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American Rhetoric: Movie Speech

"Inherit the Wind" (1960)

Henry Drummond Questions Matthew Brady on the Scientific Authority of the Bible



[Audio mp3 delivered by Spencer Tracy and Frederic March](#)



Drummond: I call to the stand one of the world's foremost experts on the Bible and its teachings: Matthew Harrison Brady.



Davenport: Your Honor, this is preposterous!



Hornbeck: Brother, let us pray.



Judge: Well, it's highly unorthodox. I've never known an instance where the defense called the prosecuting attorney as a witness.

Brady: Your Honor, this entire trial is unorthodox. But if the interests of Right and Justice will be served, I would take the stand.

Davenport: But Colonel Brady --

Judge: The Court will support you if you wish to decline to testify as a witness against your own case.



Brady: Your Honor, I shall not testify against anything. I shall speak out as I have all my life on behalf of the living truth of the Holy Scriptures.

[Court officer begins to swear the witness in]

Drummond: No, no, no, no -- that won't be necessary to swear him in.

Brady: Oh, I can make affirmation. I have no objection to swearing to God.

Drummond: [chuckling] I take it you will tell the truth. Now, sir, I am right in calling upon you as an authority on the Bible, am I not?

Brady: I believe it is not boastful to say that I have studied the Bible as much as any layman. And I have tried to live according to its precepts.

Drummond: Bully for you. Now, I suppose you can quote me chapter and verse right straight through the King James version?

Brady: There are many portions of the Holy Bible that I have committed to memory.

Drummond: I don't suppose there are many portions of this book you've committed to memory -- *The Origin of the Species*?

Brady: I am not the least interested in the pagan hypotheses of that book.

Drummond: Never read it?

Brady: And I never will.

Drummond: Then how in perdition have you got the gall to whoop up this holy war about something that you don't know anything about? How can you be so cock sure that the body of scientific knowledge, systematized in the writings of Charles Darwin, is in any way irreconcilable with the book of Genesis?

Brady: Would you state that question again, please?

Drummond: Well, now, let me put it this way. On page 10 of *The Origin of the*

Species, Darwin states --

Davenport: I object to this, Your Honor. Colonel Brady has been called as an authority on the Bible. Now the gentleman from Chicago is using this opportunity to read into the record scientific testimony which you, Your Honor, have previously ruled irrelevant. Now, if he's going to examine Colonel Brady on the Bible, let him stick to the Bible, the Holy Bible, and only the Bible.

Judge: You will confine your questions to the Bible.



Drummond: Alright. Forget it. We'll play in your ballpark, Colonel. Now, there, I'd like to get this part clear first. This is the book that you're an authority on, isn't it?

Brady: That is correct.

Drummond: You believe that every word written in this book should be taken literally?

Brady: Everything in the Bible should be accepted exactly as it is given there.

Drummond: Now what about this part right here, where it talks about Jonah being swallowed by the whale? You figure that really happened?

Brady: The Bible does not say "a whale." It says, "a big fish."

Drummond: As a matter of fact, it says "a great fish." But, I guess that one's pretty much the same as the other. Now, what do you think about that business?

Brady: I believe in a God who can make a whale, and who can make a man, and make both do what He pleases.



Lady in the audience: God Bless you, Matthew Harrison Brady.

Audience: Amen, amen....

Drummond: I want those "amens" in the record. Now I recollect a story about Joshua -- Joshua making the sun stand still. As an expert, do you tell me that that's as right as the Jonah business? That's a pretty neat trick.

Brady: I do not question or scoff at the miracles of the Lord, as do ye of little faith.

Drummond: Have you ever pondered what would actually happen to the earth if the sun stood still?



Brady: You can testify to that if I get you on the stand.

Drummond: If, as they say, the sun stood still, they must have had some kind of an idea that the sun moved around the earth. You think that's the way of things? Or don't you believe that the earth moves around the sun?

Brady: I have faith in the Bible.

Drummond: You don't have much faith in the solar system.

Brady: The sun stopped.

Drummond: Good! Now, if what you say actually happened -- if Joshua stopped the sun in the sky -- the earth stopped spinning on its axis, continents toppled over one another, mountains flew into space, and the earth, shriveled to a cinder, crashed into the sun. Now, how come they missed that little tidbit of news?

Brady: They missed it because it didn't happen.

Drummond: But it had to happen. It must've happened, according to natural law. Or don't you believe in natural law, Mr. Brady? Would you ban Copernicus from the classroom along with Charles Darwin? Would you pass a law throwing out all scientific knowledge since Joshua? Revelations, period?!

Brady: Natural law was born in the mind of the heavenly Father. He can change it, cancel it, use it as He pleases. It constantly amazes me that you Apostles of Science, for all your supposed wisdom, fail to grasp this simple fact.

Drummond: Now listen to this. This is *Genesis* 4 to 16: "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife." Now where the hell did she come from?

Brady: Who?

Drummond: Mrs. Cain. Cain's wife. If, in the beginning, there were just Cain and Abel, and Adam and Even, where did this extra woman come from? Did you ever stop to think about that?

Brady: No, sir. I leave the agnostics to hunt for her.

Drummond: Never bothered you?

Brady: Never bothered me.

Drummond: Never tried to find out?

Brady: No.

Drummond: You figure somebody else pulled another creation over in the next county somewhere?



Brady: The Bible satisfies me. It is enough.

Drummond: It frightens me to think of the state of learning in the world if everybody had your driving curiosity. Now, this book goes into a lot of "begats": "And Arphax'ad begat Shelah, and Shelah begat Eber" and so on and so on and so on. Now, are these pretty important people?

Brady: They are the generations of the holy men and women of the Bible.

Drummond: How'd they go about all this begattin'?

Brady: What do you mean?

Drummond: Well, I mean, did they begat in much the same way as folks get themselves begat today?



Brady: The process is about the same. I don't think your scientists have improved it any! Hahahaha...

Drummond: In other words, all of these folks were conceived and brought forth by the normal biological function known as sex. What do you think of sex, Colonel Brady?

Brady: In what spirit is this question asked?

Drummond: Well, I'm not asking you what you think of sex as a father or as a husband or even as a presidential candidate. You're up here as an expert on the Bible. What is the biblical evaluation of sex?

Brady: It is considered original sin.

Drummond: And all these holy people got themselves begat through original sin? Well, all that sinnin' make 'em any less holy?

Davenport: Your Honor, where is this leading us? What has it got to do with the State versus Bertram Cates?

Judge: Colonel Drummond, the Court must be satisfied that this line of questionin' has some bearin' on the case.

Drummond: You've ruled out all of my witnesses. You must allow me to examine the one witness you've left to me in my own way.

Brady: Your Honor, I am willing to sit here and endure Mr. Drummond's sneering and his disrespect, for he is pleading the case for the prosecution by his contempt for all that is holy.

Drummond: I object! I object! I object!!

Brady: On what grounds?! Is it possible that something is holy to the celebrated agnostic?



Drummond: Yes. The individual human mind.

In a child's power to master the multiplication table, there is more sanctity than in all your shouted "amens" and "holy holies" and "hosannas." An idea is a greater monument than a cathedral. And the advance of man's knowledge is a greater miracle than all the sticks turned to snakes or the parting of the waters. But, now, are we to forgo all this progress because Mr. Brady now frightens us with a fable?! Gentlemen, progress has never been a bargain. You have to pay for it. Sometimes I think there's a man who sits behind a counter and says, "Alright, you can have a telephone, but you lose privacy and the charm of distance."



"Madam, you may vote, but at a price. You lose the right to retreat behind the powder-puff or your petticoat." "Mr., you may conquer the air, but the birds will lose their wonder and the clouds will smell of gasoline." Darwin took us forward to a hilltop from where we could look back and see the way from which we came, but for this insight, and for this knowledge, we must abandon our faith in the pleasant poetry of *Genesis*.

Brady: We must not abandon faith! Faith is the most important thing!

Drummond: Then why did God plaign us with the power to think?! Mr. Brady, why do you deny the one faculty of man [that] raises him above the other creatures of the earth: the power of his brain to reason? What other merit have we? The elephant is larger; the horse is swifter and stronger; the butterfly is far more beautiful; the

mosquito is more prolific. Even the simple sponge is more durable. Or does a sponge think?

Brady: I don't know. I am a man, not a sponge.

Drummond: Well, do ya think a sponge thinks?

Brady: If the Lord wishes a sponge to think, it thinks!

Drummond: Do you think a man should have the same privilege as a sponge?

Brady: Of course!



Drummond: This man wishes to be accorded the same privilege as a sponge! He wishes to think!!

Brady: But your client is wrong! He is deluded! He has lost his way!



Drummond: It's sad that we don't all have your positive knowledge of what is right and wrong, Mr. Brady. How old do you think this rock is?

Brady: I am more interested in the "Rock of Ages" than I am in the age of rocks.

Drummond: Dr. Paige of Oberlin College tells me this rock is at least 10 million years old.

Brady: Well, well, Colonel Drummond, you managed to speak here some of that scientific testimony, after all.

Drummond: Look, Mr. Brady. These are the fossil remains of a marine prehistoric

creature found in this very county, and which lived here millions of years ago when these very mountain ranges were submerged in water.

Brady: I know. The Bible gives a fine account of the flood. But your Professor's a little mixed up in his dates. That rock is not more than six thousand years old.

Drummond: How do ya know?

Brady: A fine biblical scholar, Bishop Usher, has determined for us the exact date and hour of the Creation. It occurred in the year 4004 B.C.

Drummond: Well, that's Bishop Usher's opinion.

Brady: It's not an opinion. It's a literal fact -- which the good Bishop arrived at through careful computation of the ages of the prophets, as set down in the Old Testament. In fact, he determined that the Lord began the Creation on the 23rd of October, 4004 B.C. at, uh, 9:00am.

Drummond: [Is] that Eastern Standard Time? Or Rocky Mountain Time? It wasn't Daylight Saving Time, was it, because the Lord didn't make the sun until the fourth day.

Brady: That is correct.

Drummond: That first day, what do you think, it was 24 hours long?

Brady: [The] Bible says it was a day.

Drummond: Well, there was no sun out. How do you know how long it was?

Brady: The Bible says it was a day!

Drummond: Well, was it a normal day, a literal day, 24 hour day?

Brady: I don't know.

Drummond: What do you think?

Brady: I do not think about things that I do not think about.



Drummond: Do you ever think about things that you do thing about?! Isn't it possible that it could have been 25 hours? There's no way to measure it; no way to tell. Could it have been 25 hours?!

Brady: It's possible.

Drummond: Then you interpret that the first day as recorded in the Book of Genesis could've been a day of indeterminate length.

Brady: I mean to state that it is not necessarily a 24 hour day.

Drummond: It could've been 30 hours, could've been a week, could've been a month, could've been a year, could've been a hundred years, or it could've been 10 million years!!

Davenport: I protest! This is not only irrelevant, immaterial -- it is illegal! I demand to know the purpose of Mr. Drummond's examination. What's he trying to do?

Brady: I'll tell you what he's trying to do. He's trying to destroy everybody's belief in the Bible and in God!

Drummond: That's not true and you know it. The Bible is a book. It's a good book. But it is not the only book.

Brady: It is the revealed Word of the Almighty God spake to the men who wrote the Bible.

Drummond: How do you know that God didn't spake to Charles Darwin?

Brady: I know because God tells me to oppose the evil teachings of that man!

Drummond: Oh, God speaks to you?

Brady: Yes!

Drummond: He tells you what is right and wrong?

Brady: Yes!

Drummond: And you act accordingly?!

Brady: Yes!!

Drummond: So, you, Matthew Harrison Brady, through oratory or legislature or whatever, you pass on God's orders to the rest of the world! Well, meet the Prophet from Nebraska! Is that the way of things? Is that the way of things? God tells Brady what is good! To be against Brady is to be against God!

Brady: NO!!! Each man is a free agent!!

Drummond: Then what is Bertram Cates doing in a Hillsborough jail? Supposing Mr. Cates had the influence and the lung power to railroad through the state legislature a law saying that only Darwin could be taught in the schools!

Brady: Ridiculous! Ridiculous!! There is only one great Truth in the world!



Drummond: The gospel!! The gospel according to Brady!! God speaks to Brady, and Brady tells the world world!! Brady!!! Brady!!! Brady, Almighty!!!

Brady: The Lord, the Lord is my strength --

Drummond: Suppose that a lesser human being -- suppose a Cates or a Darwin had the audacity to think that God might whisper to him? That an un-Brady thought might still be holy. Must a man go to prison because he differs with a self-appointed prophet? Extend the Testaments! Let us have a book of Brady! We shall hex the Pentateuch and slip you in neatly between Numbers and Deuteronomy!!

Brady: Now, now my friends! --

Drummond: The witness is excused!

Brady: -- my followers --

Drummond: The witness is excused!



Brady: All of you know -- what I said was -- what I believe -- I believe in the truth of the book of *Genesis*! *Exodus*! *Leviticus*! *Numbers*! *Deuteronomy*! *Joshua*! *Judges*! *Ruth*! *1st Samuel*! *2nd Samuel*! *1st Kings*! *2nd Kings*! *Isaiah*! *Jeremiah*! *Lamentations*! *Ezekiel* --

Judge: Court is adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow mornin'.



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