the Catholic Church remained palpable in 1920s New Mexico. The Southern Baptist affiliation helped stoke the flames of mistrust between the two faiths. As the editor of the *Alabama Baptist* wrote the *Baptist New Mexican* in 1925:

Where then are the one people who stand squarely against all errors of Romanism? Where are the people who ideally at least point backward to the pure and undefiled Christianity of the New Testament? Where are the people who put these doctrines into practice in their churches without admixture of Romanism? They are found in the independent democratic organizations scattered over Christendom and known as Baptist churches.⁹⁸

The small Baptist population in New Mexico also meant that the denomination faced economic difficulties in supporting the institutions they had recently created. At the beginning of the 1920s, only thirteen of the Baptist churches

⁹⁴ *Baptist New Mexican*, 21 April 1927.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 June 1925.

⁹⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Religious Bodies*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1926), 44. Out of 215, 563 citizens, only 9,570 claimed by the Southern Baptist Convention; 174,287 reported as Catholic.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* Of 581,083 citizens in Oklahoma, the Southern Baptist Convention claimed 131,139.

⁹⁸ *Baptist New Mexican*, 16 July 1925.

in the entire state operated without financial assistance from the Convention. The New Mexico Baptists' Orphan's home relied upon constant fundraisers to meet financial needs by the late 1920s.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, New Mexico's Baptists strove to create a college, a children's home, and a hospital throughout the decade. In the 1920s, the Baptists of New Mexico focused on building the infrastructure through which they could practice a modified social gospel. Albuquerque's First Baptist Church gained 302 new members between the years 1924 and 1925 alone.¹⁰⁰ In 1920 Clovis Baptists built a brand new hospital that remained self-sufficient until 1939.¹⁰¹ In the face of daunting challenges, the Baptists made tangible progress. New Mexico's Southern Baptist leadership urged its followers to fight the forces of modernism, specifically in public schools, by supporting teacher-training at Baptist Montezuma College and by spreading the Word of God—not by supporting antievolution legislation.

In 1921, Montezuma College opened in Las Vegas, New Mexico. The new college accepted 231 students in the first year, with the support of the Southern Baptist Convention.¹⁰² Baptist leaders in the state championed the importance of this institution. In an attempt to attract donations to keep Montezuma in operation, the *Baptist New Mexican* declared: "It is impossible to give our young people the proper training, unless we provide Christian teachers. . . . Montezuma College trains teachers along safe and sane lines."¹⁰³ During a fundraising drive in 1927, the paper

⁹⁹ Carnett, *Contending for the Faith*, 25-26.

¹⁰⁰ *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 21 July 1925. Information from article titled "Reception Given at Baptist Church for 302 New Members."

¹⁰¹ Carnett, *Contending for the Faith*, 27.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 18 June 1925.

reiterated: “We need the right kind of men and women in our public schools. . . . There is no limit or law on living the Christian life. That is what our Montezuma students do.”¹⁰⁴ The *Baptist New Mexican* went further to explain how Montezuma influenced the state’s public schools in the desired way, but carefully pointed out that no violation of the church and state arrangement was necessary:

Secular education knows what to do with the mind and body but not with the soul. Montezuma, as a Christian school, deals with this also. The danger in any so-called educational process is in the neglect, or failure to take account of the whole man . . . of what value to search into the mysteries of life under the guidance of an individual or institution, that fails to recognize that it is in God that we live and move and have our being. . . . herein Montezuma has her influence upon the public schools in that she sends out men and women as teachers, who have had the three-fold training, and naturally let it shine in their lives, though they may not teach it in the school room.¹⁰⁵

The fifth annual “Montezuma Assembly” of New Mexico’s Baptists took place during the Scopes trial in July 1925 on the Montezuma campus. The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* covered the gathering and reported that the Assembly “[was] held with splendid attendance and interest.”¹⁰⁶ The fact that Reverend Lester F. Sage retained his presidency over the Convention in a re-election indicates that Baptists in the state were satisfied with his leadership.¹⁰⁷ Had they desired a more fundamentalist approach in 1925, they would have replaced Sage. The Southern Baptists seemed content with their plan of reforming the state through the Christian training of teachers.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 3 March 1927.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 19 May 1927.

¹⁰⁶ *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, 13 July 1925. The information from the “Montezuma Assembly” comes from an article titled, “Baptist People From All Over the State Hear Addresses by Prominent Men in Church; College Grows.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Still, significant opposition to the scientific community and to modernism did exist in the Baptist community of New Mexico. In some cases, opposition to evolution travelled with Baptists hailing from states where public debates had recently raged. Reverend W. E. Wright moved to New Mexico to become the pastor of the congregation in Raton in the fall of 1925. Wright relocated from Texas, where he had served as editor of the *Southeast Texas Messenger*. When asked to introduce himself to the Baptists in the state by answering a few questions for the *Baptist New Mexican*, the new pastor wrote: “Touching the issues which you mentioned (evolution, alien immersion, open communion, etc.), in theology and ecclesiology, I am by conviction and training of the regular Southern Baptist type. I am for our Southern Baptist Institutions and Program out to the end. As to evolution, modernism, etc., I am opposed to the whole tribe and believe all our institutions and leaders should be committed to an aggressive, uncompromising opposition to the same.”¹⁰⁸ The paper also included a rhyme which it attributed to Reverend Wright: “There’s nothing in the monkey’s style that makes appeal to me; there’s nothing of his fiendish guilt upon my family tree.”¹⁰⁹ In the wake of the Scopes trial, Wright clearly believed that taking a firm stance against evolution and modernism was the surest way to prove to the Baptists in New Mexico that he was a dedicated man of the faith.

The *Baptist New Mexican* held firm to the notion that an aggressive opposition to evolution was unnecessary. In asking for pastors to send in Bible passages to the publication, the editor noted: “The average student is reading much these days on

¹⁰⁸ *Baptist New Mexican*, 24 September 1925.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

both sides of the evolution controversy. It seems that the best answer to evolution is faithful and regular reading of God's Word. Many of the 'ills' and 'isms' of this day could be successfully overthrown if God's people were only true to His Word."¹¹⁰

The Baptists of New Mexico seemed content to battle the forces of modernism through Christian education and the reading and preaching of the Bible. Antievolution legislation would only serve as a distraction from that path.

Other Protestant denominations felt the impact of limited human and economic resources as well. The Presbyterians, for example, adopted similar strategies for soul-winning in New Mexico. In 1927 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States assessed the situation and reported:

In New Mexico, the people are sixty-five percent Spanish, and most of them are retarded. . . . In the cities, they are too much inclined to make politics their business, while on farms, the economic problems are yearly becoming more acute. . . . While problems have been growing more acute, the reductions in our budget have given us year by year a smaller force with which to cope with them. At the present time practically half of our churches in the state of New Mexico are without pastoral care.¹¹¹

Much like the Baptists, the Presbyterians focused on Christian education and training as the most important step towards improving the situation in New Mexico. The creation of two boarding schools, one for girls in Santa Fe and the other for boys in Albuquerque, strove to give "the boys and girls from the backward community an opportunity for a Christian education and, second, what is very closely associated with the first, the development of individual Christian leaders."¹¹² The school administrators banned the use of Spanish except on "special occasions" to ensure that

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 27 August 1925.

¹¹¹ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, 1927, Menaul School Archives, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 164-166.

¹¹² *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, 1925, Menaul School Archives, 193.

pupils developed their skills in the English language. Presbyterian leaders believed that the Catholic Church was ineffective at educating and cultivating future Christian leaders. Instead, the Church fostered “illiteracy, superstition and the evils attendant upon a generally low standard of living.”¹¹³ The high school curriculum at Menaul School in Albuquerque included one year of general science and one year of chemistry, but no biology courses.¹¹⁴ The “Menaul School Bulletin,” printed by the school for boys in Albuquerque, carefully noted that “Menaul does not encroach upon the public schools, rather it has been of great help, supplying many teachers all over the state.”¹¹⁵ It is likely, given the curriculum at Menaul, that students were given no background in evolutionary biology upon graduation. The Presbyterians, like the state’s Baptists, pushed for “Christian leaders” in New Mexico’s public schools, but not for overt Christian doctrine. The more moderate Presbyterians were unlikely to lead an antievolution crusade, especially due to the limited resources available and the number of problems afflicting the state.

The Methodists followed a similar path. The pastor of the Methodist congregation in Gallup, New Mexico, wrote the *Gallup Independent*: “The great thinkers of our country are coming to recognize that the American church school is one of the greatest factors in the solution of our wave of youthful criminals.”¹¹⁶ New Mexico’s Protestant leaders focused on building up their own forces for education, not on interfering with the public schools. The potential Protestant allies of the Baptists in combating the “menace of evolution” were just as busy carving out a

¹¹³ Ibid., 182.

¹¹⁴ “Menaul School Bulletin,” vol. 4 no. 3, March 1921. Menaul School Archives. See section titled “High School Curriculum.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid., See section titled “Organization and Aim.”

¹¹⁶ *Gallup Independent*, 29 May 1925.

foundation for their own denominations. Although education remained essential to that foundation, antievolution sentiment remained largely muted.

The Eighth New Mexico Legislature of 1927 convened between January 11 and March 12. No bills concerning evolution passed, or even received serious discussion, despite the newspaper articles and Baptist “Antievolution Resolution.” New Mexico also inaugurated Richard Charles Dillon as the state’s eighth governor on January 1, 1927. Dillon’s successful campaign slogan, “Education, Good Roads, and Advertizing the State's Resources,” highlighted the priorities in the political climate of 1927 New Mexico.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, all three subjects in the slogan related to issues that New Mexico’s commercial organizations had advocated with vigor. The rumor of pro-evolution legislation was said to be prompted by a desire to advertise the state. Dillon’s platform and personal history as an entrepreneur suggest that he may have been open to pro-evolution legislation, had the response not been so negative. As a politician, Dillon probably altogether avoided the controversial issue, a choice he could make because of the legislature’s other priorities. An examination of his record and that of other New Mexican leaders and organizations can help illuminate why the position of neither the pro-evolution commercial organizations nor the antievolution Baptists ever received serious consideration in the state.

During his term as governor, Dillon actively promoted the state of New Mexico to businessmen across the nation. His article titled “New Mexico, an Undeveloped Empire” aimed at informing those outside the state of the abundant natural resources in New Mexico, as well as its growing infrastructure in roads and

¹¹⁷ Charles B. Judah, *Governor Richard C. Dillon: A Study in New Mexico Politics* (Albuquerque: Division of Research of the Department of Government of the University of New Mexico, 1948), 18.

schools.¹¹⁸ At a banquet in Chicago, Illinois, in 1929, Dillon declared, “We realize that good schools and good roads are two fundamentals for the building of a state, not only for our own welfare and happiness but to establish a sound basis combined with our resources upon which we may conscientiously invite desirable people to come and cast their lot with us and build their homes.”¹¹⁹ “Desirable” people wanted good education and Governor Dillon was committed to creating a more effective and modern public school system in New Mexico. In a 1928 statement on education, Dillon endorsed the following:

The right kind of education not only instructs our boys and girls in reading, writing and arithmetic, but teaches love of God and country, instills the principle of law and order, obedience to parents and constituted authority, temperance in all things, and self-control, honesty, industry, thrift and cleanliness, loyalty and patriotism, love and veneration for the American flag as the symbol of our mighty, free, honorable and prosperous nation.¹²⁰

The religious community in New Mexico could agree with Dillon’s statement that education should instill a “love of God.” This position and any others like it that Dillon made on education surely convinced Baptists that he could be trusted. Antievolutionists would charge that the theory of man’s descent from common biological ancestry, in the words of the Baptist Resolution, would be supporting “a doctrine which they believe to be directly opposed to the teachings of God’s Word and their conscientious religious belief.” The idea of religious texts in the schools, of course, was illegal, and any teacher caught doing so faced a stiff penalty, as stipulated by the New Mexico School Code originally adopted in 1923:

¹¹⁸ Secretary of Governor Dillon, to Mr. A. N. Sewell, 8 December 1930, Richard Charles Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 15, folder 11.

¹¹⁹ “Address of Governor R.C. Dillon of New Mexico,” Richard Charles Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 1, folder 6. Governor Dillon delivered this address at the Valmora Reception and Banquet, Stevens Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, 20 November 1929.

¹²⁰ “Statement on Education,” 19 November 1928, Governor Richard C. Dillon Papers, NMSRCA, box 1, folder 25.

No teacher shall use any sectarian or denominational books in the schools, or teach sectarian doctrine in the schools, and any teacher violating the provisions of this section shall be immediately discharged, his certificate to teach school revoked, and be forever barred from receiving any school moneys and employment in the public schools in the state.¹²¹

Governor Dillon's statement on education stressed patriotic and moral themes but made no mention of science or evolution in the state's public schools. Instead, another perceived evil and danger to the state's children took precedence in 1927—the production and sale of liquor.

Debates over the enforcement of Prohibition far outweighed demands for antievolution legislation in the late 1920s. Liquor, it seems, loomed as a far more destructive force to introduce to the youths of New Mexico than the notion that their species had somehow evolved from other primate forms. Governor Dillon received pressure from the citizens of New Mexico. One letter from New Mexico resident R. J. Brown told the Governor, "I feel that it is our duty to see that a law of some kind to prevent the boot-leggers from preying on our children be passed." Defending the state's children from the menace of spirituous liquors, according to this citizen, required not just any law, but a "law with teeth in it."¹²² The Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution allowed for concurrent laws by states for enforcement of prohibition. Unlike his predecessor, Democratic governor Arthur T. Hannett, who had vetoed a bill outlining strict prohibition laws, the Republican Dillon supported stringent prohibition laws and maintained close contact with the New

¹²¹ *New Mexico School Code*, 1927, State Documents, New Mexico State Library, Santa Fe, Section 1102.

¹²² R.J. Brown, to Governor Richard C. Dillon, collection of correspondence relating to legislation in 1927, Governor Richard C. Dillon Papers, NMSRCA, box 1, folder 29.

Mexico Department of the Anti-Saloon League of America.¹²³ The Governor and his allies in the legislature responded when the Seventh Legislature of New Mexico convened in early 1927 by introducing Senate Bill No. 90, which proposed new enforcement capabilities and sentences to combat liquor. The bill passed, but only after many of the “teeth” that R. J. Brown had desired were extracted. The director of the Scientific Temperance Instruction of the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement in New Mexico, Mary Stevens, wrote the governor, “We can reach the largest number through the teachers in our public schools.” Stevens supported a program whereby teachers would teach the “evil effects of alcohol” in the classroom. “To my mind the teaching of the principles involved is of vast importance in character development in the lives of our young people.”¹²⁴ The governor received much correspondence requesting temperance be taught in the schools, but none asking for a ban or mandate on evolution.

Prohibition remained an important topic into the next election cycle. Instead of charging the governor as a modern Darwinist, political rivals of Dillon accused him of being “wet.” One Baptist preacher wrote the governor to inform him of assaults on his character: “I know nothing of your morals and have been pushing the campaign on the business efficiency of your administration. I am a Texas republican pastoring a democratic church. I have had it hurled back at me that one of the State Highway employees, Mr. Ted Watson, has been telling that he had been on several drunks with you . . . he is a drunk and a fighter and would probably enjoy making

¹²³ R.C. Farley, to Governor R.C. Dillon, 27 December 1926. Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 15, folder 9.

¹²⁴ Mary A. Stephens, to Hon. Richard Dillon, 28 December 1928. Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 15, folder 9.

trouble with a preacher. . . . I am yours for fair play.”¹²⁵ Legislation leading to effective prohibition enforcement in New Mexico proved difficult until the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed in 1933, thus settling the issue.

Bills regarding education that passed in 1927 did several things: they outlined financial appropriations, created independent rural school districts, and confirmed the purchasing of land and materials through bond elections for school construction.¹²⁶ What of the *New Mexico State Tribune*’s report that commercial organizations had felt “that evolution is being taught in a surreptitious manner and that it might as well be done above-board”? No general statement can be applied to every public school in New Mexico in the late 1920s. The rift between rural and city schools alone indicates that curriculum likely changed drastically on a case-by-case basis. In petitioning Governor Dillon for a position on the State’s Board of Education, a rural New Mexican educator wrote: “City schools have an independent board who takes care of them. Rural schools have no such government, and if neglected by the state office, it is a pity. To take care of these rural schools, a representative of them should consist one of the members of the board of education. . . . I dwell in the belief that only through education can New Mexico with its great population of Spaniards acquire its salvation educationally.”¹²⁷ The likelihood that evolution was taught in city schools appears much higher than in rural schools where both funding and well-trained

¹²⁵ O.P. Morrison, to Honorable Gov. Dillon, 11 October 1928, Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 1, folder 6.

¹²⁶ *Laws of the State of New Mexico Passed by the Eighth Regular Session of the Legislature of the State of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: Valiant Printing Co., 1927), chapter 139, sections 6-8.

¹²⁷ J. G. Jaramillo, to Hon. Richard Dillon, 31 December 1926, Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 12, folder 37.

teachers remained scarce. Teacher-training programs at the state's universities were not able to give instructors a background in evolutionary sciences.

In 1926, the University of New Mexico employed only one professor of biology and one of geology.¹²⁸ The state superintendent of Public Instruction, Isabel Lancaster Eckles, reported in 1926 that enrollment at the university doubled in the past seven years, but that “the enrollment of the University remains relatively small, compared with older and consolidated institutions in other states, but the steady growth of its student body and the elevation of its standards are gratifyingly apparent.”¹²⁹ The University of New Mexico quickly established itself as the largest research institution in the state, but New Mexico Normal University was the “largest teacher-training institution in the State of New Mexico.” Normal University suffered a 26.8 percent budget reduction between 1924 and 1926. The budget cuts materialized in the form of entire departments being closed and the reduction of faculty salaries. Reports of the financial purge did not mention which departments ceased to exist. However, the lists of faculty members for the academic year 1926 to 1927 indicate that no biology professor remained on the university's payroll.¹³⁰ New Mexico's chief provider of educators and its largest research institution in the late-1920s fell short of ensuring that the children of the state could learn from instructors intimately familiar with the principles of evolutionary biology.

¹²⁸ *Thirty-Fifth and Thirty-Sixth Annual Reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to the Governor of New Mexico*, 1926, State Documents, New Mexico State Library, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 46.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

¹³⁰ “Biennial Report of the New Mexico Normal University,” 1926, in *Thirty-Fifth and Thirty-Sixth Annual Reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to the Governor of New Mexico*, State Documents, New Mexico State Library, 50. The report covered the period from November 30, 1924 to June 30, 1926. The New Mexico Normal University was located in East Las Vegas, New Mexico.

The New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts, however, operated an active Biology Department in Las Cruces. The Department worked in association with the Bureau of Biological Survey of the United States. The majority of the work done in conjunction with the Bureau focused only on the “control of predatory animals and destructive rodents.”¹³¹ Reports from the university in 1926 offered the encouraging news that “an increasing number of the graduates are going into the high schools of the state as teachers, especially of science, agriculture, and home economics.”¹³² However, in a rural state where many schools employed only one or two teachers, students exposed to an instructor trained in biology by the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts were few and far between.

Influential leaders of science in New Mexico focused on the ongoing turf war over ownership of New Mexico’s resources. The New Mexico Association of Presidents of Higher Institutions of Education proved formidable advocates for the establishment of the state as a haven for science in the late 1920s. Of particular importance to this elite group of administrators was the conservation of the natural scientific resources of the state. These resources should benefit New Mexico and not be “shipped away by the carload to enrich eastern and even foreign institutions,” they argued.¹³³ The reputation of the state’s higher scientific education required that the unique artifacts, and the possibilities for future scientific exploration, be exploited by

¹³¹ *Thirty-Fifth and Thirty-Sixth Annual Reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to the Governor of New Mexico*, 1926, 61.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 59

¹³³ “Conservation of the Scientific Resources of New Mexico,” resolution passed by the New Mexico Association of Presidents of Higher Institutions of Education on 27 August 1928, Governor Richard C. Dillon Papers, NMSRCA, box 2, folder 91. The members of the Association included J.F. Zimmerman, President of the University of New Mexico, H.L. Kent, President of the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts, and E.L. Hewett, Director of the School of American Research.

researchers in New Mexico and that a fair portion of discoveries made by outsiders remain in one of the state's institutions. The stakes seemed high, especially in scientific fields critical to the study of evolution. In passing a resolution outlining their grievances, the Association of Presidents felt that "in fact, in paleontology, there is no richer field in the United States than New Mexico."¹³⁴ Myriad variations in plant and animal life also enriched the state's prospects in the study of species. As the presidents outlined:

From a biological standpoint New Mexico has unusually rich natural resources. The state lies in a transition zone; consequently representatives of the east, north, south, and west may be found within comparatively small areas. The wide range of physiographic conditions in the state makes possible a wide range in flora and fauna.¹³⁵

Understandably, the scientific community in New Mexico felt compelled to defend these resources, which they described as "of such unique character and value that the state has become a veritable hunting ground for the scientific world."¹³⁶ The primary perceived threat to the image and substance of science in New Mexico did not rest on exterminating antievolution sentiment. Nor did the Association of Presidents feel that proper instruction of evolution in the state's public schools required compulsory legislation. Instead, their activities focused on the battle with the rest of the scientific community over the state's resources.

The Association's efforts proved fruitful. Less than a year after the resolution House Bill #32 passed through the State Legislature providing for the protection of the state's scientific resources. An act for the "Preservation of the Scientific

¹³⁴ Ibid. The Association noted the "greatest importance" of fossil beds in the area between Santa Fe and Espanola, "and in the extensive region between Cuba and Farmington."

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Resources of New Mexico” was finally approved on March 14, 1931. The act guaranteed the demands of the Association of Presidents and created the Science Commission of New Mexico.¹³⁷ With their attentions turned elsewhere in the late 1920s, New Mexico’s scientific elite failed to weigh in on the 1927 controversy.

To be sure, New Mexico’s School Code provided some attempts at streamlining the curriculum of the state’s public schools. The Code mandated the teaching of the following subjects:

Reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, geography, language and grammar, Spanish, New Mexico history, United States history, including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States and of New Mexico, local civil government, elements of physiology and hygiene, morals and manners, music, drawing, elementary bookkeeping, the fundamental principles of common honesty, honor, industry and economy, the laws of health, physical exercise, household economics, manual training and other vocational subjects, and such other branches of learning as may seem expedient may be prescribed by the state board of education.¹³⁸

Science did not appear to be a top priority at the time the School Code was adopted in 1923. Except for the fields of public health and hygiene, science barely received mention. The State Board of Education met on February 18, 1927, to discuss the possibility of changing the textbook adoption policy of the state.¹³⁹ The President of New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, who served as chairman of the State Board of Education for the past two years suggested, “I feel quite sure we ought not to be hasty in any of our actions regarding text books because

¹³⁷ Governor Richard C. Dillon Papers, NMSRCA, box 2, folder 31.

¹³⁸ *New Mexico School Code*, 1927, State Documents, New Mexico State Library, Santa Fe, Section 1418.

¹³⁹ R.C. Dillon, to John Milne, 17 February 1927, Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 12, folder 37. This telegram reported that the governor would attend the meeting of the Board of Education the following day.

legislation may be enacted which would affect any action in progress.”¹⁴⁰ They could have brought up evolution, considering the recent news. Although New Mexico was in the middle of a textbook controversy, it did not focus on the matter of evolution.

Governor Dillon wanted to ensure that children in public schools received free textbooks.¹⁴¹ The cost of purchasing more textbooks caused major concern. In addition, two State Board of Education members were implicated in separate schemes to influence the adoption of specific texts. One, a Mr. Dowell, resigned as a result. According to the acting superintendent of public instruction, Lois Randolph: “It is to his credit that he did not plead ignorance of the law which prohibits school officials from using professional influence to secure the adoption of certain text books. . . . Mr. Dowell was an impecunious school teacher. Mrs. Otero Warren is a rich politician. No plea of poverty could be applied as alleviatory in her case. I could not look the school children of this state in the face if I had not tried to express my disapproval of Mrs. Otero-Warren’s dereliction.”¹⁴²

The other member implicated in the statement above, the well-known Mrs. Otero-Warren, Randolph suspended. Later she fought against her reinstatement. Randolph made her case to the other members of the Board in a letter stating: “She [Otero-Warren] acknowledged receiving one payment from Houghton Mifflin money. The State Board has concerns of greater importance to the public schools than the continued consideration of Mrs. Otero-Warren’s affairs and her vindications. . . . I can see no reason why Mrs. Otero-Warren should not have sufficient professional ethics

¹⁴⁰ H.L. Kent, to Governor R.C. Dillon, 10 February 1927, Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 12, folder 37.

¹⁴¹ Judah, *Governor Richard C. Dillon*, 9.

¹⁴² “Lois Randolph to Members of the State Board of Education,” 25 August 1927, Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 12, folder 37.

to keep out of book contracts not [*sic*] can I see why after she was caught redhanded [*sic*] and admitted her guilt she should not have as much respect as Mr. Dowell and tender her resignation as a sign of her regret.”¹⁴³ New Mexico’s leaders of education grappled with whether or not to buy textbooks directly from publishers in gross and create a distribution center where they could be stored. The state was still attempting to create a state-wide system of education that could efficiently instruct the children of New Mexico.

Eventually, Attorney General Frank H. Patton weighed in with an interpretation of the powers of the superintendent in the matter: “It is my opinion that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction has the powers and duties set forth in said section 201, and that these are independent of any supervision of the State Board of Education.”¹⁴⁴ Under the leadership of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Lois Randolph the State Board of Education did not address the evolution controversy between Albuquerque’s commercial organizations and the Baptists. Instead, Randolph focused on a sweeping audit of the organization’s textbook allocations. Randolph wrote the governor later in 1927, “In view of some other expenditures I believe recoverable, I believe a complete audit of the books of the State Department of Education from the period covered by doubtful outlay of funds by the former administration to the present time is a necessity to which the public is entitled.”¹⁴⁵ The textbook controversy consumed the actions of the State Board of Education for

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Frank H. Patton, to Miss Lois Randolph, Opinion No. 3957, 16 August 1927, Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 12, folder 37.

¹⁴⁵ Lois Randolph, to Hon. R.C. Dillon, 7 December 1927, Richard Dillon Papers, CSWR, box 12, folder 40.

much of the year 1927, leaving evolution as a non-issue in the state's governing body of education.

By 1931, New Mexico's Education Department had outlined the specific goals of scientific education in the state's public high schools. The section on the "Course of Study in Biology" stated that the objectives "are especially fitted to the needs of the students of our state."¹⁴⁶ The Board of Education placed heavy emphasis on eugenics, arguing that the "future of race development is based on the practice of biological principles. We believe that biology with its emphasis on physiology, hygiene, sanitation, and heredity is an important subject."¹⁴⁷ Race and ethnicity played an important role in the formulation of New Mexico's public schools. The state even had segregation laws on the books in the 1920s, providing "separate rooms" for "the teaching of pupils of African descent."¹⁴⁸ The first concrete indication that New Mexico's Board of Education supported the teaching of evolution can be found in Unit XII of the Course of Study in Biology in 1931 under the title "The Laws of Inheritance and the Principle of Evolution." The section provided a list of the aims of this unit as:

1. To understand the laws of heredity.
2. To appreciate the fact that an understanding of biology helps man to improve the race.
3. To understand the significance of variation and heredity.
4. To know about the contribution of Gregor Mendel to biology.
5. To understand some of the stages by which animals and plants have reached the places they now occupy.
6. To appreciate the value of plant and animal breeding.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ "High School Course of Study in Science," Bulletin No. 2, 1931, State Documents, New Mexico State Library, Santa Fe. See Part II, The Course of Study in Biology.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ *Laws of the State of New Mexico*, 1925, Chapter 73, Section 21, State Documents, New Mexico State Library, Santa Fe.

¹⁴⁹ "High School Course of Study in Science," part II.

The Board of Education deftly avoided any mention of Charles Darwin in this unit. Both the work of Gregor Mendel, the famous father of genetics, and Luther Burbank, noted botanist, found a place in the unit on evolution. Darwin, the man whose work inspired and informed both men, was conspicuously absent. A list of science books recommended for the state's public school libraries did not embrace Darwin's epochal work. Instead, it included lesser, though surely scintillating titles, such as *Romance of the Fungus World* and *Social Life in the Insect World*.¹⁵⁰ All of these suggestions for curriculum in the state's science class rooms by 1931 were merely that—suggestions, not mandatory. Still, the fact that the Board advocated and recommended the teaching of evolution in the state represents a change in policy. In the end, the commercial organizations got their wish as New Mexico's teachers could teach evolution “above-board” with the backing of the state's public school administration by 1931.

By the 1930s, economic problems from the late 1920s came to a boiling point in the form of the Great Depression. Like the rest of the nation, New Mexicans put aside their inclinations to battle over the question of evolution in publicly supported schools. In 1930, the struggle to maintain the Baptist Montezuma College ended. The College, so important to the Baptist mission in New Mexico, closed its doors due to insufficient funds; the Baptists later sold the College to the Catholic Church. Economic troubles in the 1920s interrupted some of the plans of Southern Baptists to practice the social gospel. However, the relatively small Southern Baptist

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

denomination continued to fight to keep the gains it had made in the 1920s so that it could exert their influence later in the twentieth century.

Not long after the dust from the brief evolution conflict had settled, the *Baptist New Mexican* expressed no desire to publicly attack evolution by stating that “the evolution question might ‘bob up’ again, but short work can be made of that.”¹⁵¹ Other than the rumor of legislation mandating the teaching of evolution, and the unified opposition to it in the creation and support for the Albuquerque Baptists’ Resolution, New Mexico’s Southern Baptists abstained from mobilizing the antievolution sentiment within the community in the first half of the century, due in large part to the economic hardships and the harsh reality of New Mexico demographics.

When faced with the possibility of legislation requiring that evolution be mandated in the curriculum of public schools in 1927, New Mexico’s Baptist community responded with a swift and resounding reply. New Mexico’s 1927 evolution controversy stands as a unique case in the history of evolution controversies in 1920s America. It was unique in the sense that the spark required to ignite a flame in New Mexico came not from a proposal for *antievolution* legislation, but from a rumor of a *pro-evolution* law. The controversy started with a plan from Albuquerque’s modern businessmen; it ended largely because of the swift action from New Mexico’s Southern Baptists. Evolution controversies in other states in the 1920s mostly occurred in the reverse order and often resulted in legislation. The brief 1927 evolution controversy in New Mexico demonstrated that fundamentalist Baptists in

¹⁵¹ *Baptist New Mexican*, 28 April 1927.

the state stood prepared to combat modernism. However, the state's other concerns consumed the activities of faithful and material organizations alike, thus preventing a protracted battle between modernism and fundamentalism.

Whereas Southern Baptists saw New Mexico's potential future as a shining beacon of righteousness, the business community in New Mexico foresaw the rise of material wealth as the key to growth in the sunny, southwestern state. The desire to advertise the state as a place where modern Americans could settle and raise a family concerned many New Mexicans, including then Governor Dillon. Advertising clubs and Chambers of Commerce faced the challenge of combating preconceived notions of the state as "backward" and "foreign." The "desirable" people they hoped to attract, mostly white American Protestants, demanded efficient public schools and widespread roads as the marks of a progressive American state. In many ways, then, the Southern Baptists and those concerned with advertising the state's resources had common interests in the largely Catholic, Hispanic state. Joining together, the Bible Belt and the Southwest could only serve to alleviate both parties' gravest concerns. In light of the growing economic depression, both sides put aside their differences on science and education in order to focus on more pressing issues. Many decades passed before the evolution controversy once again received a spark in New Mexico.

Chapter 3

Evolution and Intelligent Design: The Modern Debate in New Mexico, 1995-2008

From the 1930s to the 1990s the developing infrastructure and changing demographics transformed New Mexico's relationship with both the rest of the nation and the evolution controversy. The work of advertising and commercial clubs during the state's infancy began to pay dividends as the century wore on. The 1930 census reported that just over 423,000 people resided in New Mexico, with only three cities of 10,000 or more citizens: Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Roswell.¹⁵² Forty-one percent of that population worked in the agricultural sector of the economy.¹⁵³ By 1990, however, the state's population had swelled to over one-and-a-half-million citizens.¹⁵⁴ The city of Rio Rancho, on Albuquerque's west mesa, counted more than 10,000 citizens just eighteen years after its founding in 1962.¹⁵⁵ Only about 3 percent of the state's population still labored in agriculture in 1990. Other sectors of the economy, like administrative support and professional specialty occupations, for instance, far outnumbered farm workers.¹⁵⁶ As the twenty-first century approached, New Mexicans realized that their population had tripled since the 1927 evolution controversy. Similarly, the state had gradually conformed to modern American standards.

¹⁵² U.S. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Number and Distribution of Inhabitants*, vol. 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 729.

¹⁵³ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Occupations By States*, vol. 4 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 1067.

¹⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce, *1990 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics, New Mexico* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), 1.

¹⁵⁵ Joseph E. Weiss, "Sunbelt Migration and its Effects Upon the Growth and Development of a Southwest Community—Rio Rancho" (Ph.D. Diss., University of New Mexico, May, 1981), 2.

¹⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, *1990 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics, New Mexico* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993), 54.

Along with the demographics and economy of the state of New Mexico, the national evolution debate changed as well. The Depression of the 1930s and World War II witnessed little discussion over evolution. Science education across the country continued to suffer during the Cold War era, due to an inadequate supply of qualified teachers, especially in biology.¹⁵⁷ This fact presented a serious problem to a nation engaged in a global struggle for supremacy over land, sea, and most recently, space. The arena of technological and scientific advancement formed the primary battlefield between the United States and the Soviet Union. Without effective science education, many feared that America would no longer remain on the cutting edge of modern technology and might even lose the Cold War.

The prophecy of demise appeared frighteningly plausible when the Soviet Union successfully launched the satellite *Sputnik* into the earth's orbit in 1957. In the following weeks, the American rival satellite *Vanguard* failed to lift off from the launch pad. The scientific inferiority revealed in this exchange provided scientists and political leaders the evidence they needed to push for improved science education.¹⁵⁸ And, of course, evolutionary science remained the cornerstone of all biological inquiries in the final half of the twentieth century. Leading geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky, an American citizen born and raised in Russia, penned an essay in 1973 titled "Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution."¹⁵⁹ Dobzhansky stated confidently, "evolution as a process that has

¹⁵⁷ George E. Webb, *The Evolution Controversy*, 128.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 129. The Eisenhower administration pushed the National Science Foundation and the Physical Science Study Committee to help assess and improve science education in the United States.

¹⁵⁹ Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution," *The American Biology Teacher* 35, no. 3 (1973): 125-129.

always gone on in the history of the earth can be doubted only by those who are ignorant of the evidence or are resistant to evidence, owing to emotional blocks or to plain bigotry. . . . There are no alternatives to evolution as history that can withstand critical examinations.”¹⁶⁰ Although most professional scientists such as Dobzhansky were convinced of the importance and validity of evolution, the nation’s high school science teachers remained skeptical. In 1961, a poll of 1,000 high school science teachers found that two-thirds felt they could properly teach biology without evolution.¹⁶¹ States such as Tennessee and Arkansas still had antievolution laws on the books at the time of that particular poll. Over time, evolution standards at the college level in America improved during the Cold War, thanks to the efforts of professional biologists. However, biology standards in public high schools still varied widely state-by-state and teacher-by-teacher.¹⁶² Even in the face of a global struggle for scientific superiority, gaining widespread acceptance for evolution in America proved difficult.

Biblical literalists from Evangelical Protestant denominations remained the most committed antievolution crusaders in late-twentieth-century America.¹⁶³ However, the legislative efforts to eliminate completely evolution from the public schools at the state level had largely died out after the 1920s. This silence did not mean that antievolutionists had surrendered. As the title of Edward J. Larson’s survey of the evolution controversy in America suggests, evolution’s opponents implemented a “trial and error” method to help erode the validity of evolution as the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 129.

¹⁶¹ Webb, *The Evolution Controversy*, 133.

¹⁶² Ibid., 133.

¹⁶³ Larson, *Trial and Error*, 188.

only tenable theory in public high schools.¹⁶⁴ The Cold War era witnessed a shift in tactics. After the 1920s, the evolution controversy did not re-emerge in America on a large scale until the 1960s. In New Mexico, the debate took even longer to sprout new legs.

In 1967, Tennessee's legislature repealed the antievolution Butler Act, which had led to the Scopes trial of 1925. Mississippi and Arkansas remained the only states with antievolution laws on the books. Court decisions soon declared the legislation in both states unconstitutional. By 1970, not a single American state had an antievolution statute.¹⁶⁵ Antievolution legislation could no longer serve as the main weapon against the teaching of evolution in America's public schools. Instead, evolution's opponents adapted to the new environment and sought to create a scientific alternative in the form of "creation science." Opponents argued that the biblical version of human history should be included in the name of "fairness" and labeled the scientific consensus on teaching evolution as "dogma." These two tactics soon gained favor in antievolution circles during the modern debate over Darwin's theories.

Creationists had to try and play by scientific rules in order to defeat evolution's monopoly on theories of the emergence of the human species. Or, at the very least, they had to dress the wolf in sheep's clothing. Instead of reading the biblical account of Genesis in a flexible manner that adapted to the findings of science, many modern evangelicals demanded that only a science that confirmed the Bible's most literal interpretations would suffice. In the Cold War era debate, the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Webb, *The Evolution Controversy*, 153.

term “creationist” became synonymous with a person who maintained—no matter what evidence scientists provided to the contrary—that all life was created on earth 10,000 years ago in much the same form that it is in today.¹⁶⁶ Creation science started with the Bible and then searched for evidence in the natural world to support a literal interpretation of it. Should they succeed in their quest to authenticate a literal interpretation of Genesis, creationists believed that “every anti-Christian system and movement (communism, racism, humanism, libertinism, behaviorism, and all the rest) would be deprived of their pseudo-intellectual foundation.”¹⁶⁷ Viewed in this light, creation scientists felt they were advancing America’s cause in the Cold War by offering alternatives to evolution, not simply trying to hinder it. With the help of their national organization, the Creation Research Society, and a growing body of creation science research, modern creationists set out once again to combat the teaching of evolution in America’s public schools.¹⁶⁸

The campaign to place creationism in public schools did not seek to immediately displace evolution. Instead, creationists hoped, first, to secure “equal time” in science classes. Beginning in 1980 and increasingly in 1981, several state legislatures considered protecting teachers who taught creationism in the classroom.¹⁶⁹ The most public debates arose in Arkansas and Louisiana, where creation bills were quickly challenged in the court system to determine their constitutionality. In both cases, the advocates of creation science lost. In Arkansas,

¹⁶⁶ Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), xi.

¹⁶⁷ Henry M. Morris, ed., *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1974), 264; quoted in Numbers, *The Creationists*, xi.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., Numbers devotes an entire chapter to the Creation Research Society, 214-240.

¹⁶⁹ Larson, *Trial and Error*, 150.

the American Civil Liberties Union defended evolution, just as it had done at the Scopes trial in 1925. In 1982, the Arkansas court ruled in *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education* that the state's equal time statute was "simply and purely an effort to introduce the Biblical version of creation into the public school curricula" and therefore in violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment.¹⁷⁰ The Louisiana creation bill made its way to the United States Supreme Court. The court ruled in *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987) that creation science was religion, not science.¹⁷¹ Evolution's supporters hailed these decisions as the death blow to creationism. Creationists merely conceded a misstep and they regrouped to fight another day.

With creation science labeled "religion" by the highest court in the land, creationists could no longer continue to push for its inclusion in public schools. In the face of this challenge, however, as creation science fell out of favor, the concept of "intelligent design" picked up where it had left off. Intelligent design is the observation that life on earth is so incredibly complex and so often resembles a machine-like precision that the only plausible explanation for such complex organisms is that an intelligent agent (usually divine) created all life. Proponents of intelligent design sought to cast a wider net than their forebears. From a legal perspective, the framers of intelligent design hoped that by not specifically naming the intelligent agent, it could not be brushed aside as another Christian creationist theory. Instead of insisting on a young earth biblical literalism, the proponents of

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 163.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 179. Justice William Brennan wrote the deciding opinion and declared "the term 'creation science,' as contemplated by the legislature that adopted this Act, embodies religious belief."

intelligent design courted all those who believed in a divine creator. The movement, however, remained almost exclusively a Protestant Christian enterprise.

Advocate Phillip E. Johnson emerged in the early 1990s as an indispensable engineer of the intelligent design movement. “The important thing,” Johnson asserted, “is not whether God created all at once or in stages, or whether the process of creation requires a greater or lesser period of time,” but that “anyone who thinks that the biological world is a product of pre-existing intelligence . . . is a creationist in the most important sense of the word.”¹⁷² Instead of searching for proof of the Bible’s infallibility in things like flood geology, intelligent design looked for the fingerprint of God at every level, from biology to cosmology. The intelligent design movement’s central support and command center sprang from the formation of the Discovery Institute, based out of Seattle, Washington, in 1990.

The Discovery Institute provided, and continues to provide, funding for research fellowships. It also gives direction to the intelligent design movement through the Center for Renewal of Science and Culture (CRSC) [now known as the Center for Science and Culture]. Similar to the creation science movement before it, intelligent design first built up a body of research claiming new scientific concepts, such as “irreducible complexity” and “complex specified information.”¹⁷³ From there, proponents of intelligent design sought publicity through media outlets and grassroots efforts, with the eventual goal of justifying a place in science classrooms.

¹⁷² Phillip E. Johnson, “The Origin of Species Revisited,” *Constitutional Commentary* 7 (1990): 427-34; quoted in Larson, *Trial and Error*, 186.

¹⁷³ For the idea of irreducible complexity see Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996). For complex specified information see William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1999). Also see, Dembski, *No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot be Purchased Without Intelligence* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

The new tactic to break apart the domination of evolution in science classes (and indeed in American culture at large) came to be known as the “Wedge” strategy.¹⁷⁴

When the Discovery Institute announced the creation of the CRSC, it printed the following statement in its *Journal*:

For over a century, Western science has been influenced by the idea that God is either dead or irrelevant. Two foundations recently awarded the Discovery Institute nearly a million dollars in grants to examine and confront this materialistic bias in science, law, and the humanities. The grants will be used to establish the Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture at Discovery, which will award research fellowships to scholars, hold conferences, and disseminate research findings among opinion makers and the general public.¹⁷⁵

The main thrusts of the CRSC became intelligent design research and promotion. As America entered the twenty-first century, around half of the population had not accepted evolution, and almost two-thirds supported some form of creationism in the public schools.¹⁷⁶ The situation seemed ripe for a return of William Jennings Bryan’s majoritarian argument. The *New York Times* announced in 1996 that all across America, “The issues that Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan fought out in a Dayton courtroom are being replayed in classrooms, school board meetings and state legislatures as religious fundamentalists become increasingly assertive.”¹⁷⁷ Although the terms of the debate were not, in fact, the

¹⁷⁴ For an in-depth examination of the “Wedge” strategy see Barbara Forrest and Paul R. Gross, *Creationism’s Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁷⁵ “Major Grants Help Establish Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture,” Discovery Institute *Journal* (August 1996); quoted in Forrest and Gross, *Creationism’s Trojan Horse*, 29.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Steinfels, “Eighty Years after Scopes, a Professor Reflects on Unabated Opposition to Evolution,” *New York Times*, 18 June 2005, B5.

¹⁷⁷ Peter Applebome, “70 Years After Scopes Trial, Creation Debate Lives,” *New York Times*, 10 March 1996, 1; 22.

same as in the 1920s, evolution became a hot topic once again. As the same article noted, the controversy “is not just limited to the South. It’s everywhere.”¹⁷⁸

Battles over alternative theories to evolution reappeared in every corner of the country as the twentieth century approached its end. Biology teacher Pamela Messick from Nashville, Tennessee, found the controversy highly disturbing. “I think it is impossible to teach biology without incorporating evolutionary theory,” Messick said. “We did evolve. . . . And I can still believe in God, because no one can explain that first spark.” Reflecting the tensions of the growing culture clash, Messick saw the mounting opposition to evolution as “a political power play to insert Bible Belt beliefs into our educational system. The other day I went into my classroom and I said, ‘Evolution, evolution, evolution, evolution,’ and then told my students that I was saying it now because I might not be able to say it anymore.”¹⁷⁹ From Georgia and Tennessee to New Hampshire and Nevada, evolution’s opponents adopted the terminology of the growing intelligent design movement to influence the course of science education in America. With this new round of conflict, New Mexico played a much more visible role than it had during the 1920s.

In the summer of 1996, the New Mexico state Board of Education convened to discuss the state’s science requirements. One topic drew particular interest. A board member, Virginia Trujillo, revealed to the *Albuquerque Journal* that “a difference of opinion regarding some of the content” had emerged. “For example,” Trujillo said, “creationism wasn’t in there.”¹⁸⁰ Scientists and concerned citizens,

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Valerie Santillanes, “Evolution Delays New Standards for N.M. Schools,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 15 June 1996, A1.

mainly from the Albuquerque area, arrived at the Board's next meeting in August prepared to fight for evolution in New Mexico's public schools. In front of a "standing-room-only" audience, the Board debated proposals and eventually avoided both the words "evolution" and "creationism" in their final decision.¹⁸¹ Instead, the newly minted state curriculum standards prompted students to "compare, contrast and discuss the scientific evidence supporting or refuting theories of biological origins."¹⁸² The ambiguous wording in the new standards launched a drawn-out conflict that took place on the local and state level, echoing the controversies occurring all across America.

As one might expect, the nature of science education in 1990s New Mexico depended on the teachers. Reports from the 1996 Board of Education controversy found that many of the influential education leaders in New Mexico felt that no matter what the curriculum said, the teachers would decide whether to provide instruction on evolution at their own discretion.¹⁸³ In fact, that seemed to be the case across the country. Some teachers supported creationism and ignored the sections of the textbooks on evolution. Almost one quarter of biology teachers in Louisiana reported that they felt creationism had scientific merit.¹⁸⁴ However, some teachers also avoided evolution, simply as a result of the controversy on the issue. The *New York Times* found that "teaching evolution has become so politicized that many high school teachers around the country report they skip the subject rather than risk

¹⁸¹ Fritz Thompson, "Can They Fit Together?," *Albuquerque Journal*, 13 October 1996, B8. Thompson created a brief timeline of events to illustrate how the controversy developed by collecting personal recollections of the members of the Board.

¹⁸² John Fleck, "Evolution Debate Far From Extinct," *Albuquerque Journal*, 28 December 1997, A1.

¹⁸³ Thompson, "Can They Fit Together?"

¹⁸⁴ "Afraid to Teach Evolution," *New York Times*, 4 February 2005, A18. The *Times* claimed that a doctoral dissertation from 1998 collected this information on the teachers of Louisiana.

confrontations with conservative parents or fundamentalist religious groups.”¹⁸⁵ This proved to be the situation in New Mexico.

In 1998, a student at Eldorado High School in Albuquerque told the *Albuquerque Journal* that although he took two biology courses, he had received no instruction on evolution. The *Journal* reported that this anonymous student inquired what reasons one teacher had for neglecting the theory and was told “the teacher didn’t want the hassle of dealing with parents and state standards on the issue.”¹⁸⁶ The *Tribune* provided the following opinion in opposition to the mounting conflict in New Mexico and placed the blame squarely on the crusaders for intelligent design:

As State Board of Education President Eleanor Ortiz said at the time, state standards don’t prohibit the teaching of evolution. But, they don’t require it either. And teachers find this ambiguity perplexing. Intimidated by parents and religious groups, some teachers opt to ignore the entire subject, skipping the few chapters that explain Darwinism in textbooks.

This is the ultimate end result of the continuing battle by creationists to include in science curriculum the theory of ‘intelligent design,’ promoted, ironically, as a way to give students an opportunity to discuss all theories in an open marketplace of ideas.¹⁸⁷

Some local New Mexico school systems tackled the issue themselves.

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) developed their own standards in 1997 and passed guidelines strongly advocating evolution in the city’s school district. The APS curriculum intended to ensure that students were taught that the “great diversity of organisms” on earth came to be through billions of years of evolution. APS required that students learn that the earth is 4.6 billion years old and the universe was formed

¹⁸⁵ Peter Applebome, “70 Years After Scopes Trial.”

¹⁸⁶ Editorial, “Spotlight on Creation Casts Doubt on Team,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 4 May 1998, A8.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

by way of the Big Bang Theory some ten to twenty billion years ago.¹⁸⁸ But Roger Lenard, a physical chemist at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque and a member of the state Board of Education disagreed with the APS decision. Lenard, a proponent of intelligent design and a leading member in the 1996 Board fight to include alternative theories to evolution in the classroom, insisted that evolution was “a theory in crisis”—a phrase directly from the Discovery Institute’s playbook.¹⁸⁹ Many biology teachers in New Mexico, outside APS, still taught evolutionary biology. However, they felt the pressure of the growing controversy from the state’s largest city. Jim Gilroy, science teacher at Taos High School, told the *Albuquerque Journal*, “You’ve got to have respect for every kid in your classroom, and the kids have got to feel it.”¹⁹⁰ Without state or local standards mandating that evolution be taught, New Mexico’s science teachers had to rely on their own assessment of the conditions in their classroom. This situation led some to avoid evolution altogether.

The campaign to elect a state Board of Education member to represent the Albuquerque area in 1998 hinged largely on the evolution issue. Leading the charge for definitive evolution instruction was Marshall Berman, a physicist from the Sandia Laboratories in Albuquerque. Berman ran for the seat on a platform of restoring integrity to New Mexico’s science education. “The board has very limited scientific knowledge and the vast majority has none on that particular issue [evolution] at all,” Berman told the *Albuquerque Journal*. “They have been led astray by a few.”¹⁹¹ His

¹⁸⁸ John Fleck, “Evolution Debate Far From Extinct.”

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. Fleck reported that Lenard, a devout Christian, believed God’s word to be explicitly revealed in the Bible and at odds with evolution.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Matthew Franck, “Candidates Want to Broaden Debate,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 10 May 1998, B1.

opponent, Millie Pogna, had served twenty years on the board. Berman felt Pogna expressed doubts about the validity of evolution.¹⁹² During the 1996 Board of Education debate, reports indicated that she was concerned that evolution might be viewed as a “fact” and not as a “theory” in the standards. As Pogna stated, “the science standard seems to have a belief system built into it.”¹⁹³ Since both candidates ran as Republicans, and no Democrat challenged for the seat, the winner of the primary in June stood to win the post outright.

As the final polls closed, it became clear that Berman had scored a major victory over the incumbent Pogna by capturing 67 percent of the vote.¹⁹⁴ Later in 1998, before vacating her seat, Pogna joined Roger Lenard as the only two members of the Board of Education to vote for purchasing computer software called “Evolution: Key Non-Darwinian Events,” for circulation in science classes.¹⁹⁵ Berman vigorously opposed this software, calling it a “diatribe written by someone on his computer at home.”¹⁹⁶ Lenard cited the state science standards that called for students to “debate the pros and cons of various scientific theories of the origin of the universe” as his reason for supporting the purchase. The twelve other board members rejected it, however, calling the software “bad science.”¹⁹⁷ Berman’s election marked a shift in philosophy among the members of Board. The voters of the Albuquerque

¹⁹² Kristen Davenport, “State’s Classrooms to Teach Evolution,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 9 October 1999, A1.

¹⁹³ Santillanes, “Evolution Delays New Standards for N.M. Schools,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 15 June 1996.

¹⁹⁴ Matthew Franck and Rene Romo, “Berman Topples 20-Year Incumbent,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 3 June 1998, A3. All poll results were unofficial at the time of this report.

¹⁹⁵ Matthew Franck, “Anti-Evolution Software Off Schools’ List,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 10 October 1998, E3.

¹⁹⁶ “Education Panel Reviews Materials,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 9 October 1998, B3. The *Journal* attributed this article to the Associated Press.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

area had made a clear statement on science education by ousting an incumbent who had represented them for twenty years.

Berman's campaign message for stronger support of evolution was not unique in the 1998 election cycle. Evolution proved to be the most important issue in the race for the Board of Education District 7 seat as well. Challenger Frances Stevens displaced the incumbent Board member, Darl Miller, representing Las Cruces, Truth or Consequences, the Hatch Valley, and southern Doña Ana County. Miller faced accusations of "advocating that Biblical theories on the creation of the Earth be taught in addition to evolution" during the campaign.¹⁹⁸ Stevens carried around 60 percent of the vote. In the election of Berman and Stevens, New Mexico's citizens provided the Board of Education with a mandate to revisit the 1996 science standards and strengthen the state's support for the teaching of evolution.

In 1999, both Kansas and Kentucky changed their science curriculum by eliminating the word "evolution" from their respective standards.¹⁹⁹ But New Mexico moved in the opposite direction. The state Board of Education pushed for explicit and clearer use of the term evolution. The president of the school board, Flora Sanchez, said that in general, "our teachers have the guidance that they need. However, we continue to get input from the scientific community that we've watered them down and left open the opportunity for other material to be introduced with the same weight. We need to close the doors and make this real explicit."²⁰⁰ The new

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Francis X. Clines, "Creationist Captain Sees Battle 'Hotting Up,'" *New York Times*, 1 December 1999, A18. The Kansas Board of Education removed any mention of evolution while the Kentucky Board of Education changed the wording from "evolution" to "change over time."

²⁰⁰ Scott Smallwood, "Proposal Bolsters Evolution," *Albuquerque Journal*, 1 October 1999, A1.

guidelines did just that. The Board specifically described several types of teaching methods on the theme of evolution and erased the provision to “present the evidence for and against” evolution. The Board members reasoned that every topic in science should be handled that way, so they felt it unnecessary, and potentially damaging, to only mention criticism when it came to the theory of evolution.²⁰¹ The new curriculum passed with fourteen affirmative votes to one dissenting. As a result of the 1999 curriculum adjustment, the standards changed from presenting to students the arguments “for and against the concept of evolution” to explaining the arguments “for the current scientific theory of evolution.”²⁰²

The 1999 standards made a good impression on some of New Mexico’s science teachers. Steve Brugge, chairman of the science department at Eisenhower Middle School in Albuquerque, told the *Santa Fe New Mexican* that in the past some students picked up their books and left his class after finding out that evolution was the only theory he intended to discuss. He also explained that some parents left Bibles in his classroom; some students even interrogated him about Adam and Eve since he refused to teach creationism.²⁰³ Brugge described the benefits of the new curriculum: “when a parent comes in and says, ‘Why [are you teaching evolution]?’ you can say, ‘Here it is [in the state requirements].’”²⁰⁴ Biology teacher Bruce Miller was also pleased with the change. “I need it spelled out that I don’t have to address a string of silly alternative theories,” Miller said. “With 175 classroom days, I don’t

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Scott Smallwood, “Evolution Vote Set for Today,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 8 October 1999, A1.

²⁰³ Kristen Davenport, “State’s Classrooms to Teach Evolution,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 9 October 1999, A1.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

have time for that.”²⁰⁵ The new standards relieved New Mexico’s science teachers from the burden of explaining why they taught evolution, and evolution alone, in the face of an increasingly publicized national debate.

New Mexico’s 1999 standards made national headlines by their support of evolution. The *New York Times* stated, “the vote effectively made New Mexico the first state in recent years to take a firm stand against the teaching of creationism.”²⁰⁶ The results of the 1999 standards seemed even more encouraging to evolution’s supporters, since the changes arose from the democratic process of holding elected officials accountable. As evolution became a campaign issue in the school board elections, New Mexico’s citizens let their ballots do the talking. Of course, not all state citizens and science teachers supported the Board’s changes. Before the final vote, the Board listened to the opinions of members of the public. Three spoke out against the new standards, claiming that evolution had not yet been proven; one argued that it was not even good science.²⁰⁷ Phil Robinson, who stated that he had eighteen years of science teaching experience, told the Board members that his “greatest concern” was that their actions would censor opposing voices. Instead, Robinson asked the Board to “leave open the possibility of future theories.”²⁰⁸ Although the 1999 decision went against alternative theories, the debate over evolution in New Mexico had just started to heat up.

After failing to keep the door open for alternative theories in 1999, the critics and outright opponents of evolution regrouped and formed a new strategy for making

²⁰⁵ Michael Janofsky, “New Mexico Bars Creationism from State Curriculum,” *The New York Times*, 9 October 1999, A10.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Davenport, “State’s Classrooms to Teach Evolution.”

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

headway in New Mexico. With the onset of the twenty-first century, New Mexico witnessed a grassroots movement to inform the citizenry about the controversy and encourage them to support intelligent design. Outspoken intelligent design promoter Phillip Johnson described the situation in 1999 in an article for the *Wall Street Journal*. In places like New Mexico, where evolution-only science education formed the standard, Johnson declared, “students are not supposed to approach this philosophy [materialism or scientific naturalism] with open-minded skepticism, but to believe it on faith.”²⁰⁹ The strategy employed by Johnson in these remarks sought to paint evolutionists as the “bad scientists” and appeal to the “American tradition that the people have a right to disagree with the experts.”²¹⁰ For added shock value, Johnson included the following quote from an unnamed Chinese paleontologist: “In China we can criticize Darwin but not the government. In America you can criticize the government but not Darwin.”²¹¹ These themes soon played out in New Mexico in the form of appeals for fairness towards alternative theories and attacks on scientific elitism.

Harvest Church and Calvary Chapel, both national nondenominational evangelical Christian organizations, were incorporated as New Mexican churches in the late-twentieth century. Although intelligent design drew support from various Protestant denominations, these evangelical “mega-churches” welcomed and hosted leading creationists from across the nation to inform their congregations and the general public about the battle against evolution. Albuquerque’s Calvary Chapel alone boasted around 14,000 members by 2006, making it the largest church in the

²⁰⁹ Phillip E. Johnson, “The Church of Darwin,” *Wall Street Journal*, 16 August 1999, A14.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

entire state.²¹² In 2000, Rio Rancho's Harvest Church hosted a creationist talk by national and international lecturer Duane Gish. A long-time researcher for the Institute for Creation Research in California, Gish published books challenging evolution and arguing for creationism during the 1970s and 1980s.²¹³ "What we believe we can establish," Gish told the *Albuquerque Journal*, "is the fact that there is and must be a creator who created the universe and living organisms." He continued, "if (the universe) exists, there must be a Lord and master. God as creator controls our destiny."²¹⁴ Although some New Mexico Baptist churches hosted creationism and intelligent design lectures, the state's large nondenominational evangelical churches, such as Harvest and Calvary, formed the primary incubators for alternative theories to evolution in New Mexico's revived debate.

Strategically disseminating the literature of intelligent design to those in position to have an influence on science education formed an important part of the movement's grassroots efforts. In 2002, seventy seven of New Mexico's public school science departments received unsolicited copies of Michael Behe's antievolution book, *Darwin's Black Box*, free of charge. The books came with a letter signed by University of New Mexico professor of biochemistry and molecular biology John Omdahl.²¹⁵ The letter asked the departments to have science teachers read the book and then donate it to the school's library. Supplying and shipping these copies of Behe's book carried an estimated cost of \$1155. The head of the science

²¹² Larry Spohn, "In God We Trust; Too Bad the Same Can't Always be Said of his Spokespeople," *Albuquerque Journal*, 30 March 2006, D1.

²¹³ Paul Logan, "Scientists Offer Creationist Defense," *Albuquerque Journal*, 25 February 2000, 4.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Forrest and Gross, *Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design*, 159-162.

department at Eisenhower Middle School, Steve Brugge, wrote Omdahl expressing his doubt that the university would furnish the funds for such an enterprise. He also questioned the reasons for sending the book to a middle school: “I have never seen it [Behe’s book] listed on any middle-school reading list; I would be delighted if you can point me to such a list—the New Mexico Family Council hiding behind the lab coat of UNM simply does not count.”²¹⁶ Omdahl denied any connection to the Family Council and insisted that he acted on his own. The University of New Mexico had nothing to do with sending out the books. However, it later came to light that Phil Robinson, the same man who had publicly pleaded against the formation of the 1999 Board of Education evolution standards, had organized the book circulation effort as a member of the New Mexico Family Council.²¹⁷ The book circulation episode of 2002 alerted the scientific community of New Mexico that intelligent design’s Wedge strategy clearly targeted the state as a potential partner in supporting its agenda.

Further evidence of New Mexico as targeted terrain by intelligent design proponents arrived in the form of the Intelligent Design Network of New Mexico (IDnet-NM). The Network officially organized in July, 2002, with the following stated mission:

The purposes of IDnet-NM are to promote unbiased evidence-based science education with respect to the teaching of cosmological and biological origins; enhance public awareness of the evidence of intelligent design in the cosmos and in living things; and to inform the public of the underlying philosophical,

²¹⁶ Steve Brugge to John Omdahl, personal communication, April 3, 2002; quoted in Forrest and Gross, *Creationism’s Trojan Horse*, 160. Forrest and Gross calculated the estimated cost of circulating the books to New Mexico’s science departments.

²¹⁷ Forrest and Gross, *Creationism’s Trojan Horse*, 161. For evidence of this connection Forrest and Gross refer to “Darwin’s Black Box Sent to Schools,” *Creation Science Fellowship of New Mexico Newsletter* 13, no. 4 (2002).

religious, scientific, and legal issues surrounding the teaching of origins science in public schools.

IDnet-NM provides informed speakers for presentations and lectures on Intelligent Design and objective origins science education to public and private school science classes, churches, parent groups, and various civic, professional, and community groups.²¹⁸

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Intelligent Design Network set up shop in three states: Kansas, Ohio, and New Mexico.²¹⁹ With intelligent design's profile growing in the state, an increasing number of New Mexicans became exposed to the renewed controversy over Darwin's ideas.

First Baptist Church of Rio Rancho presented a lecture by Russell Humphreys of the Institute for Creation Research on "Evidence For a Young World," in March, 2003.²²⁰ Humphreys, a born-again Christian, was once a Sandia Laboratories employee working on some of the most advanced scientific concepts of nuclear physics. He abandoned evolution after he discovered it "wasn't fitting the Bible too well."²²¹ Humphreys harkened back to the creation science days by invoking young earth creationism. "Most people believe science proved the world was formed billions of years ago," Humphreys told the *Albuquerque Journal*, "but the Bible states the age of the earth in terms of thousands of years. Billions of years is obviously at odds with scripture."²²² Creationism, whether in the form of intelligent design or young earth Biblical literalism, took its appeal directly to the people of New Mexico through lectures such as Humphreys'.

²¹⁸ "Who is IDNET-NM?," Accessed on 25 February 2009, at <http://www.nmidnet.org/who.htm>.

²¹⁹ Information accessed on 20 February 2009 at www.intelligentdesignnetwork.org.

²²⁰ Patrick Dunn, "Scientist Puts His Faith in Theory of Creation," *Albuquerque Journal*, 13 March 2003, 4.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

The controversy reached the higher levels of New Mexico science education as well. In 2003, several University of New Mexico science professors, as well as the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, expressed concern over an undergraduate course titled “Origins: Science, Faith and Philosophy.”²²³ Michael Kent, a Sandia Laboratories employee, taught the course, along with a psychology professor. An intelligent design conference put on by the Polyani Center in 1999 inspired Kent to create the class. The *Albuquerque Journal* reported that the objective of the course was to “present a balanced view that pairs mainstream scientific views with the notion of intelligent design.”²²⁴ At first, the College of Arts and Sciences tabbed the course as eligible to fulfill the required science credit. After many of the university’s science professors objected to this idea, the dean of the college told Kent that his course was “more typical of humanities courses in beginning with questions” and could not be given as a science credit.²²⁵ From the state’s middle schools to the state’s largest university, the doctrine of intelligent design continued to challenge the teaching of evolution in New Mexico.

The state’s Board of Education, however, refused to back down from evolution in the face of controversy. In 2003 the Board met to once again to vote on new science standards. In a process that had begun in 2002, the Board developed standards that emphasized evolution even more strongly than in the 1999 standards. A representative from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, an organization based out of Washington, D.C., dedicated to blocking the inclusion of creationism and

²²³ Olivier Uyttebrouck, “Origins Course Not Science, UNM Dean Says,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 1 October 2003, A1.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

intelligent design in America's public schools, called a draft of the new standards "clear, knowledgeable, superbly organized and well integrated," to the point that they "compare with, and in some ways surpass, the very best standards adopted to date."²²⁶ The process followed by the Board did not ignore intelligent design. In fact, the Board allowed members from IDnet-NM to submit their own proposals all along the way so that the members of the Board could understand their grievances.

Board member Flora Sanchez noted a marked difference between the 2003 Board meeting on science standards and the previous 1999 meeting. Sanchez reported that in 1999 teachers from across the state implored her to support them by bolstering evolution in the science standards. By contrast, in 2003 Sanchez "received packets of information from the Intelligent Design Network as well as letters in support of evolution from scientists around the country."²²⁷ The eyes of the nation's scientists and intelligent design supporters fixed firmly on the state Board of Education of New Mexico. In late August the Board approved the new curriculum unanimously.²²⁸ As journalist Jeff Tollefson noted, it seemed that "New Mexico's scientific community" was winning the "battle over the treatment of biological evolution in science education."²²⁹

By 2005, however, new national research polls indicated that the majority of Americans still approved of teaching some form of creationism in schools, in addition to evolution. The study, conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

²²⁶ Jeff Tollefson, "Proposed Science Standards Include Evolution," *Albuquerque Journal*, 10 August 2003, B1. The Foundation's spokesman was Lawrence Lerner, who by 2003 had evaluated state science requirements for the organization for six years.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Diana Heil, "Evolution Science Staying in Schools," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 29 August 2003, A1.

²²⁹ Tollefson, "Proposed Science Standards Include Evolution."

and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, found that from a sample of 2,000 Americans, 64 percent did not object to teaching both evolution and creationism in science classes. Thirty-eight percent of respondents favored replacing evolution completely with creationism.²³⁰ These numbers reflected New Mexicans' feelings on the issue as well, but to a slightly lesser extent. A poll of New Mexico voters asked specifically what participants thought about intelligent design. Fifty percent said that they agreed with intelligent design after being read a definition of the term.²³¹ Forty-nine percent of respondents said they would support the teaching of intelligent design in New Mexico's schools. Eugenie C. Scott, director of the National Center for Science Education, an organization dedicated to fighting evolution's detractors across the country, stated that the reason Americans felt this way was out of a sense of fairness. As Scott explained, "it's the strongest thing that creationists have got going for them because their science is dismal, but they do have American culture on their side."²³² Even though the state's science standards remained firmly supportive of evolution, New Mexico's citizenry reflected the wider trends in American society that did not actively discourage alternative theories.

One idea for compromise that gained popularity nationwide recommended that instructors teach students about the controversy between evolution and intelligent design in science class. The "teach the controversy" movement gained support from President George W. Bush and other influential politicians, such as Republican

²³⁰ Laurie Goodstein, "Teaching Creationism Is Endorsed in New Survey," *New York Times*, 31 August 2005.

²³¹ "Poll: Intelligent Design has Support in N.M.," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 7 November 2005, A2. The poll the *New Mexican* quoted was conducted by the *Albuquerque Journal*.

²³² Ibid.

Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee.²³³ President Bush called on the sentiments of fairness and diversity of opinion when he told reporters in generalized terms, “I think that part of education is to expose people to different schools of thought, you’re asking me whether or not people ought to be exposed to different ideas, and the answer is yes.”²³⁴ The National Center for Science Education responded to the President’s support for exposing students to both sides. It stated, “It sounds like you are being fair, but creationism is a sectarian religious viewpoint, and intelligent design is a sectarian religious viewpoint It’s not fair to privilege one religious viewpoint by calling it the other side of evolution.”²³⁵ Some politicians went to extreme measures to explain their distaste for evolution-only teaching. Republican congressional representative and House Majority Leader Tom Delay of Texas declared that the Columbine shooting massacre at a Colorado high school in 1999 occurred in large part “because our school systems teach our children that they are nothing but glorified apes who have evolutionized [*sic*] out of some primordial mud.”²³⁶ Evolution’s opponents remained dedicated to the cause, but many recognized that the idea of “teach the controversy” represented their best bet for introducing alternative theories into America’s public school science classes.

In New Mexico, the local school board of Rio Rancho took up the issue of alternative theories on their own. Whereas APS exercised its right to pass local curriculum standards in 1997 to strengthen the teaching of evolution in their schools,

²³³ Elisabeth Bumiller, “Bush Remarks Roil Debate Over Teaching of Evolution,” *New York Times*, 3 August 2005, A14.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid. Statement given on behalf of the organization by spokeswoman Susan Spath.

²³⁶ Lawrence Krauss, “School Boards Want to ‘Teach the Controversy.’ What Controversy?,” *The New York Times*, 17 May 2005.

the neighboring Rio Rancho school system opened the door for opposition in 2005.

Led by Don Schlichte, a local pastor and board member, the new policy aimed to ensure that alternative ideas to evolution were not explicitly excluded from the curriculum:

The Rio Rancho Board of Education recognizes that scientific theories, such as theories regarding biological and cosmological origins, may be used to support or to challenge individual religious and philosophical beliefs. Consequently, the teaching of science in public school science classrooms may be of great interest and concern to students and their parents.

The Board also acknowledges the conditional trust parents place in public education, as well as the requirements of the Constitution and New Mexico education law, that the classroom not be used to indoctrinate students into any religious or philosophical belief system.

Because of these concerns, this policy recognizes that Rio Rancho Public Schools should teach an objective science education, without religious or philosophical bias, that upholds the highest standards of empirical science.

Therefore, science teachers in Rio Rancho Public Schools will align their instruction with the district's approved curricula and fully comply with the requirements of the New Mexico 2003 revised Science Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards. . . discussions about issues that are of interest to both science and individual religious and philosophical beliefs will acknowledge that reasonable people may disagree about the meaning and interpretation of data.²³⁷

New Mexico's state Department of Education affirmed the Rio Rancho Public School Board's right to "supplement the required standards." Supplemental material still needed to remain within state and federal laws against introducing religious doctrine into public schools. New Mexico's American Civil Liberties Union warned that they would take legal action if a teacher taught intelligent design in science class.²³⁸ Rio Rancho's new standards seemed to support the "teach the controversy" theme used by evolution's detractors. The standards avoided any mention of evolution. Marshall Berman, who had since stepped down from his state Board of

²³⁷ Elaine D. Briseo, "Rio Rancho Opens Class Doors to Debate," *Albuquerque Journal*, 28 August 2005, B1.

²³⁸ Ibid.

Education post, weighed in on Rio Rancho's new standards. He wrote the *Santa Fe New Mexican* in October, 2005:

In Rio Rancho, three school-board members, who admit to no scientific expertise whatsoever, claim they know there are data indicating weaknesses and gaps in the 'field' of 'origins science.' That unscientific expression has its 'origin' in the contradictions between Biblical inerrancy and scientific understandings of cosmology and the origin of species.

I ask New Mexicans to stand up against propaganda and indoctrination in the science classrooms.²³⁹

Intelligent design supporters in New Mexico turned Berman's argument on its head. Like Phillip Johnson in 1999, they claimed that evolution formed a kind of "faith" of its own, indoctrinating students in the same way that a religion might. Pastor Michael W. Naranjo of The Rock Christian Fellowship in Española claimed that the "scientific community, given their Darwinian faith, has responded with absolute resistance [to intelligent design]."²⁴⁰ In the tradition of William Jennings Bryan, Pastor Naranjo stumped for intelligent design on behalf of the average American:

For the common man who simply believes and trusts the creator, intelligent design makes sense. More sense than believing that a fish by chance and random mutation somehow developed lungs out of gills while managing not to drown through the eons of chance development. More sense than believing that we evolved from reptiles and monkeys. 'In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.' (Genesis 1:27) It is important to note that not one scientist has been able to create life in a laboratory. You can zap primordial soup all you want, but life only comes from Him and only Him. The sophisticated complexities of biochemical systems are far too intricate and complex to have developed by chance. Intelligent design should become an essential component of scientific explanation.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Marshall Berman, "My View: Five Locals Speak Out on 'Intelligent Design,'" *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 16 October 2005, F3.

²⁴⁰ Michael W. Naranjo, "My View: Five Locals Speak Out," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 16 October 2005, F3.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

For Pastor Naranjo, intelligent design's appeal came in the form of common sense. That line of reasoning, however, proved insufficient for New Mexico's scientific community. In 2005, the New Mexicans for Science and Reason began broadcasting a weekly radio show called "Science Watch."²⁴² The Rio Rancho school board's decision drew the ire of the radio program on a couple of its initial shows. Marshall Berman asked New Mexicans to join him in writing letters, mostly in the form of e-mail, to the Rio Rancho school board to protest its actions.²⁴³ Interestingly, some felt that introducing intelligent design in the classroom was not just bad for science, but it was bad for business. Although unaware of the historical connection, journalist Winthrop Quigley harkened back to New Mexico's 1927 debate over evolution when he described the position of American business toward intelligent design for the *Albuquerque Journal*:

Regardless of any spiritual angst one might feel, the fact remains that ID [intelligent design] is bad for business. Corporate America, especially its technology companies, is very worried about losing its competitive advantage over India, China and other Asian countries because of a poorly educated workforce. . . . Thomas L. Friedman in his book 'The World Is Flat' said every major company he interviewed for the book 'is investing significantly in research and development abroad. It is not "follow the money." It is "follow the brains."' While Rio Rancho schools are working to put non-science into their science program, a kid in India is preparing to take our kids' technology jobs. I promise you, the Indian kid is not wasting his time studying ID.²⁴⁴

Quigley's statement draws a connection between quality science education and a thriving economy and job market, much like the Albuquerque commercial organizations had done nearly eighty years prior. In the 1920s, Albuquerque's

²⁴² Accessed on 23 February 2009, at <http://www.nmsr.org/goradio.htm#pastshows>.

²⁴³ Elaine D. Briseo, "Letter Drive Opposes Science Policy; E-Mails Urged to RR School Board," *Albuquerque Journal*, 8 September 2005, 1.

²⁴⁴ Winthrop Quigley, "Why Intelligent Design is Wrong in Science Class," *Albuquerque Journal*, 27 October 2005, 2.

business community wanted to attract commerce and citizens from other states to settle in New Mexico by taking a stand against antievolutionism and supporting science. By the twenty-first century quality science education implied competitiveness in a global economy. In both cases, some New Mexicans reasoned that proper science education held the key to a prosperous state and citizenry. Meanwhile, in 2005 New Mexicans, as well as the rest of the nation interested in the controversy, turned their attention to a federal case in Pennsylvania that promised to determine the future of the debate.

In 2005, a federal court agreed to hear arguments in the case of *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*. Parents from Dover, Pennsylvania, had sued their local School Board for allowing intelligent design in the public high school curriculum, charging that it constituted a breach of the separation of church and state.²⁴⁵ The trial became the focal point of the national intelligent design debate. Expert testimony for both sides provided Federal Judge John E. Jones III with the most up-to-date information on the two theories. In his decision in late 2005, Judge Jones struck down the Dover School Board's standards by linking intelligent design to creationism. The language of the ruling offered a sharp rebuke of the underlying assumptions regarding intelligent design:

In making this determination, we have addressed the seminal question of whether I.D. is science. We have concluded that it is not, and moreover that I.D. cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents.

Both defendants and many of the leading proponents of I.D. make a bedrock assumption which is utterly false. Their presupposition is that evolutionary theory is antithetical to a belief in the existence of a supreme being and to religion in general. Repeatedly in this trial, plaintiffs' scientific experts

²⁴⁵ Laurie Goodstein, "Evolution Lawsuit Opens With Broadside Against Intelligent Design," *New York Times*, 27 September 2005, A21.

testified that the theory of evolution represents good science, is overwhelmingly accepted by the scientific community, and that it in no way conflicts with, nor does it deny, the existence of a divine creator.

To be sure, Darwin's theory of evolution is imperfect. However, the fact that a scientific theory cannot yet render an explanation on every point should not be used as a pretext to thrust an untestable alternative hypothesis grounded in religion into the science classroom or to misrepresent well-established scientific propositions.

The citizens of the Dover area were poorly served by the members of the board who voted for the I.D. policy. It is ironic that several of these individuals, who so staunchly and proudly touted their religious convictions in public, would time and again lie to cover their tracks and disguise the real purpose behind the I.D. policy.

With that said, we do not question that many of the leading advocates of I.D. have bona fide and deeply held beliefs which drive their scholarly endeavors. Nor do we controvert that I.D. should continue to be studied, debated, and discussed. As stated, our conclusion today is that it is unconstitutional to teach I.D. as an alternative to evolution in a public school science classroom.²⁴⁶

The results of the Dover trial had an immediate impact on the evolution debate in New Mexico. Under pressure from citizens like Berman, and in the wake of Judge Jones's ruling, the Rio Rancho school board amended the standards in 2006 to placate the concerns of the public by removing a sentence that did not agree with the state standards.²⁴⁷ Evolution once again found a friendly ally in the modern American court system.

As 2005 drew to a close, "intelligent design" qualified as a finalist for the "word of the year" award given by the American Dialect Society. The banquet to

²⁴⁶ "Excerpt From the Ruling on Intelligent Design," *New York Times*, 21 December 2005, A34.

²⁴⁷ Elaine D. Briseo, "Rio Rancho Schools Amend Science Policy; Critics Said Earlier Standard was a Ruse to get Intelligent Design in the Classroom," *Albuquerque Journal*, 11 April 2006, A1. The sentence that ran counter to the state's requirements and met the most opposition read: "When appropriate and consistent with the New Mexico Science Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards, discussions about issues that are of interest to both science and individual religious and philosophical beliefs will acknowledge that reasonable people may disagree about the meaning and interpretation of data."

decide on the winning word was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on January 6, 2006.²⁴⁸ Intelligent design lost to television personality Stephen Colbert and his invented word “truthiness,” which the Dialect Society defined as “the quality of stating concepts or facts one wishes or believes to be true.”²⁴⁹ In a year of more significant losses, perhaps advocates of intelligent design could overlook this defeat. However, intelligent design proponents knew the importance of positive exposure in an age of mass media. Evolution’s supporters recognized this as well.

One professor of geology at the University of Massachusetts, Donald U. Wise, reached out to the American people through attempts at comedy. “The scientific community just isn’t touching John Q. Public,” Wise said. “We just have to find a way of breaking through. The only way we will do that is with humor.”²⁵⁰ He devised a plan to replace the term “intelligent design” with “incompetent design” in America’s consciousness. One of the methods Wise developed to accomplish this idea included new lyrics to the “Battle Hymn of the Republic”:

My bones proclaim a story of incompetent design
 My back still hurts, my sinus clogs, my teeth just won’t align
 If I had drawn the blueprint I would certainly resign
 Incompetent Design!
 Evo-Evo-Evolution. Design is but a mere illusion
 Darwin sparked our revolution. Science shall prevail!²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Dan Mayfield, “Will Whale Tail Be ‘05’s Legacy?; ‘Yodas’ from American Dialect Society Coming to Albuquerque to Vote for the Word of the Year,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 31 December 2005, A1.

²⁴⁹ Isabel Sanchez, “Linguists Pick The 2005 -iest Word - Society Anoints ‘Truthiness,’ Meaning ‘truth-y, not fact-y,’ as its Word of the Year,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 7 January 2006, A1. Stephen Colbert is the host of “The Colbert Report” on television’s Comedy Central.

²⁵⁰ Cornelia Dean, “Helping Out Darwin’s Cause With a Little Pointed Humor,” *The New York Times*, 27 December 2005, F3.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Pointed humor and the Dover case aside, the theory of evolution continued to attract dissent at the local level in New Mexico. In 2006, Robert Hall, Pastor of the Calvary Chapel of Albuquerque, launched an eight-week-long lecture series on teaching creationism and denouncing evolution. “If creationism is taught openly,” Hall predicted, “people will see the falsehood of evolution and consider the account in the Bible.”²⁵² Hall did not find the evolution controversy to be a laughing matter: “Genesis says God created the earth in six literal days. If the book of Genesis was a myth, then there was no Adam, no original sin and no need for a savior. Evolution and the arguments for it undermine our faith.” Pastor Hall seemed to revel in his role of keeping the controversy alive. He proclaimed, “if I’m not making waves, then I’m not doing my job.”²⁵³ Undeterred by the 2005 setbacks, local antievolutionists in New Mexico’s evangelical churches continued to stoke the coals of fundamentalism with an eye towards the future.

The proponents of intelligent design set out to shift the paradigm of the modern world away from Darwinian evolution and back to one of divine origins. Ever since the wide dissemination of evolutionary theory in the late nineteenth century, theologians and laypersons alike have pointed to the choice of either “God or Darwin” as a false dichotomy. Nevertheless, evolution and the secular scientific community provide modern evangelical fundamentalists with a useful model. They represented that which they did not wish to be— a group separated from the interpretation of the Bible as the revealed word of God and a source of literal truth

²⁵² Patrick Dunn, “How it All Began; Calvary Chapel Pastor Plans Series to Teach his Congregation about Creationism,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 1 July 2006, 3.

²⁵³ Ibid.

regarding human and cosmological origins. Since it contained a large group of Biblical literalists as well as a large contingent of scientifically-conscious citizens, New Mexico entered the twenty-first century as a hotbed of evolution controversy.

Partisans on both sides of the issue put the stakes in the gravest terms. Dave Thomas, President of the New Mexicans for Science and Reason, told the *New York Times* that if alternative theories to evolution became sanctioned policy in public schools, next “we’ll have Holocaust deniers insisting there were no gas chambers.”²⁵⁴ In his 2008 documentary, “Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed,” noted conservative television personality Ben Stein struck a chord with audiences in an appeal for intelligent design. In the film, Stein compared the scientific establishment’s insistence on evolution-only education to Nazism interspersed with intermittent clips of concentration camps.²⁵⁵ The modern debate often inspires a worst-case-scenario attitude, but does it advance people’s awareness on the issue? A 2005 poll indicated that 43 percent of New Mexicans had still neither read nor heard anything about intelligent design.²⁵⁶ Stein’s documentary, promoted by New Mexico’s evangelical mega-churches like Calvary Chapel, aimed at reaching those uninformed citizens as well as rallying the already converted.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Michael Janofsky, “New Mexico Bars Creationism From State Curriculum,” *New York Times*, 9 October 1999.

²⁵⁵ Ethan Gilsdorf, “No Intelligence Allowed in ‘Expelled,’” *The Boston Globe*, 19 April 2008. Accessed on 24 February 2009, at http://www.boston.com/ae/movies/articles/2008/04/19/no_intelligence_allowed_in_expelled/.

²⁵⁶ “Poll: Intelligent Design has Support in N.M.,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 7 November 2005, A2.

²⁵⁷ Information accessed on 24 February 2009, at <http://www.ruamoney.com>. This website, launched to combat the celebration of Charles Darwin’s 200th birthday in February, 2009, listed three screenings of “Expelled” in the Albuquerque area with the final showing at Calvary Chapel, Albuquerque. The website showed Ben Stein wearing a monkey mask and a disclaimer stating “Don’t let Darwin Make a Monkey out of You.”

In 1927, Albuquerque's Baptists had argued that mandating evolution in the public school system would make the state a "hiss and byword" in the eyes of the nation. In the modern controversy, scientists and other concerned citizens worried that the same thing could happen if intelligent design entered the science curriculum. Both sides in the modern controversy felt that they were guardians of the future potential of New Mexico's young hearts and minds. In an increasingly technological world, emphasis on quality science education will surely continue to grow. Evolution in New Mexico, it seems, has not witnessed its final challenge from a highly adaptive and passionate foe.

When New Mexicans felt a challenge to their notions of fairness in the modern debate, they tended to be open to allowing differing opinions in the classroom. However, when faced with the possibility of harming their children's future in a technology-driven global job market, they voted out school board members who supported teaching "alternative theories." In the early twenty-first century, New Mexico emerged as a key battleground in the modern American evolution debate. National and local organizations worked diligently on opposing sides to both support the teaching of evolution and to open the door for alternative theories. As the state nears the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, state science standards continue to support evolution, for now. But the final chapter of the one-hundred-and-fifty-year-old controversy has yet to be written.

Conclusion

Like science, religion is a powerful force that can give meaning to life and cause incredible conflict in the world. The history of the evolution controversy in New Mexico provides only one example among many of the clash between religion and science in American history. The American evolution controversy developed over the course of the twentieth century from attempts to completely outlaw the theory in the 1920s to mandated instruction as found in the modern debate. Yet the case of New Mexico proved unique in the evolution controversy. New Mexico only experienced public outrage over evolution in the 1920s after a proposal emerged to *mandate* its teaching in 1927. Sixty years later, in many areas of the country, New Mexico included, the theory of evolution remains as contentious a topic as ever.

Any study of an ongoing conflict begs the question, “what is at stake?” In the 1920s debate, Albuquerque’s commercial organizations recognized an opportunity to attract citizens from those states banning evolution and thus proposed mandating the theory in New Mexico’s schools. The desire for economic development and overall success of American institutions in the state led to such innovative ideas as the mandate. Many of the Southern Baptists in New Mexico, however, revealed their uncompromising opposition to any proposed mandate by supporting the First Baptist Church of Albuquerque’s “Anti-Evolution Resolution.” According to these Baptists, forcing evolution upon the schools meant placing morality, the institution of marriage, the sanctity of the home, American ideals of freedom, and God’s Word in jeopardy. Their swift response to the evolution mandate proposal ensured that no state politician dared to introduce such a measure in the legislature. Commercial

organizations wanted business to expand and the Baptists wanted to save souls. In the end, both sides stood to gain more of each in New Mexico by simply dropping the controversy. The issue essentially faded for about forty years.

The evolution controversy revived to become a truly widespread national movement in the 1990s but with a new name: intelligent design. With both an entrenched scientific community and a bustling contingent of evangelical Protestants, New Mexico entered the modern debate much more prepared for a sustained fight than in the 1920s. From the local to the state level, New Mexico became hotly contested ground. One scientist observed of the modern debate that the “admission of scientific creationism to the classroom as science is not only a contradiction of terms but will lead to the wholesale destruction of a form of reasoning that serves us well.”²⁵⁸ The Intelligent Design Network of New Mexico’s website directed the Catholics in the state to read the following message from intelligent design supporter and journalist Denyse O’Leary:

The Darwinian explanation does not explain religious belief, it explains it away. It removes any reason for supposing that the reason that we believe in God is that God actually exists and has revealed himself to us.

Can you still believe in God or revelation? Yes, but your belief becomes the intellectual equivalent of smoking pot. You evolved in such a way that belief turns you on. That, in sum, is the reason for the strong appeal of Darwin's theory to atheists.²⁵⁹

In order to avoid such intellectual and spiritual pitfalls, O’Leary’s article implored all Catholics to join with evangelical Protestants and embrace intelligent design. In fact, O’Leary rested her hope on intelligent design as the only remaining

²⁵⁸ Warren D. Dolphin, “A Brief Critical Analysis of Scientific Creationism,” in David B. Wilson, ed., *Did the Devil Make Darwin Do It? Modern Perspectives of the Creation-Evolution Controversy* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1983), 35.

²⁵⁹ Denyse O’Leary, “Can the Catholic Church Believe in God and Darwin?,” Accessed on 22 February 2009, at <http://www.arn.org/blogs/index.php/2/2008/10/25/>.

concept to refute evolution and preserve the Christian faith. These views on the implications of the modern debate show that partisans on both sides of the controversy viewed the situation as extremely important.

Of course, not all people find religion and evolution to be mutually exclusive or view the controversy as a fight to the death. As far back as Darwin's publication of the *Origin of Species*, those concerned with the issue noted the possibility of co-existence between evolution and God. As Darwin wrote: "A celebrated author and divine has written to me that 'he has gradually learnt to see that it is just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that He created a few original forms capable of self-development into other and needful forms, as to believe that He required a fresh act of creation to supply the voids caused by the action of His laws.'"²⁶⁰ In his 2005 book, *The Evolution-Creation Struggle*, philosopher of science Michael Ruse concluded that "those of us who love science must do more than simply restate our positions or criticize the opposition. We must understand our own assumptions and, equally, find out why others have (often) legitimate concerns. This is not a plea for weak-kneed compromise but a more informed and self-aware approach to the issue."²⁶¹ These more moderate statements from religious and secular citizens also arose in New Mexico in the 1920s and 1990s. Nevertheless, respect for the opposing viewpoint too often evaporated in the heat of the moment, especially in the intensity of the modern debate.

The persistence of the evolution controversy formed a striking characteristic in the development of modern American culture. New Mexico developed into a full-

²⁶⁰ Darwin, vol. 2., *Origin of Species*, 294.

²⁶¹ Michael Ruse, *The Evolution-Creation Struggle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 288.

fledged participant in the discussion. Even so, a common theme emerged in both the 1920s and the modern debate. Evolution's supporters and opponents both drew on humor as a means of expressing their views on the matter. In the 1920s Reverend W. E. Wright wrote rhymes comically denying any common lineage with monkeys. Meanwhile, Will Rogers suggested that Tennessee's antievolution Butler Act and the subsequent Scopes trial only served to prove that humans shared common ancestry with lower orders of animals. Two generations later, Professor Donald U. Wise satirized intelligent design by replacing the lyrics to the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" with a message of "incompetent design." Today, caricatures of monkeys and outrageous ideas like the "flying spaghetti monster" are used as a means of drawing people into the controversy by making them laugh.²⁶² In the New Mexico evolution controversy, the use of humor echoed similar trends across the nation.

The evolution debate became much more nationalized following the Cold War era. Battlegrounds still formed at the local and state level. However, the terms and tactics of the modern debate emanated from centralized organizations, such as the Discovery Institute and the National Center for Science Education. We can see from the development of the evolution controversy in New Mexico that mainstream American culture predominantly directed the forms of controversy during the 1990s. This accounts for the surge of participation in the modern debate, as opposed to the limited activity in the 1920s. This is not to suggest that innovative approaches comparable to the 1927 evolution mandate controversy are a thing of the past. The

²⁶² Sarah Boxer, "But is there Intelligent Spaghetti Out There?," *New York Times*, 29 August 2005, E.3. The flying spaghetti monster refers to a campaign against allowing alternative theories into science classrooms that originated over the modern debate in Kansas. Supporters of the campaign argued tongue-in-cheek that if intelligent design had a place in science classrooms, so did their "belief," which held that the universe was created by a flying spaghetti monster.

modern debate is now carried on over the internet on sites like youtube.com, with amateur videos making various claims and counterclaims. The Foundation for Thought and Ethics, which published one of the first intelligent design textbooks, *Of Pandas and People*, now utilizes the internet to reach teachers and parents, without approval from state boards of education.²⁶³ The possibilities for unique approaches to the controversy remain, but it seems unlikely that they will be contained within a particular state or locale, as occurred in New Mexico in 1927.

For Charles Darwin's 200th birthday on February 12, 2009, the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque planned a week-long celebration. Focusing on several lectures on evolution and its historical impact, Darwin Week promised to be an intellectual festival dedicated the man and the theory. As the date drew closer, however, chalk drawings of monkeys appeared on the university's main campus sidewalks asking passing pedestrians, "Are You A Monkey?"²⁶⁴ Attributed to the local Calvary Church and Renovate Campus Ministries, the artwork displayed a website address that led the curious to a video of students dancing in monkey masks to Michael Jackson's song "Thriller." The website later revealed its true purpose by promoting three local screenings of Ben Stein's intelligent design documentary "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed." The reaction of Albuquerque's evangelical Protestant churches to Darwin Week serves as a reminder that the evolution

²⁶³ Forrest and Gross, *Creationism's Trojan Horse*, 162. The Foundation for Thought and Ethics website can be accessed at www.fteonline.com.

²⁶⁴ Pat Lohman, "Campaign Hypes Creationism Event," *Daily Lobo*, 28 January 2009. This article describes the video from the website accompanying the chalk drawings. For the information on the documentary screenings the same website was accessed on 24 February 2009 at <http://www.ruamonkey.com>.

controversy remains alive and well in the twenty-first century. It seems that New Mexico has not witnessed its final controversy over the theory of evolution.

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