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Editorial and Publishing Offices :

MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.,

ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON, W C.2.

Editorial communications should be addressed to the Editor.

Advertisements and business letters to the Publishers.

Telephone Number : GERRARD 8830.

Telegraphic Address : PHUSIS, WESTRAND, LONDON.

NO. 2892, VOL. 115]

The Proscription of Darwinism.

ON March 23 the Governor of Tennessee signed a Bill which enacts that "it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, normal schools, and all other public schools of the State which are supported in whole or in part by the school funds of the State to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man is descended from a lower order of animals." This Act marks another important advance in the outlawry of Darwinism in American education. Tennessee is one of the most enlightened of the Southern States, but it has followed the example of five others. The last previous action, as stated in Prof. J. W. Gregory's "Menace of Colour," 1925, p. 74, was the unanimous decision last July of the State Education Committee of Georgia to refuse grants to any school or university which teaches the doctrine of evolution. The Legislature of Florida had earlier decreed, also unanimously, that it is "contrary to the public welfare for teachers paid by taxation to teach as a fact any hypothesis that links man in blood relationship with any lower form of life." A Bill with the same purpose was defeated in Kentucky by one vote only. Text-books of biology have been debarred from schools in North Carolina because they asserted a relationship between man and monkeys.

This proscription of Darwinism is the result of two main impulses—one religious, the other racial. The religious impulse is the more publicly expressed, and is doubtless the more influential. The Fundamentalists in the United States are as powerful as the Evangelicals were in England seventy years ago. The conclusions of "The Origin of Species" were denounced by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce to the British Association at Oxford in 1860; and his argument that they are inconsistent with Genesis had to be taken seriously. The support to that position had become negligible in England fifty years ago; but its survival in the United States is shown by the writings of Mr. W. J. Bryan, who has been thrice candidate for the Presidency, and was State Secretary in Wilson's cabinet. His theological books, including his "The Menace of Darwinism, and the Bible and its Enemies" (1921), "In His Image" (1922), and "Shall Christianity remain Christian?" (1924), are written in the frame of mind of Wilberforce; and as the Bishop repudiated an ape as his ancestor, Bryan represents Darwinism as adding insult to injury by insistence that man has descended, not from an American, but

from an African monkey. Bryan regards the Modernists as descending from Christianity to Atheism by successive adoption of seven grievous errors—"The Bible not infallible; Man not made in God's image; no miracles; no Virgin Birth; no Deity; no Atonement; no Resurrection." The multitude of those who make this descent is attributed to Darwinism. "The principal objection to Evolution," says Bryan, "is that it is highly harmful to those who accept it, and attempt to conform their thought to it. Evolution does not ruin all who accept it, neither does smallpox kill all who take it. In fact only five per cent. of those who take smallpox die of it. The spiritual mortality among evolutionists is greater than that." Bryan is probably right in his view that Darwinism has been the most effective factor in undermining belief in the literal inspiration of the Bible. Hence it is charged with being the main cause of the asserted decline in American morals and ethics. "Darwinism," says Bryan, "chills the spiritual nature and quenches the fires of religious enthusiasm." Fairhurst, in his "Atheism in our Universities," complains that their influence is ruinous; he declares that most of the students drink, half of them gamble, and only a tithe of them are interested in religion. A census is claimed to show that eighty-five per cent. of the students enter the Universities as Christians; the number of sceptics is doubled in the first year and trebled by graduation. Some Fundamentalists describe American society as "brought to the verge of ruin by a godless philosophy," which is based on evolution. Hence Bryan declares "Evolution is the Menace of Civilisation. It is the greatest menace to civilisation as well as to religion. Belief in God is the fundamental fact in society; upon it rests all the controlling influences of life. Anything that weakens man's faith in God imperils the future of the race."

Bryan's attempt to refute Darwinism is futile. It is, he says, "not science at all; it is guesses strung together." In support of its unscientific character he quotes "Dr. Etheridge, Fossilologist of the British Museum," and misrepresents modern authorities such as Bateson. The main charge against it is that it is "not only groundless but absurd and harmful to society," as it rests on the brute doctrine of survival of the fittest, which is said to encourage selfishness, to be fatal to the spirit of brotherhood, and to render certain the destruction of modern culture by international and industrial war. Men with such convictions naturally feel bound to prevent national funds being used in the spread of such pernicious doctrine. No teacher in a

public school in the States would be permitted to teach that monarchy is superior to republicanism, and Bryan objects to public funds being used to sap national faith by "teaching daily what cannot be true if the Bible be true." He claims that men of science are a small minority and should not be allowed to use the public schools for the dissemination of their subversive dogmas.

The campaign against Darwinism also gains support from the objection to its evidence of a common ancestor for the Negro and Caucasian. The extent of this impulse is uncertain, but it is significant that the six States which have taken action against evolution are all in the south. On this question the Bible would appear to agree with Darwin; for did not Paul on Mars Hill declare that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men"? Some Americans avoid this difficulty by denying that negroes are descendants of Adam and claim that accordingly they are not men. The negro is a soulless animal at the head of the ape family! Believers in Noah's Deluge may fairly claim that the negro cannot have varied from the white stock as quickly as would be necessary to explain his appearance on earlier Egyptian records. If the negro be not a descendant of Noah, the Bible statements regarding "all men" are held not to apply to him.

The inter-racial difficulties in the southern states have certainly helped the anti-Darwinism agitation indirectly; for their educational backwardness and the poverty of one section of their people is due to the presence of the negro and to cheap negro labour. Recent statistics show that in two counties in North Carolina the white crofters and "renters" have a cash income per person of fourpence and sevenpence per day respectively; the corresponding classes of negroes earn a penny a day more. Families with such income cannot afford education, books, newspapers, doctors, or enjoy a reasonable standard of life. It is not surprising that they retain beliefs which, according to British notions, are decades out of date.

Bryan's eloquence and sincerity have made him perhaps the most powerful recent individual influence in American politics. But he has often failed to persuade his countrymen to adopt his policy. His present appeal for trust in the Rock of Ages rather than in "Ages of Rocks" may carry still further the educational outlawry of Darwinism; but it will probably fail in the end as completely as his famous appeal to the United States to adopt bimetallism "to save a world crucified on a Cross of gold."