

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR.

MR. SPEAKER: I am directed by the Governor to return herewith the following House Bills with his approval: House Bills Nos. 185, 649, 750; also a message in writing.

J. D. TALLEY, *Secretary.*

The message was taken up, read by the Clerk and is as follows:

To the Honorable House of Representatives:

Because of the unusual interest which has been manifested in House Bill No. 185, known as the "Anti-Evolution Bill," I ask to spread on your journals, the following statement in reference to this bill.

Many earnest and interesting communications have been received regarding it.

As might be expected, many of these approved the bill and many of them disapproved it.

Freedom of religion and strict separation of church and state are fixed principles in this country. This bill should be rejected if it contravenes either proposition. In my judgment, it does neither.

The Constitution of Tennessee records the belief of our people in God and a future life.

“No person who denies the being of God or a future state of rewards and punishment, shall hold any office in the Civil Department of this State,” Article 9, Section 3.

By what laws shall the rewards and punishments be meted to us in the future state? Obviously, the answer must be by those laws, which God has revealed to us. And the further answer must be that His laws have been revealed to us in the Holy Bible, if at all. It is this Bible which orders our conduct and by which we shall be judged for rewards or punishment in the future state. Therefore, our civil institutions under our constitution, are directly related to the Bible, and our whole scheme of government is inseparably connected with it by this provision in our organic law.

Our system of public schools has become a far reaching and important function in our government. The minds of children are moulded and taught in these schools.

Since our Constitution has recognized God, and if the Bible is His holy word directly governing our relationship to the future state of rewards and punishments, how is it possible for our school system to omit all attention to the Bible and to wholly ignore it? It is manifestly impossible. That fact has been recorded in our legislation.

“At least ten verses from the Bible shall be read or caused to be read without comment, at the opening of each and every public school upon each and every school day by the teacher in charge, provided, the teacher does not read the same chapter more than twice during the same session; provided, that where any teacher has other teachers under and subject to direction, then the teacher exercising this authority, shall read the Holy Bible, or cause it to be read as herein directed.” Acts 1915, Chapter 102.

Nobody will deny that the Holy Bible teaches that man was created by God in His own image. This bill is founded in the idea and belief that the very integrity of the Bible in its statement of man’s divine creation, is denied by any theory that man descended or has ascended from any lower order of animals. That such theory is at utter variance with the Bible story of man’s creation, is incapable of successful contradiction.

What is the language and object of the proposed bill?

“That it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the Universities, Normals, and all other public schools of the state which are supported in whole or in part by the public 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 has descended from a lower order of animals.”

It will be seen that this bill does not require any particular theory or interpretation of the Bible regarding man’s creation to be taught in the public schools. We know that creeds and religions are commonly founded in the differing refinements and interpretations of the Bible. The integrity of our Bible has been recognized in our laws, requiring it to be read in our schools and this bill does no more than provide that such integrity shall not be negated in the minds of our children on the fundamental point of man’s Divine creation. It is required that the Bible must be read without comment to insure that no religious creed or doctrine of our people may be offended by any interpretation or refinement of the teacher. It is perfectly plain that any creed or interpretation of the Bible, touching man’s creation, is permissible under this bill which does not deny his divinity and does not teach that man has been evolved from a lower animal. Indeed, it is my understanding that those professing the theory of evolution, have discarded that idea. Certainly, it has never been established as a fact.

Nothing of that sort is taught in any accepted book on science. It is the belief of our people and they say in this bill that any theory of man’s descent from a lower animal, is directly and fundamentally at variance with the statement and teaching of the Bible as to man’s creation, and that such theory because a denial of the Bible, shall not be taught in our public schools, where the Bible is read by law. Com-

ments on the Bible are forbidden; hence, any theory which disputes the integrity of the Bible is forbidden also. It seems to me that the two laws are entirely consistent. The widest latitude of interpretation will remain as to the time and manner of God's processes in His creation of man.

To insure our freedom of conscience in all religious matters was inserted Section 3 of Article 1, in our Constitution:

"That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience; that no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship or to maintain any minister against his consent; that no human authority can in any case whatever control or interfere with the rights of conscience; and that no preference shall ever be given by law to any religious establishment or mode of worship."

Obviously, there can be no infringement of this provision unless the teacher in our public schools by this bill, is controlled or interefered with in his right of conscience in teaching the subject of man's creation. This bill does not do that in the sense and meaning of the constitution. He has the undoubted right to believe and think on the subject without restraint from any human authority, but the constitution does not accord to the teacher the right to teach in our schools in matter whatever he may choose. The people have the right and must have the right to regulate what is taught in their schools. Otherwise, they could not choose their text books and require them to be taught in the schools. The regulation which is now being written into statutory law, involves a vital subject and policy. It is faith in man's Divine creation and the soul's immortality.

This faith definitely underlies the moral and spiritual life of our nation. Right or wrong, there is a deep and widespread belief that something is shaking the fundamentals of the country, both in religion and morals. It is the opinion of many that an abandonment of the old fashioned faith and belief in the Bible, is our trouble in large degree. It is my own belief.

After a careful examination, I can find nothing of consequence in the books now being taught in our schools with which this bill will interefere in the slightest manner. Therefore, it will not put our teachers in any jeopardy. Probably,

the law will never be applied. It may not be sufficiently definite to permit of any specific application or enforcement. Nobody believes that it is going to be an active statute.

But this bill is a distinct protest against an irreligious tendency to exalt so called science, and deny the Bible in some schools and quarters—a tendency fundamentally wrong and fatally mischievous in its effects on our children, our institutions and our country.

Having these views and with this explanation, after mature consideration, I do not hesitate to approve this Bill.

Respectfully,

AUSTIN PEAY, *Governor.*

March 23rd, 1925.

ON SENATE AMENDMENT.

House Bill No. 495—To create the 20th Judicial District.  
On motion the House concurred in the Senate Amendment by the following vote:

Ayes .....	40
Noes .....	15
Present and not voting .....	12

Representatives voting aye were: Messrs. Anthony, Armstrong, Bogle, Boyd (of Shelby), Bratton, Butler, Chamlee, Choate, Clark, Coleman, Conatser, Cooper (of Maury), Dowell, Driver, Early, Fielder, Fox, Gallimore, Gleaves, Hallberg, Hamilton, Haynes, Haynie, Holland, Larsen, Lewis, Loveless, Lowe, McCleish, McKnight, Miller (of Hardeman), Moran, Neely, Perry, Rackley, Ruffin, Summers, White, Willett and Yoakley—40.

Representatives voting no were: Messrs. Barger, Boyer, Brooks, Brown (of Blount), Guinn, Lee, Lyle, Marshall, McDaniel, Parker, Riggins, Sparks, Thompson, Tindell and Ward—15.

Representatives present and not voting were: Messrs. Acuff, Cook, Davis (of Davidson), Davis (of Knox), Durham, Franks, Greene, Jennings, Sewell, Simms, Wallace (of McNairy), and Mr. Speaker Barry—12.

HOUSE BILLS ON THIRD READING.

House Bill No. 794—To repeal Charter of Dickson and re-incorporate same.