

Vote as You Pray: The 1928 Election in Washington County, Arkansas

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ON OCTOBER 20, 1928, AN ADVERTISEMENT in the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* informed readers that Washington County, Arkansas's most prominent clergyman, Rev. H. K. Morehead, had failed to pay his poll tax, rendering him ineligible to vote in that year's election. The ad crowed, "After weeks of labor in an effort to persuade Southern Democrats to desert the party of their fathers and join hands with the most corrupt political machine the world has ever known, it develops that the Reverend Gentlemen . . . is unable to vote." Paid for by the Smith-Robinson Club of Washington County, the ad suggested, "A man unwilling to contribute ONE DOLLAR to the common school fund for a poll tax, has no right to advise Democrats how to vote."¹ The advertisement clearly illustrates not only Democrats' fears that white southerners would shrug off their traditional allegiances in the 1928 presidential election but also the complex collision of church and state that occurred that year in Arkansas. Many Protestant leaders around the country voiced their disapproval of Democratic presidential candidate Alfred E. Smith because of his perceived hostility to prohibition and his Catholicism. But Reverend Morehead and other Arkansas ministers were immersed in another controversy mixing religion and politics. In that same election, the state's voters would determine the fate of Initiated Act No. 1, which would ban the teaching of evolution in tax-supported schools. Numerous ministers around the state had been campaigning to remove evolution

¹*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, October 20, 1928. The *Daily Democrat* was owned by Roberta Fulbright, widow of Jay Fulbright and mother of J. William Fulbright, and was the largest newspaper in Fayetteville in 1928. See Michael B. Dougan, *Community Diaries: Arkansas Newspapering, 1819-2002* (Little Rock: August House, 2003), 194, 201, 203, 210.

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from schools' curriculum since 1926. Religious elements in the presidential campaign compounded the controversy, creating complex fractures in longstanding party and religious allegiances.

Washington County was one of many Arkansas counties where evolution and Al Smith were public, fiercely contested issues that brought the church into the political realm. Local Protestant leaders urged both the passage of Initiated Act No. 1 and the election of Smith's Republican opponent Herbert Hoover. They might appear to have made their case, since similar proportions of voters backed Hoover and voted to ban the teaching of evolution. Despite the county's longstanding loyalty to the Democratic party, the Republican presidential candidate received 56 percent of its votes, a twenty-point increase from the 1924 election. By contrast, Hoover topped the 1924 totals by just ten points statewide. Washington County, the home of the state's flagship university, passed the anti-evolution act with a 61 percent majority, close to the 63 percent majority statewide. But the seeming closeness of the Hoover and anti-evolution vote masked deep differences within the county. Only 30 percent of voters in the county seat of Fayetteville favored the act, making evident the conflict that emerged between church leaders and the university community. University president John C. Futrall and much of his faculty were among the state's most vocal opponents of the teaching ban. Other communities in the county showed considerable variation in their voting against the wet Catholic Smith and for the ban on the teaching of evolution, making clear that different sets of people were responsible for the Hoover and anti-evolution majorities. The county was not moving in lockstep with its ministers.

Al Smith received only 41 percent of the popular vote in 1928 and lost the electoral vote, 444 to 87.² Republicans carried four southern states—Texas, Virginia, Florida, and North Carolina—for the first time since Reconstruction, as well as Tennessee and Kentucky. Historians disagree on the reasons for Republican success, but most cite Smith's Catholicism, Democrats' more lenient prohibition platform, and the country's economic prosperity. Some also cite Smith's urban, immigrant roots and his connection with New York City's Tammany Hall machine. Most southern Democrats could have found several reasons not to vote for Smith, as many were dry Protestants who might be

²Thomas C. Donnelly and Roy V. Peel, *The 1928 Campaign: An Analysis* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), ix.

suspicious of Catholicism and urbanites.³ The matter became more complicated in Arkansas. Historians have debated whether Arkansas would have been another southern state carried by Hoover had Arkansas senator Joe T. Robinson not been Smith's running mate. Arkansas voters chose Smith over Hoover, 119,196 to 77,751, yet Hoover managed to win ten Arkansas counties, including five that had been solidly Democratic for decades. Explanations for the atypical results center on the importance of prohibition to churchgoers in reducing the Democratic vote. Arkansas historians have thoroughly documented the statewide election, but they have written little on the various factors at work in individual communities.⁴

While the evolution controversy that climaxed with the same election has been similarly well-documented by historians, its local ramifications also need to be fleshed out. In 1926, less than a year removed from the Scopes Trial, Arkansans began to debate the possibility of legislation banning the teaching of evolution in public schools. Religious groups turned toward political action. Rev. Ben Bogard of Little Rock urged church groups around the state to lobby their legislators. The Spring Creek Missionary Baptist Church of Benton wrote in 1926, "We will not vote for any legislator . . . who will not obligate himself to have enacted a law to prohibit the teaching of evolution in any common school . . . supported by taxation."⁵ The Arkansas Baptist State Convention also urged legislators to outlaw evolution in public schools. Anti-evolutionists got their wish in January 1927 when Rep. A. L. Rotenberry of Little Rock proposed House Bill No. 34, which would satisfy their demands. When Rotenberry's bill failed to pass, anti-evolution forces gathered enough signatures to place an initiated act on the 1928 ballot. Arkansas

³Ibid.; David Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918-1932*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 217-243; Allan J. Lichtman, *Prejudice and the Old Politics: The Presidential Election of 1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Beryl F. McClerren, "Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics: Religious Issues during the Presidential Campaigns of 1928 and 1960," *Quarterly Review* 34 (April-June 1974): 103-112; Edmund Moore, *A Catholic Runs for President: The Campaign of 1928* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956); James H. Smylie, "The Roman Catholic Church, the State, and Al Smith," *Church History* 29 (September 1960): 321-342.

⁴Cal Ledbetter, Jr., "Joe T. Robinson and the Presidential Campaign of 1928," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 45 (Autumn 1986): 95-125; Lucille H. Mills, "The Presidential Campaign of 1928 in Arkansas" (M.A. thesis, University of Arkansas, 1948); Nevin E. Neal, "The Smith-Robinson Arkansas Campaign of 1928," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 19 (Spring 1960): 3-11; Cecil Edward Weller, Jr., *Joe T. Robinson: Always a Loyal Democrat* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 109-122. Mills' work is still the most complete study of the statewide election.

⁵James D. Bernard, "The Baptists," *American Mercury* 7 (February 1926): 139-140.

voters favored Initiated Act No. 1, which banned the teaching of evolution in all public schools, by a margin of 108,891 to 63,406 (58 percent). Only Ashley, Crittenden, Drew, Lee, Little River, Pulaski, and Yell Counties voted against it.⁶

Though prominent ministers throughout Arkansas urged the public to pass the anti-evolution act and vote for Hoover, few historians have attempted to examine the two religiously tinged campaigns in tandem. In a 1970 article in the *Journal of American History*, Virginia Gray sought to determine the relationship between anti-evolution sentiment and social characteristics of the populace (including fundamentalism, illiteracy, and "ruralism"), hoping to test the traditional assumption that anti-evolution sentiment was highest among uneducated, rural fundamentalists. Based on voting results, she found that support for Initiated Act No. 1 was "not strongly associated" with illiteracy or the percent of Baptist church membership in a local population. In addition, although there was a positive association between voting for the initiative and voting against Smith in the 1928 election, Gray's analysis shows that the association was not significant enough to draw a meaningful conclusion. Unfortunately, Gray did not examine the relative influence of prohibition and anti-Catholic sentiment in driving voters' choices about Al Smith. She also unwisely cast all Baptists as fundamentalists, even though many Baptists would not have categorized themselves as such, and fails to study fundamentalists from other denominations. Gray also ignored denominations that were not principally fundamentalist, many of which—particularly Methodists—played important roles in the anti-evolution and anti-Smith movements.⁷ By examining events in a single Arkansas county, we might better grasp what connections voters, and not just outspoken campaigners and ministers, drew between the presidential campaign and the anti-evolution cause.

In Washington County, the ministers of some of the area's largest congregations took the lead in opposing both Smith and evolution. In 1926, 11,110 of the county's 39,225 residents claimed membership in local churches (28 percent, compared to the 33 percent of Arkansans who were

⁶R. Halliburton, Jr., "The Adoption of Arkansas' Anti-Evolution Law," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 23 (Autumn 1964): 271-283; Todd Lewis, "Bogard's Crusade: The War against Evolution in Arkansas, 1926-1928," *Ozark Historical Review* 17 (Spring 1988): 1-18; Leo Thomas Sweeney, "The Anti-Evolution Movement in Arkansas" (M.A. thesis, University of Arkansas, 1966).

⁷Virginia Gray, "Anti-Evolution Sentiment and Behavior: The Case of Arkansas," *Journal of American History* 57 (September 1970): 352-366.

church members).⁸ The county was overwhelmingly Protestant, with Baptists numbering over 3,000, Methodist Episcopalans 3,296, and Presbyterians over 1,400. The three largest churches in Fayetteville were the Central Methodist Episcopal Church on the corner of Dickson Street and Highland Avenue, First Baptist Church on the corner of College Avenue and Dickson, and Central Presbyterian Church off Dickson Street. Rev. H. K. Morehead, identified in the local newspaper as urging Democrats to vote against Smith, was pastor at the largest of these, Central Methodist, with 1,200 members. The congregation welcomed modernity, it seems. In March 1928, it installed the first electric church sign west of Little Rock. It read, "You Are Welcome. Central Methodist Church, H. K. Morehead, Pastor" (the *Democrat* did not fail to note that the sign had a removable panel for the pastor's name). Morehead stated that it was "perfectly proper that electricity proclaim such a welcome to the world."⁹ Rev. Frank W. Carnett was pastor to 950 members at First Baptist Church.¹⁰ A fundamentalist who abhorred evolution and drinking, Carnett, in January 1927, published a front-page article in the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* titled "I Believe Nothing that Contradicts the Bible," which dismissed evolution.¹¹ Vowing to vote Democrat in every race except the presidential, he had no problem mixing religion with politics. He stated to an anti-Smith audience in July 1928, "I have no patience with the minister who will not raise his

⁸*United States Census, Religious Bodies, 1926: Arkansas* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1930), 580-581; *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 3, pt. 1, *Population, 1930: Arkansas* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931), 212-229.

⁹*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, March 30, 1928.

¹⁰William S. Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928* (Fayetteville: W. S. Campbell, 1928), 73-74.

¹¹*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, January 22, 1927. Rev. Harry Glenn Finney, the pastor at Central Presbyterian Church, appears to have remained quiet during the election, though his attendance, in September 1928, at Hoover's homecoming rally in West Branch, Iowa, suggests that he was a Republican. Finney graduated from Princeton in 1904 and Princeton Theological Seminary in 1905, and continued studying at Ohio Wesleyan and the University of Chicago. He began his ministry in Minneapolis in 1905 and served nine years in Hamilton, Ohio, and nine years in Marion, Iowa, before coming to Fayetteville. Although Finney's theological leanings are unknown, he was most likely a conservative Presbyterian who avoided political matters. As a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Finney would have been schooled in the theology of Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield, which promoted the inerrancy of Scripture and would later influence fundamentalist thinking. Princeton was the leading edge of conservative Presbyterianism and anti-modernist in thought, though distinct from the fundamentalist movement. *Central Presbyterian Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas, corner Dickson, Block and St. Charles Streets. Our Centennial Celebration, November 21-23, 1930* (Fayetteville: n. p., 1930); *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, September 19, 1928; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 111-118, 128.

voice at a time like this for fear someone will say that he is dabbling in politics.”¹²

Perhaps the most outspoken member of the clergy in 1928 was Rev. Benjamin Harvey Greathouse, who made his opposition to both Smith and evolution clear. Greathouse had fought alongside his father in the Confederate Army at the age of fifteen. He became a licensed Methodist minister in 1871 and served in various churches in Arkansas and Texas until he resettled his family just south of Prairie Grove, Arkansas, in 1910. Described as proud, courageous, and independent, Greathouse vigorously supported prohibition. He once dealt with a drunken congregant who was interrupting his sermon by excusing himself and then ramming the man's head into an oak tree. Although a fundamentalist, Greathouse was a proponent of progressive social reform. Like William Jennings Bryan, his arguments against evolution centered on the social effects of Darwinism. According to Greathouse, the theory of evolution denied the fall of man, thus denying the principle of right and wrong and human responsibility. It has “never organized a brotherhood, established a hospital, liberated a slave, closed a saloon, nor even built a college to promote its own theories.”¹³ Survival of the fittest destroyed human compassion and the hopes of men, while atheism led to despair and the destruction of moral character. The reverend took leave from his church in 1918 and served two terms as Democratic state senator from Washington County and a partial term in the House of Representatives. Greathouse reportedly resigned from the House in September 1928 to care for his ailing fourth wife, but he opened the Washington County Anti-Smith Club shortly after his resignation.¹⁴

The local Catholic population could hardly offer a counterpoise to prominent Protestant clerics' hostility to Smith. The religious census of 1926 counted 531 Roman Catholics in Washington County, less than 5 percent of church-going citizens.¹⁵ A large portion of the Catholic population lived ten miles northwest of Fayetteville in Tontitown. Fayetteville's St. Joseph's Church, located on the corner of North Willow Avenue and Lafayette Street, kept only a modest number of parishioners. St. Joseph's supported a parochial school that rarely enrolled more than forty students, and only thirty-six university students identified themselves as Catholic.

¹²Fayetteville Daily Democrat, July 25, 1928.

¹³B. H. Greathouse, *An Address before the House of Representatives Forty-Sixth General Assembly* (n. p., 1927), 6, 10; Thomas Rothrock, “Benjamin Harvey Greathouse,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 16 (Summer 1957): 163-168. On Bryan, see Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 274-275.

¹⁴Fayetteville Daily Democrat, September 24, October 9, 1928.

¹⁵United States Census, *Religious Bodies, 1926: Arkansas*, 580-581

Father John Francis McBarron, responsible for the churches in Fayetteville and Tontitown, did not belong to the Fayetteville Ministerial Alliance, an informal association of local evangelical pastors that held meetings and social events.¹⁶ Father McBarron did not follow the example of his evangelical brethren. An editorial in the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* claimed that McBarron did not “believe in mixing temporal and spiritual things, or politics and religion, and so he doesn’t even dabble in politics to the extent of casting a vote.” The same editorial alleged that many Tontitown Catholics wore Hoover buttons and “few if any are taking very much interest in the coming campaign.”¹⁷

Faculty members and students at the University of Arkansas made up a large portion of the ministers’ opponents in the evolution debate, though they were not necessarily on opposite sides in the presidential campaign. Many considered Fayetteville, as home to Arkansas’s flagship university, the intellectual center of the state. But the university and its faculty and students were also closely involved in the community’s religious life. The YMCA and YWCA were very successful on the University of Arkansas campus during the 1920s, and the “Y” worked closely with area churches. Nearly every church in Fayetteville catered to students by providing meals, Bible studies, programs, debates, lectures, and recitals. An informal survey conducted by local churches and the “Y” showed that 68 percent of students held church membership in 1926 and 88 percent in 1929, a considerably higher total than the county at large. The greatest number of students were Methodist (590 in 1929), with Baptists second (312), and Presbyterians third (295).¹⁸ Morehead, who frequently sent invitations to organizations such as fraternities and sororities to attend church as a body, believed that religion should establish a “vital relationship” with schools and universities.¹⁹ University president John C. Futrall attended Morehead’s church.²⁰

Debate on banning the teaching of evolution in public schools filled Washington County newspapers for nearly two years before the 1928 balloting. Arguments for and against the ban were complex and varied. The threat that atheism would be promoted in public schools was the

¹⁶Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville*, 73-75.

¹⁷*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, October 18, 1928.

¹⁸*Arkansas Traveler* (Fayetteville), October 14, 1926, October 25, 1929. The *Traveler*, the student newspaper at the university, was published every Thursday during 1927 and 1928.

¹⁹*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, January 6, 1928.

²⁰Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville*, 70; Paul D. Haynie, “Religion and Morals at the University of Arkansas in the 1920s,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1986): 148-167.

greatest concern of the county's ministers. Washington County representative and Methodist pastor B. H. Greathouse declared that the theory of evolution was atheism, "pure and simple, and must be dealt with in that light."²¹ In a letter to the editor of the *Daily Democrat*, Greathouse cited two schoolbooks, one used at the university and one in Little Rock high schools, as examples of this atheism.²²

Opponents of the anti-evolution effort in Washington County were generally careful to deny that they were atheists and recognized that the fear of atheism among voters was the largest obstacle to defeating it. Dr. Virgil Jones, professor of English and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Arkansas, argued that a vote for Initiated Act No. 1 was not a vote against atheism, and he likened the attempt of its proponents to identify evolution with atheism to a "small-town political boss who used to shout that all the gamblers and crooks were supporting his opponent." He described the act as religious oppression, the same oppression that "most" anti-evolutionists attacked the Catholic Church for committing.²³ After hearing of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism's (AAAA) plan to intervene in the Arkansas debate, the editor of the *Daily Democrat* declared that its involvement would be disastrous for the pro-evolution camp.²⁴ Charles Smith, the AAAA representative, had been arrested for violating a Little Rock ordinance that forbid the use of the Lord's name in "scenes and acts" other than for "veneration and worship." Smith had posted a sign at his office that read, "Evolution Is True. The Bible's a Lie. God's a Ghost."²⁵ Fayetteville mayor Allan Wilson received a telegraph from the jailed Smith asking if Fayetteville would protect his rights if he moved his headquarters there. Mayor Wilson replied:

No Atheist will be permitted to open headquarters in this city for the distribution of anti-religious literature. . . . You are doing the people of Arkansas a grave injury by injecting atheism in the fight against the anti-evolution referendum. The anti-evolution bill will be defeated by great majority if you and other atheists will mind your own business and leave Arkansas voters alone.²⁶

²¹Greathouse, *Address before the House of Representatives*, 3.

²²*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, February 11, 1927.

²³*Ibid.*, November 5, 1928.

²⁴*Ibid.*, September 6, 1928.

²⁵*Arkansas Gazette*, October 17, 1928; Sweeney, "Anti-Evolution Movement," 90.

²⁶*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, October 25, 1928.

University president Futrall stated publicly that there was “strong reason for believing” that Charles Smith had been encouraged by anti-evolutionists to enter the state’s debate.²⁷

Many of those who opposed the ban sidestepped the issue of atheism by asserting such a measure would be an inappropriate joining of church and state. An anonymous Washington County representative stated that he hoped the subject of evolution would not come up during the 1927 legislative session because if he was forced to vote he would “have to vote as a fundamentalist, but I don’t think religion is a matter for the Assembly to legislate about. There’s already too much monkey business.”²⁸ An editorial published in the January 6, 1927 edition of the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* argued that religion should never be legislated. The Rotenberry bill was “a step toward reunion of state and church. . . . To deny any searcher for truth the right to study any theory he pleases, is tyranny over the mind.”²⁹ The *Daily Democrat* later warned that the bill would “throw the state into a new religious warfare.” An editorial pleaded, “If those who call themselves Fundamentalists would live up to their name, they must stick to the fundamentals of Christianity . . . and the fundamentals of America, one of which is religious freedom. . . . Truth is not a matter that can be legislated.”³⁰

The editor of the *Daily Democrat* lamented, “It will be a sad day of Arkansas if she ever permits ‘church and state’ so to unite to the extent that the lawmakers of the state can say what one may believe. . . . Only a bigoted mind will ever declare that a legal band should be put around man’s brain.”³¹ In response to being labeled a “tyrannical” “Meddlesome Mattie” by an Elkins anti-evolution club for its stance toward the evolution act and its failure to advertise an anti-evolution meeting, the *Daily Democrat* declared:

If those who seek to stop the study of the theory of evolution would spend their time teaching their own children entrusted to them the great moral precepts of the Bible . . . and see that they are not associating with evil companions, these blind would-be teachers of others’ faith would be doing more for the world than they are now doing by ‘meddling’ with other people’s beliefs.³²

²⁷Ibid., November 5, 1928.

²⁸Ibid., January 7, 1927. The anonymous representative was most likely Rep. Wilson Cardwell who was one of two Washington County representatives to vote for House Bill No. 34.

²⁹Ibid., January 6, 1927.

³⁰Ibid., January 22, 1927.

³¹Ibid., May 14, 1928.

³²Ibid.

In a letter to the editor, J. D. Eagle warned that the evolution ban would do worse than suppress free speech; it would suppress freedom of thought.³³ Three days before the 1928 election, the *Daily Democrat* made one last plea to voters to kill the anti-evolution act. Believing in evolution “is entirely beside the point.” Voters should vote against denying students “freedom of choice of study, freedom of speech, and to combine church and state.”³⁴

Ministers in Washington County responded forcefully to such concerns. Reverend Greathouse argued that church and state were necessarily intertwined because “our government was organized on the Bible and when it is discounted the government of our fathers will fall.”³⁵ Greathouse and Reverend Carnett, who made “Evolution and Tax-Supported Schools” his sermon on January 19, 1927, believed that evolution contradicted the Bible and that state sponsorship of such a belief meant that the state was attacking Christianity.³⁶ Carnett stated, “We ought not take the people’s money, as taxes, to teach as a fact a theory which contradicts the Bible.”³⁷ An editorial in the student newspaper, the *Arkansas Traveler*, saw a contradiction in the ministers’ argument, however, stating that Protestants “have ridiculed the Catholics for attempting to interfere with the state, but under what other classification can anti-evolution be placed?”³⁸

At least one minister in Fayetteville dissented from his colleagues’ position on church-state issues. Rev. H. L. Wade, who preceded Morehead at Central Methodist, preached a sermon titled “The Book Nobody Knows,” which was “a discussion of some phases of legislation on the subject of evolution and the Bible,” and wrote an article that declared his opposition to both evolution and any legislation that abolished its teaching.³⁹ Reverend Wade stated that he was neither a fundamentalist nor a modernist, only a Christian and a Methodist pastor who saw a problem of growing secularism that the state could not remedy. He believed “more home religion, more Sunday school training; and a more careful selection of teachers” was the preferable solution to the evolution problem.⁴⁰ The *Daily Demo-*

³³Ibid., February 14, 1927.

³⁴Ibid., November 2, 1928.

³⁵Greathouse, *Address before the House of Representatives*, 8.

³⁶*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, January 18, 1927.

³⁷Ibid., January 22, 1927.

³⁸*Arkansas Traveler*, February 3, 1927.

³⁹*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, January 8, 1927. H. L. Wade was replaced before the end of 1927.

⁴⁰Ibid., January 22, 1927.



Rev. Frank W. Carnett. *Courtesy First Baptist Church, Fayetteville.*

crat reprinted an article from the *Arkansas Methodist* written by another clergyman, A. C. Millar, a prominent Arkansas dry and, later, an anti-Smith Democrat. Millar argued that authorities should not forbid subjects because they are difficult to understand or are objectionable. He likened a public university not being able to teach evolution to a Methodist school of theology not being able to teach the doctrine of predestination.⁴¹

In addition to church-state concerns, Washington County opponents of the act feared a blow to the state's reputation should it ban the teaching of evolution. The *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* lamented, "Arkansas is laughed at enough, as being a benighted state, without putting herself in the position to have the world's finger pointed at her as it was pointed at Day-

⁴¹Ibid., February 5, 1927; Michael Strickland, "Alexander Copeland Millar," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, encyclopediaofarkansas.net (accessed October 28, 2009).

ton, Tennessee [site of the Scopes Trial].”⁴² The Rotenberry bill would “bring down ridicule upon us from all sections, and send our brighter and more independent boys and girls to other states for their schooling.”⁴³ A citizen writing under the name “Jimmie Higgins” saw the anti-evolution effort as a symbol for Arkansas backwardness. He wrote to the *Daily Democrat*, “I am glad the outside world is beginning to see us as we really are. . . . Maybe the leaders here in our political and religious institutions will begin to have serious thoughts as to how we can change condition so it will be possible for the average family to have reading matter besides the Bible and religious tracts issued by the anti-evolutionists or the Ku Klux Klan.” “Higgins” said an anti-evolution petition had “the names of most of your business and professional men . . . which shows the mental state to be found in the University City of the ‘Wonder State.’”⁴⁴ University student representatives of the men’s and women’s dormitories, the National Religious Society, the YMCA, and the YWCA issued a statement appealing to legislators to consider the damage such a bill would do to their education. It stated, “We shall have been legislated out of our right to think as we desire,” and “we do not want to be laughed at.”⁴⁵ Dr. Virgil Jones felt that the bill would “throw a monkey wrench into an expensive machine,” the University of Arkansas. The school would lose its academic credibility, and Arkansas would become a laughing stock of the world.⁴⁶

Much of the debate, in fact, focused on the University community. The American Association of University Professors chapter at the University of Arkansas issued a statement that questioned the constitutionality of the anti-evolution bill. “[The bill] is contrary to the spirit, if not to the letter, of section six of the Declaration of Rights in the Constitution of Arkansas,” which guaranteed free communication of thought and opinions.⁴⁷ The bill also contradicted Section 24 of the Declaration of Rights, which gave no preference by law to any religious establishment, and Section 26, which prohibited any religious test for any person as a qualification to vote or hold office. The chapter argued that an anti-evolution bill would impose a religious test upon public school teachers. Such legislation would have dis-

⁴²*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, January 6, 1927.

⁴³*Ibid.*, January 22, 1927.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, February 20, 1928. A resident of nearby Madison County, Sam Faubus, father of Orval, regularly wrote letters to editors under the pen name “Jimmie Higgins,” a familiar alias for Socialists at the time (Upton Sinclair had published *Jimmie Higgins* in 1919). Roy Reed, *Faubus: The Life and Times of an American Prodigal* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 33.

⁴⁵*Arkansas Traveler*, February 3, 1927.

⁴⁶*Arkansas Gazette*, January 29, 1927.

⁴⁷*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, January 22, 1927.

criminated against Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Charles Evans Hughes—all Christians who accepted the theory of evolution. The *Arkansas Traveler* called the initiative an attempt of “our contemporary medievalists to force their views upon the rest of the people.”⁴⁸ Professors also tried to appeal to Democrats by citing Thomas Jefferson’s devotion to academic freedom. They concluded by claiming that Christianity needed no legal protection; “if it is true, it will survive all the onslaughts of the scientists, if they ever make any.” After all, the professors reasoned, Christ once said, “Ye shall know the truth and it shall make you free.”⁴⁹

One of the most public confrontations between university faculty and the county’s ministers over evolution occurred at a public discussion at the First Baptist Church in January 1927. Rev. J. W. Workman, a student pastor at the Methodist church, declared that he had found no conflict between science and religion. In fact, Workman, who had studied under prominent paleontologist and evolutionist Richard S. Lull at Yale, claimed that his faith had been strengthened by his study of evolution. Presenting an argument similar to those made by professors, Workman asserted that evolution required an unexplainable driving force, leaving room for faith in scientific study. On the other hand, Baptist minister Carnett condemned evolution because “it attempted utterly to upset a great part of the teachings of the Bible,” such as the story of Jonah and the whale.⁵⁰ If evolutionists can reconcile evolution and the story of Genesis, “how much of the Bible do evolutionists believe?” asked Carnett. Dr. Samuel C. Dellinger, a professor of zoology at the University of Arkansas and pioneering archeologist in the state, responded that arguing about whether or not a whale swallowed Jonah missed the important parts of Christianity. Dellinger suggested there were two schools of Biblical interpretation, “the literal and the figurative,” and “proof of evolution is so overwhelming to students of it that they do not doubt it.” Furthermore, only those trained as scientists could understand the theory. Reverend Carnett responded that science had failed to prove evolution as a fact, thus it was not science.⁵¹ Carnett also claimed that 95 percent of noted scientists were agnostic or atheist, which Dellinger heatedly denied. For their part, student representatives of the men’s and women’s dormitories, the National Religious Society, the YMCA, and the YWCA asserted, “We do not believe that you can find a single graduate . . . who will say that his belief in God has been lessened by the teaching of

⁴⁸*Arkansas Traveler*, November 1, 1928.

⁴⁹*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, January 22, 1927.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, January 21, 1927.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, January 22, 1927.

the theory of evolution. . . . Most of the young people's Sunday school classes . . . are taught by faculty members."⁵²

Reverend Greathouse also took on the university community, saying that as a legislator he was doing everything possible for the university, "but I would not speak the whole truth if I did not say certain sub-professors and callow youths of the university have put an obstacle in our way by opposing a bill that only forbids the teaching of man's brute origin."⁵³ The editor of the *Arkansas Traveler* responded that Greathouse "committed the not uncommon fallacy of gracefully lifting sentences and phrases from their context and intended meaning."⁵⁴ In the *Democrat*, C. E. Jordan wrote:

I have met some of these alleged 'sub-professors and callow youths,' and a finer, more earnest and intelligent class of young manhood and womanhood is impossible to find. . . . On the other hand, I have also closely watched the work of our legislators, and cannot sing praises of the men who go down to Little Rock and betray the trust we have placed in their care, and fritter away our tax money with school boy oratory and senseless debates on subjects entirely out of the realm of their duties to the citizens of this county and of our State.⁵⁵

The Al Smith debate raged alongside the anti-evolution debate in the county's newspapers. By the beginning of 1928, local citizens commonly voiced anti-Catholic and prohibition sentiment. During the months leading up to the Democratic National Convention in June 1928, few doubted that Al Smith would be the party's candidate. But because of his wet leanings, connection with Tammany, and Catholicism, Smith was not the county's ministers' candidate of choice. By the end of July, Reverend Morehead, Reverend Greathouse, and Reverend Carnett, all prominent in the anti-evolution debate, would become the county's most vocal opponents of Smith, though Reverend Greathouse was a Democratic state representative until September 1928. Before Greathouse resigned from his position in the House, however, he was more measured than he would become. In July 1928, he wrote to the *Daily Democrat*, "If the voters of the country will stand by their own conviction, and friends and churches as Al Smith stands by his, the will of the whole people will be accomplished in the coming election." Although Greathouse never said an ill word in the

⁵²*Arkansas Traveler*, February 3, 1927.

⁵³*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, February 11, 1927.

⁵⁴*Arkansas Traveler*, February 17, 1927.

⁵⁵*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, February 17, 1927.



A 1928 campaign window hanger. *Courtesy Old State House Museum.*

letter, he made sure to mention Smith's Catholicism and the candidate's refusal to support a dry plank and added, "Everybody knows what they are voting for when they vote for Smith. Men who hold his views will and ought to vote for him. Those who oppose what he stands for cannot consistently vote for him." Most importantly, Greathouse closed by saying,

"The voice of the whole people MUST be expressed; and they must vote as they pray."⁵⁶

Also advising citizens "to vote as they pray," Reverend Carnett drew a packed house for an anti-Smith address at the county courthouse on July 24. The *Daily Democrat* noted that many women attended. Carnett claimed that he was "not raising a political question, and I am not interested in party politics per se, I speak concerning character and conduct." Carnett voiced his concern about Al Smith's wetness, his Catholicism, and his campaign manager John Raskob, a wet, Catholic industrialist and financier. Carnett believed that Joe T. Robinson had "paid too much for this mess of pottage," i.e. his nomination as Smith's running mate. Reverend Morehead's opinions were similar, as he cited Smith's Catholicism, connection to Tammany Hall, and dripping wet record as the three reasons he could not vote for Smith. "These things are greatly at variance with true Democracy."⁵⁷

Morehead seemed to give greatest emphasis to the alcohol issue, becoming the first minister to announce his displeasure with Al Smith's nomination. Morehead, who claimed to be a Democrat "of the first order," had attended the party's national convention in Houston. He reported seeing Smith supporters giving away miniature beer glasses "with imitation of beer foam and everything" as souvenirs, and that those supporters had consumed whiskey openly. With regret, Morehead decided to support Hoover—who stated, "I do not favor the repeal of the 18th Amendment. I stand . . . for the efficient, vigorous enforcement of the laws enacted thereunder"—over Smith, who stated, "it is well known that I believe that there should be fundamental changes in the present provision for national prohibition."⁵⁸ Reverend Carnett concurred, quipping that Smith's administration could "re-water the great American Sahara." Carnett noted that one Supreme Court judge was over eighty, which might allow Smith to appoint a wet justice who would give the court a wet majority.⁵⁹

Other Washington County drys warned the Democrats of resistance if Smith received the nomination. From June 21 through 24, the Temperance Institute held a series of sermons in the Fayetteville area. A capacity crowd heard a sermon at the Central Methodist Church by Dr. J. A. Rice of Tulsa. Rice's proclamation that "Christ's Kingdom cannot come on earth unless the wet bogey of the coming political race is killed" drew "spontaneous applause." Despite the certainty that Smith would be the

⁵⁶Ibid., July 17, 1928.

⁵⁷Ibid., July 25, 1928.

⁵⁸Ibid., July 11, 1928.

⁵⁹Ibid., July 25, 1928.

Democratic candidate, Rice “forcibly denounced the prospective nomination.” The same day, Methodist minister W. E. Fisher of San Antonio spoke at Mount Sequoyah and made a similar plea for fighting the liquor evil.⁶⁰ Attendees at Mount Sequoyah sent a petition to the Democratic National Convention protesting the nomination of Al Smith.⁶¹ From July 10 through 19, Mount Sequoyah held a conference for 350 Methodist Sunday school workers. The conference passed a resolution that promoted prohibition and urged the same of presidential nominees.⁶²

Smith’s Catholicism also became more widely discussed. John Brown, who had recently opened his Christian college in Siloam Springs, delivered an anti-Smith speech to a capacity crowd of Springdale residents who were expecting a talk on education or religion. A *Springdale News* editorial criticized Brown for using the pulpit at First Baptist Church for a “bitter attack on Governor Smith.” The mostly Democratic audience reportedly took Brown’s ridicule “as a slap on the face.” Brown, who claimed to be a Democrat, said he would not vote for Smith because he represented the Catholic “machine”, because he was wet, and because he was a product of Tammany. Brown managed to address the menace of evolution and Catholicism in the same breath. He blamed the Catholic machine for “doing everything possible to crowd God and the Bible out of schools.”⁶³

Most ministers, however, spoke more delicately on the subject of Smith’s Catholicism. Reverend Carnett attempted to mitigate charges of religious bigotry while making an issue of Smith’s Catholicism by stating that “the Catholic equation is to be feared; not the Catholic religion, but a political machine under the guise of religion. I would fight as quickly for the liberty of a Catholic as of a Baptist.” Carnett’s fear of the Catholic “machine” reflected a common assumption held by many Protestants that Catholics were duty bound to obey the Pope, leaving elected Catholic officials under the authority of Rome.⁶⁴

The editor of the *Daily Democrat*, a leader in local opposition to the anti-evolution amendment, also condemned anti-Catholicism. An editorial noted that the intolerance that “peeves the ordinary person” might lead

⁶⁰Ibid., June 25, 1928.

⁶¹Ibid., June 21, 23, 1928.

⁶²Ibid., July 10, 1928.

⁶³Ibid., September 14, 1928.

⁶⁴Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 15, 449; Robert Slayton, *Empire Stateman: The Rise and Redemption of Al Smith* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 297-317; James J. Thompson, *Tried as by Fire: Southern Baptists and the Religious Controversies of the 1920s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982), 168-194.

some Democrats to leave the party rather than vote for Smith.⁶⁵ Another editorial tried to point out the contradictions offered by those against both Smith and evolution. It wondered how anti-Catholics, “who—strangely enough—are said to favor the anti-evolution law,” could back the initiative when “practically all” Catholics supported it. According to the writer, anti-Catholics believed that the “Church of Rome holds a sincere belief that the state has a perfect right to legislate concerning things religious,” yet those against Catholicism were asking for the same type of legislation. The *Democrat* accused religious leaders of disturbing the sacred tenet of separation of church and state by favoring the initiative, while warning voters of the dangers of the Catholic “machine.”⁶⁶

Others were heard speaking for tolerance. Days before the election, the *Arkansas Countryman*, a nonpartisan Fayetteville paper that catered to farmers, stated, “We believe the time has come when the people of this country should stop in the heat of political strife and think seriously of where they are going in the matter of religious intolerance.”⁶⁷ An essay by Henry Van Dyke, published in the *Daily Democrat* on October 19, suggested that if the election were “held among the Puritans of three hundred years ago, then both of our good candidates would have been thrown out and possibly whipped” for being Quaker or Catholic.⁶⁸ Fayetteville literary figure Charles J. Finger wrote to the paper, “I would like to see a Catholic in the White House for once, for no other reason than to prove to bigots what men of serious mind know; that intellectual and moral principles have nothing to do with creeds.”⁶⁹ A poem titled “Why Can’t I Fill That Chair” appeared in the *Daily Democrat*. The first of eight stanzas said:

Say, Daddy, won’t you tell me
Of the terrible news I heard
I scarcely can believe it,
Each cold and cruel word.
They say because I worship Christ,
And Catholic doctrines share,
I never can be President
Or hope to fill that chair.

⁶⁵*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, January 19, 1928.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, October 15, 1928.

⁶⁷*Arkansas Countryman* (Fayetteville), July 12, November 1, 1928 (quotation). The *Countryman*, a weekly paper, claimed the widest readership in the area. Its stories focused on farming and business.

⁶⁸*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, October 19, 1928.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, October 22, 1928.

An October 29 editorial proclaimed, "An honest Catholic is better than a dishonest administration."⁷⁰

Despite calls for religious tolerance, Reverends Greathouse, Carnett, and Morehead headed a meeting at the courthouse on September 7 announcing an "intensive campaign" that would "be waged . . . to carry the county for the Republicans with Hoover for president."⁷¹ Greathouse did not shy away from the subject of religion before the capacity crowd, saying, "The religious issue has been raised squarely in the presidential race by Robinson, Raskob and others; if they intend to fight on this point the clergy and their supporters will see the matter through." He accused Joe Robinson and Raskob of attacking Protestant clergymen but insisted that the "Protestant ministry cannot be frightened by that sort of thing." He tried to turn the charge of bigotry back on Catholics: "The cry of intolerance comes with poor grace from representatives of such a church as the Catholic, whose entire history has been one of intolerance." Greathouse called Hoover "one of the greatest men ever nominated by any party" and a devout Quaker who, unlike Smith, observed the Sabbath.⁷²

Smith opponents were not the only ones taking advantage of the religious question, however. A *Daily Democrat* editorial identified Hoover's wife as a Catholic, giving those Democrats unnerved by Smith's religion something else to consider.⁷³ Later, the paper corrected its statement and confessed that Mrs. Hoover was now a member of the Episcopal Church, "not that being a Catholic is any disgrace but . . . there are many persons who would be prejudiced against her on that account."⁷⁴ The paper admitted that it seemed like "a joke on the anti-Catholics that Mrs. Hoover was once of Mr. Smith's faith." An editorial titled "The Menace" argued that "Rum-Ruin-Romanism" propaganda was a disgrace to Christianity. But while the article urged better treatment of Catholics, it informed its readers that Catholics in the area were staunch wets and Republican, two *bête noires* of southern Democrats. The article noted that "our own" Al Byrnes, "a mild, well-beloved citizen . . . an Irish wet Catholic," was voting Republican.⁷⁵

On October 3, the *Daily Democrat* raised another religious objection to Hoover, reprinting on the front page an article from the *Memphis Com-*

⁷⁰Ibid., October 29, 1928.

⁷¹Ibid., September 6, 1928.

⁷²Ibid., September 8, 1928.

⁷³Ibid., June 13, 1928.

⁷⁴Ibid., June 20, 1928.

⁷⁵Ibid., October 18, 1928.

mercial Appeal headlined "Army Officer Objects to Hoover's Religion." Col. L. L. Yandell of Jackson, Mississippi, stated that he could not vote Hoover into the role of commander-in-chief because Hoover's Quaker beliefs bound him to pacifism. The colonel added, "I think it would be a slap in the face of every World War veteran to elect a Quaker, a man whose sect and religious cult is opposed to war from any cause whatsoever."⁷⁶

A handbill titled "Will You Answer?" handed out to a crowd assembled in Lincoln to hear Reverend Greathouse raised similar religious objections to Hoover but also the issue of race.

Do you indorse Hoover's action in placing negro clerks in the same room with white clerks in the Department of Commerce? Do you believe in the equality of the white and black races? Are the morals of the country in greater jeopardy than starvation of the farmer? Can Herbert Hoover, a Quaker, consistent with his faith, take oath if elected President? Could he, consistent with his religious faith, declare war? Do you think it is honorable to hide behind the mask of prohibition while making an attack upon the religion of Governor Alfred E. Smith? . . . Did the Catholics volunteer for Service in 1917 and 1918?⁷⁷

Democratic party leaders in Washington County made similar racial appeals. An editorial in the *Daily Democrat* claimed that no matter how much white southerners disagreed, they "are one in alignment against the party that stands committed to a platform of social equality and citizenship for blacks and whites; for this reason there is and for many years will be—the Solid South."⁷⁸ Judge Fred Isgrig told a Fayetteville crowd, "Mr. Hoover's nomination was seconded by Dr. Hawkins, a negro of Washington D.C., and if Hoover is in favor of carrying out the negro equality of the country like some Republicans claim then he is not a friend of the negro of the South or the people of the South."⁷⁹ At the Arkansas Democratic Convention, Fayetteville attorney Wythe Walker received a wild ovation after he slipped a "heart-rending baptismal song" into a motion that mocked the "so-called 'Hoover Democrat' who with the assistance of Scipio Jones and others was to be washed as 'white as the driven snow.'"⁸⁰ A *Daily Democrat* editorial titled "God Help the South!" warned of polit-

⁷⁶Ibid., October 3, 1928.

⁷⁷Ibid., October 15, 1928.

⁷⁸Ibid., July 13, 1928.

⁷⁹Ibid., October 23, 1928.

⁸⁰Ibid., September 15, 1928. Scipio Jones was an African-American Republican politician and attorney in Little Rock, famous for his defense of defendants convicted in the Elaine Riot cases and his struggle with Lily White Republicans.

ical and economic suicide if southerners voted Republican. Under Hoover, "the negroes . . . will come into their own with a vengeance."⁸¹

In combating the Hoover challenge, Smith partisans also stressed party loyalty and regional pride. June P. Wooten, secretary of the Pulaski County Democratic campaign committee, argued that anyone who voted in the Democratic primary was honor-bound to vote Democrat in the November election. Voting Republican would "align yourself with an organization that for sixty years has invariably endeavored to humiliate the people of the South. . . . Sons and daughters of Democracy and Confederate soldiers, think over these things before you vote to betray the South and your party."⁸² In its final plea before election day, the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* warned voters that "if the Democracy of the south should be responsible for the defeat of the Democratic candidate, it will be a death blow to the party. Its evil consequences will fall upon those who made the result possible. . . . Those 'Hoover Democrats' . . . have renounced the Democratic Party. There is no place for them with its ranks."⁸³

Most Smith opponents hardly wished to abandon the Democratic party wholesale, though. Reverend Carnett justified his apostasy by stating, "The situation which now confronts the nation is the most serious since the Declaration of Independence. Patrick Henry said, 'Give me liberty or give me death,' but I say, give me liberty from mental party slavery or give me death." Carnett would scratch the national ticket for the first time in his life but promised to vote straight Democrat in the state and local elections. John Raskob's role as Smith's campaign manager particularly galled Carnett, who stated, "Mr. Raskob is a Republican. I would find it as easy to vote for a Republican as for a Democrat with a Republican campaign manager."⁸⁴ Reverend Morehead followed Carnett's strategy, announcing that he would not quit the Democratic party and would vote Democrat in every other instance. He reasoned, "I am simply one of those who wants to help save the party . . . in order that real Democracy may be preserved to the coming generations." Morehead threatened that if leaders wanted to remove him from the party, they must be prepared "really to start something."⁸⁵

In response, the *Daily Democrat* editor urged Democrats who were opposed to Smith to simply not vote for a candidate instead of voting for

⁸¹Ibid., October 12, 1928.

⁸²Ibid., October 16, 1928.

⁸³Ibid., November 5, 1928.

⁸⁴Ibid., July 25, 1928.

⁸⁵Ibid., July 11, 1928.

Hoover. "No matter how much one admires Mr. Hoover," the editor asserted, "a Democrat should think long and seriously before casting himself in November as a little girl expressed it, 'among the 'Publicans and sinners.'"⁸⁶ By October, Democratic regulars were publicly debating Hoover Democrats. Prairie Grove hosted a talk by Granville Jones on behalf of the Democratic party. An audience of two hundred cheered Jones' declaration that there was only one issue in the race: "Honest Democratic government or Corrupt Republican government."⁸⁷ Jones was critical of Democrats who had left the party "on pretext of a belief in prohibition, which the Republican Party does not represent, as witness its failure to enforce the prohibition law when in power." The *Daily Democrat* reported that Jones "especially paid his compliments to ministers who are using their pulpits for political forums." After Jones finished, Reverend Greathouse asked for a hearing, but only ninety-one remained to listen. Jones spoke again on October 12 in Springdale in front of five hundred and urged Democrats not to stray from the party. He called himself a "fox dog . . . no matter how many luscious rabbits crossed his path he is a loyal dog that keeps the trail." Jones again criticized the pastors who were "preaching politics from the pulpit. . . . This is not the mission of the gospel."⁸⁸

Others also criticized ministers for their stance against Smith. In a letter to the editor, Charles R. Stephens, self-described as "strongly Methodist," likened Hoover Democrats to Benedict Arnold, except "Benedict Arnold only betrayed his country once."⁸⁹ He added:

Some of our preachers have so far failed in their own sphere of activity that vast areas of this Protestant Christian country are now without religious instruction and leadership. . . . If these good men had put more time teaching people to love all their neighbors and less in teaching them to fear and hate their Catholic neighbors this condition would not now exist.⁹⁰

E. B. Wall, who spoke on behalf of Al Smith in Evansville, Dutch Mills, Cincinnati, Summers, Sulphur City, Durham, Spring Valley, and Springdale during the last weeks before the election, criticized local pastors for becoming "political preachers." He accused them of not only vot-

⁸⁶Ibid., August 24, 1928.

⁸⁷Ibid., October 10, 1928.

⁸⁸Ibid., October 13, 1928.

⁸⁹Ibid., September 19, 1928.

⁹⁰Ibid.

ing Republican for president but for all tickets. Wall added that Hoover was not a dry, but the preachers thought so.⁹¹

Controversy hit its peak on October 18, when police were needed to bring a crowd to order during a "Hoover for President" rally at the Fayetteville courthouse. It featured a two and a half hour speech by Webb Covington denouncing Smith's Catholicism and wetness, which prompted George T. Searcy to stand and yell, "If Smith was as wet as Mr. Covington he would be anchored in the Mississippi River for forty days and forty nights." Covington, a Fort Smith attorney, reportedly "hit at Raskob for being a Jew and said that the very name implied un-Americanism," but he believed in giving Catholics everything the Constitution promised them. He would vote against the Democratic presidential ticket for the first time in his life. Searcy demanded the floor, defending Smith and accusing Covington of playing on prejudices while taking jeers from the anti-Smith majority. According to Searcy, Tammany officials were saints compared to Coolidge's cabinet. Searcy added, "There is a certain pastor in Fayetteville [Morehead] who states he is scratching the Democratic ticket for the first time November 6, but I know and can prove that this man has paid no property taxes . . . and is ineligible to vote under the law." The advertisement saying as much appeared in the *Daily Democrat* two days later.⁹²

None of this seemed to deter the Fayetteville clergymen. Another anti-Smith rally at the courthouse later in October featured Reverends Great-house, Carnett, and Morehead among the speakers. On October 29, Great-house and Carnett spoke at a Hoover-Curtis meeting at a university auditorium in front of fifty people, though only eight of them were students.⁹³

In the end, the objections to Smith clearly took their toll. Washington County voted for Hoover, though Democrats swept all other races. The defection to Hoover, however, did not represent as much of a sea-change as it might seem. Though Washington County had traditionally voted Democratic, two-party politics had historically been more vigorous in the Ozarks than elsewhere in the state. Between 1919 and 1959, during a period of Democratic dominance, neighboring Madison, as well as Newton, Searcy, Carroll, and Van Buren Counties elected at least one Republican to the Arkansas House of Representatives.⁹⁴ Washington, Benton, Carroll, Madison, Newton, Searcy, and Sebastian were seven of the ten Arkansas

⁹¹Ibid., October 20, 30, 1928.

⁹²Ibid., October 19, 20, 1928.

⁹³Ibid., October 30, 31, 1928.

⁹⁴Brooks Blevins, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers and their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 206.

counties that carried Hoover majorities.⁹⁵ In 1924, these counties had been among the eighteen statewide that returned a Republican percentage over 33 percent in the presidential race, with Newton and Searcy counties carrying a Republican majority.

Table 1: Republican Strength in Selected Counties in Presidential Elections, 1924 and 1928, and Percentage of African Americans in County Population

County	1924 Election	1928 Election	African Americans in Population, 1930
Sebastian	33.1	51.8	7.33
Newton	61.2	70.9	0.00
Searcy	60.3	69.6	0.01
Madison	46.8	61.3	0.12
Carroll	38.4	53.0	0.16
Benton	37.0	57.3	0.25
Washington	35.9	56.3	1.20
State of Arkansas	29.3	39.3	25.80

Source: *Arkansas Gazette*, November 25, 1928; *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, vol. 3, pt. 1, *Population, 1930: Arkansas*, 212-229; Edgar Eugene Robinson, *The Presidential Vote, 1896-1932* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1934), 139-145.

A second factor in Washington County's shift may have been the smallness of its African-American population—only 1.2 percent. Madison, Carroll, Benton, and Polk, which similarly switched from voting Democrat for president in 1924 to Republican in 1928, had even smaller black populations.⁹⁶ Although twenty-four other counties with a black population of less than five percent of its total population voted for Smith,

⁹⁵Polk, Montgomery, and Hot Spring also carried a Hoover majority.

⁹⁶*Fifteenth Census of the United States, Population, 1930: Arkansas*, 212-229.

the number of Republican votes increased in each of those counties (and nineteen of those twenty-four counties had Republican gains of at least ten percentage points compared to the 1924 election). Of the ten counties where Democrats made gains over 1924 and the five counties where Republicans gained less than two percentage points, only one had a black population that was less than 27 percent of that county's total (Randolph County's African Americans accounted for only 1.61 percent of its population, but Republicans won only 33.6 percent of the county's vote, a gain of 1.4 points from 1924). These statistics suggest that in counties with a small black population, Democrats were more willing to switch parties and vote Republican. Perhaps, as in the upper South states that went for Hoover, Arkansas communities with a smaller black presence felt less compelled to stick with a party still identified as the bulwark of white supremacy.

Table 2: Largest Republican Gains in the 1928 Presidential Election

County	Region	Gain In Republican Percentage, 1928	Percent for Hoover	African Americans in Population, 1930
Hot Spring	Ouachita	23.6	52.9	12.76
Miller	Southwest	22.2	39.5	31.20
Polk	Ouachita	21.8	53.3	0.02
Washington	Northwest	20.4	56.3	0.02
Benton	Northwest	20.3	57.3	0.25
Cleveland	Southeast	19.5	40.8	27.29
Izard	Northeast	19.3	43.4	1.36
Jefferson	South Central	18.8	41.1	57.85
State of Arkansas		10.0	39.3	25.80

Source: *Arkansas Gazette*, November 24, 1928; *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Arkansas*, 212-229; Robinson, *Presidential Vote*, 139-145.

Although the counties that carried a Hoover majority were concentrated in the northwest portion of the state, big Republican surges came in counties scattered throughout the state, even among some with a larger black population. Hot Spring, Miller, and Polk Counties showed even larger gains in Republican votes in comparison to the 1924 election than Washington. While the traditional presence of the Republican party in northwest Arkansas and the small black population possibly influenced the results in Washington County, the Republican gains made elsewhere in the state suggest that there were other factors at work in the election.⁹⁷

Prohibition and Catholicism were without doubt the most discussed issues of the presidential election in Washington County, just as they were nationwide. Historian Allan Lichtman argues in *Prejudice and the Old Politics* that religion accounted for Smith's defeat more than any other single factor.⁹⁸ Certainly in Washington County, clergymen were among Smith's most prominent opponents, and they did not hesitate to conjure with religion.

But in spite of the important role religion played in the presidential election, and the fact that prominent clergymen lined up for Hoover and Initiated Act No. 1 while the local newspaper just as adamantly opposed both, voting for Hoover showed little correlation with support for Initiated Act No. 1 in Washington or other counties.⁹⁹ Voting results for Act No. 1 among the eight counties that showed the healthiest Republican gains in 1928 show little connection between the movements. For example, although Jefferson County showed the eighth highest Republican gain in the state, it ranked sixty-sixth in percentage for the act among the seventy five Arkansas counties. Miller County had the second highest Republican gain, but was forty-ninth among counties with 62 percent voting for the act. Most striking, over 63 percent of the state voted to ban the teaching of evolution in public schools, but only 39 percent voted for Hoover.

⁹⁷It is unclear what effect Robinson's nomination for vice president had on the election in the county, but local Democratic campaigners promoted "Our Joe" any chance they got. An October 31 editorial went as far as to invoke the possibility of Robinson advancing to the presidency in the event of Smith's death: "Ten vice-presidents became president, six through death . . . and four through election later"; *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, October 31, 1928.

⁹⁸Lichtman, *Prejudice and the Old Politics*, 71.

⁹⁹Gray, "Anti-Evolution Sentiment," 365.

Table 3: Voting for Initiated Act No.1 in Counties with Largest Republican Gain

County	Ranking Among Counties in Republican Gains	Percent for Act	Ranking Among Counties for Act
Hot Spring	1	74.2	16
Miller	2	62.4	49
Polk	3	69.0	30
Washington	4	60.7	55
Benton	5	70.2	27
Cleveland	6	80.5	3
Izard	7	74.3	15
Jefferson	8	52.6	66
State of Arkansas	-	63.4	-

Source: *Arkansas Gazette*, November 25, 1928; Robinson, *Presidential Vote*, 139-145.

Washington County and other northwest Arkansas counties differed from the state in showing similar proportions voting for Hoover and the act. As noted above, while 56 percent voted in favor of Hoover in Washington County, 61 percent voted in favor of Initiated Act No. 1.

But a closer look at Washington County’s voting records suggest that although a similar percentage voted for both, many voted for one but not the other. In Fayetteville, for instance, only 29.9 percent of residents voted for Initiated Act No. 1 while 48.8 percent cast their ballots for Hoover. In Rheas Mill Township, 89 percent approved the ban while only 50 percent supported Hoover. Based on the varying percentages at the township level, it is evident that many residents voted in line with the outspoken clergy on one issue but not the other.

Table 4: Support for Initiated Act No. 1 and for Hoover, Northwest Arkansas Counties

County	Percent for Act	Percent for Hoover
Benton	70.2	57.3
Newton	66.7	70.9
Sebastian	65.3	51.9
Searcy	61.9	69.6
Carroll	60.8	53.0
Washington	60.7	56.3
Madison	60.1	61.3
State of Arkansas	63.4	39.3

Source: *Arkansas Gazette*, November 24, 1928; Robinson, *Presidential Vote*, 139-145.

As the township-level results demonstrate, there was a wide variety of opinion in the county. The Act No. 1 results in Fayetteville differed dramatically from the rest of the county. While 68.6 percent of Washington County residents living outside of Fayetteville voted for the evolution initiative, only 29.9 percent of Fayetteville residents did. The influence of the university is the obvious cause for this discrepancy—768 Fayetteville residents voted against the evolution ban, many of whom were presumably voting-age students or faculty at the university. Conversely, while Hoover carried a 57.9 percent majority among Washington County voters outside of Fayetteville, only 48.8 percent of voters living in Fayetteville chose Hoover.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, some of Hoover's highest totals came in rugged Boston Mountain townships like Cove Creek, Lee's Creek, Reed, and Winslow.

¹⁰⁰An informal poll conducted by the *Arkansas Traveler* showed that University of Arkansas students favored Smith 132 to 82; *Arkansas Traveler*, October 19, 1928. Students organized a Smith-Robinson club in October with the enthusiastic approval of the editor of the *Arkansas Traveler*. Over two hundred students attended a talk by Judge Lee Seamster and E. B. Wall at the club's rally. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1928.

**Table 5: Support for Initiated Act No. 1 and for Hoover,
Washington County Townships**

Township	Percent for Act	Percent for Hoover	Township	Percent for Act	Percent for Hoover
Boston	-	76.47	Prairie	50.32	59.13
Brush Creek	-	63.56	Prairie Grove	68.84	45.49
Cane Hill	74.12	69.05	Price	76.36	39.13
Center	64.33	62.76	Reed	92.00	82.98
Cove Creek	87.36	70.24	Rheas Mill	88.89	50.00
Crawford	70.37	59.38	Richland	75.35	56.21
Durham	70.34	68.70	Springdale (City)	61.16	50.25
Dutch Mills	95.65	61.54	Springdale	78.57	36.93
Elm Springs	64.90	43.04	Starr Hill	75.36	55.65
Fayetteville	29.88	48.82	Valley	81.42	60.34
Goshen	76.12	58.33	Vineyard	25.76	66.67
Harmon	94.19	57.45	Wedington	95.45	57.14
Illinois	82.42	37.61	West Fork	37.09	73.80
Johnson	77.98	68.25	Wheeler	75.00	74.36
Lees Creek	88.46	68.42	White River	72.15	58.57
Litteral	79.69	57.14	Winslow	70.71	79.03
Marrs Hill	87.04	21.82	Wyman	87.76	80.85
Morrow	84.21	80.00			

Source: *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, November 7-8, 1928.

Given that newspapers rarely reported on the details of a typical Sunday sermon, it is unclear whether ministers explicitly urged their congre-

gations to vote for Hoover and Initiated Act No. 1 in the same breath. But during Fayetteville's centennial celebration week in July, at a "Great Evangelistic Rally" at the Gospel Tabernacle on North School Street, Rev. Fred Bruffett of Kansas City spoke against evolution Thursday and Al Smith on Friday. The advertisement asked, "WHAT IS MAN? DID HE EVOLUTE FROM A TADPOLE? DID OUR ANCESTORS LIVE IN TREES? IS THE BIBLE ACCOUNT OF CREATION AUTHENTIC?" Bruffett also promised his audience "Ten Reasons Why Al Smith Should Not Be Elected President of the United States," and asked "Does America face the greatest crisis since the Civil War? Are the sacred principles and traditions of our forefathers at stake?"¹⁰¹

Men like Greathouse and Carnett were more careful, it appears, to keep their agitation against evolution and against Smith distinct. And evidently voters did not make their own connections between the issues. Even though ministers saw their county support both Hoover and Initiated Act No. 1, individual voters in Washington County did not consistently identify the two.

¹⁰¹*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, July 5, 6, 7, 1928. The *Daily Democrat* failed to report on the anti-Smith sermon because "space given [to other] churches today has crowded out report of the sermon, which was received with evident approval of a large number of persons present." *Ibid.*, July 7, 1928.

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