

This article was written by Bill Morgan, Vice President of the Creation Science Association of Orange County and is reprinted here with his permission.

Truth vs. Hollywood Fiction

Inherit The Wind is the title of a fictionalized account of the Scopes Monkey Trial. The Scopes Monkey Trial was a historical event in Dayton, Tennessee in 1925. The issue on trial was whether the teaching that man is related to apes should be taught in the public schools. The State of Tennessee had a law forbidding its teaching. John Scopes was charged with teaching Evolution, and high profile attorneys represented both sides, assuring an event that garnered tremendous attention and was broadcast via radio nationwide.

Inherit the Wind has been read, or watched by millions of high school students every year. The screen play portrays Christians as cruel, violent, dangerous and stupid. The screen play makes Christianity look unscientific and a belief system for fanatics and the mildly retarded. If you think I am sounding alarmist please read the screen play for yourself.

In my entire education, nothing affected my life more than this screen play. Not only did we read it in 9th grade English class, we watched the movie. The teacher was one of my favorites; my trust of him resulted in my believing Inherit the Wind was important and factual. Seeing what cruel buffoons the Christians were in this play led me to the conclusion that going to church was a complete waste of time, and the self denial of sinful pleasures was folly. In summary, this play was a significant factor in my becoming an atheist during high school.

So what is the purpose of this newsletter? To equip Christians, and cause skeptics to think. This newsletter will point by point show the distortions of Inherit the Wind (based upon the widely viewed 1960 movie starring Spencer Tracy) versus the historical facts. These facts would have helped me, and I hope they reach many high school students...please disseminate this material.

The playwrights, Jerome Lawrence and Robert Lee, wisely noted that the work was not historical, thereby giving them a license to smear.

In the play, John Scopes became Bert Cates, defense attorney Clarence Darrow became Henry Drummond, Prosecutor William Jennings Bryan became Matthew Harrison Brady, and the town of Dayton, Tennessee became Hillsboro, Tennessee.

MOVIE MYTH: Bert Cates was a dedicated Biology teacher, who would invite students to his home so they could learn and have fun with his microscope.

HISTORICAL FACT: John Scopes was a math teacher and a football coach who substitute taught Biology in emergencies. Scopes wrote an autobiography (Center of

the Storm, 1967 page 187-188) where he said: "I was not a science teacher..."

MOVIE MYTH: Bert Cates was blindsided upon being arrested for teaching evolution. Intolerant Christians caused this trial.

HISTORICAL FACT: The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) actively recruited for someone to challenge the law, offering to cover all legal expenses. Dayton businessmen thought it would benefit the local economy. Scopes agreed and his indictment was intentionally accelerated so that they could get to trial before other Tennessee jurisdictions.

MOVIE MYTH: While Bert Cates sits in jail, an angry mob (inspired by a fiery sermon of course) gathers outside the jail, burns Cates in effigy and threatens to lynch him.

HISTORICAL FACT: Scopes never spent one second in jail, the penalty for this "crime" was only paying a fine.

MOVIE MYTH: Defense attorney Drummond is threatened by a mob of townspeople and called an infidel and sinner by a senile-looking Bible salesman.

HISTORICAL FACT: A friendly crowd greeted Darrow at the train station, and the town held a banquet in his honor. Darrow said he did not find "the slightest discourtesy."

MOVIE MYTH: Drummond was all alone in defending Cates.

HISTORICAL FACT: The ACLU had a "dream team" of lawyers.

MOVIE MYTH: Brady is given a huge parade by the delirious yet simple townspeople.

HISTORICAL FACT: Bryan never had a parade.

MOVIE MYTH: Brady is an anti-science bigot who says "the way of scientism is the way of darkness."

HISTORICAL FACT: Bryan was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and during the trial said "mankind is indebted to science," and science is "of incalculable service to man."

MOVIE MYTH: Brady only disputes Evolution on Biblical grounds, and refused to read Darwin's material.

HISTORICAL FACT: Bryan utilized facts from biology and the fossil record to discredit the Theory of Evolution. He also quoted Darwin frequently during the trial.

MOVIE MYTH: The bigoted judge refused to let Darwin's books be entered in as evidence.

HISTORICAL FACT: Not only were they entered as evidence, Bryan, not Darrow

offered them as evidence.

MOVIE MYTH: Brady is an irritating bore who gives long dull speeches in court.

HISTORICAL FACT: Bryan never spoke until the fourth day of the trial, and Darrow gave a 2 hour lecture on religious bigotry.

MOVIE MYTH: Brady tries to reject a juror who is not a Bible fanatic.

HISTORICAL FACT: Bryan never spoke during jury selection.

MOVIE MYTH: The bigoted judge refused any testimony from science professors.

HISTORICAL FACT: Testimony by a zoologist was given, but without the jury. Remember the purpose of the trial was to determine if Scopes taught Evolution or not, not whether it was true. However, Darrow, an atheist, took advantage of the national radio coverage and had his witnesses defend Evolution. When Bryan requested cross examination, Darrow went ballistic and said cross examination would "show prejudice." (Evolutionists for decades have avoided cross examination!) Since the judge naturally would have allowed cross examination, Darrow fought to have written testimony submitted. The testimony was submitted, and was quoted during the trial. It consumed 54 pages of the trial transcript, but Darrow wiggled himself off the hook of his experts facing cross examination. THINK...is this a pursuit of truth or the promotion of one's philosophy?

MOVIE MYTH: Evolution is supported by science.

HISTORICAL FACT: The "experts" submitted testimony such as Piltdown Man, vestigial organs (vestigial means a left over organ that was once important in an ancestor, but now is useless...Evolutionists used to claim the pituitary gland and lymph nodes were vestigial organs). The testimony the "experts" submitted at the Scopes trial has long been falsified, a fact even evolutionists would acknowledge.

MOVIE MYTH: The most bigoted attack on Christianity in the movie involved Bert Cates girlfriend Rachel Brown, who is the daughter of the local preacher! Reverend Brown demands she break up with Cates, and when she refuses he calls together a mob for a prayer meeting and he fanatically prays for damnation and hellfire for Cates...and his daughter! Brady intervenes, calls for temperance and breaks up the meeting. He consoles Rachel and appears to be compassionate. The day at the trial however, he calls her on the stand and grills her unmercifully, she sobs and testifies that Cates has doubts about religion. Rachel later lashes out at Brady's wife calling Brady an evil man and what he represents as evil. Rachel then leaves her father.

THINK: What conclusion will many high school students conclude from this?

HISTORICAL FACT: John Scopes did not have a girlfriend at this time, nor did any

women testify at the trial.

MOVIE MYTH: Brady in the movie takes the stand (as did Bryan in real life). However, the actual testimony was not reflected in the movie.

HISTORICAL FACT: Bryan did not state the earth was created at 9am on October 23, 4004 B.C. Bryan did take the stand, and Darrow at times made strong points. Why did Bryan take the stand? Because Darrow had promised that he (Darrow) would take the stand after Bryan did.

MOVIE MYTH: Everyone is tense awaiting the jury's verdict.

HISTORICAL FACT: Darrow ended the trial by changing Scopes' plea to guilty, and waived the defense's right to a closing argument. Thus Darrow betrayed his pledge to testify, and denied Bryan an opportunity to make closing remarks. Very clever, but deceitful.

MOVIE MYTH: After the guilty verdict, the judge is lenient and fines Cates \$100. Brady is upset and delirious.

HISTORICAL FACT: Scopes was fined \$100 after pleading guilty. Bryan thought there should have been no fine, and even offered to pay it if Scopes could not afford it.

MOVIE MYTH: With his wife, Brady cries like a baby because he could not give his "speech." He then babbles the next day at court, embarrassing himself, then he collapses and dies.

HISTORICAL FACT: Bryan never tried to give this speech (he had hoped to make his closing argument). Bryan did die from a stroke just 5 days after the trial.

MOVIE MYTH: Drummond was compassionate toward Brady's passing after the reporter rudely said Brady "died of a busted belly."

HISTORICAL FACT: Darrow said Bryan "died of a busted belly."

What did some reviewers think of "Inherit The Wind?"

Time Magazine (17 Oct 1960, p 95): "The script wildly and unjustly caricatures the fundamentalists as vicious and narrow-minded hypocrites, just as wildly and unwisely idealizes their opponents, as personified by Darrow." Nationally-known critic Andrew Sarris called it "bigotry in reverse." The *New Yorker* commented that "history has not been increased but almost fatally diminished...the picturing of Dayton as a community composed entirely of backwoods religious maniacs, which apparently wasn't the case at all, makes the play a much too elementary study in black and white." Constitutional scholar Gerald Gunther from Stanford said it was the only play he ever walked out on. He said: "I ended up actually sympathizing with Bryan, even though I was and continue to be opposed to his ideas in the case, simply because the playwrights had drawn the

character in such comic book terms."

Summary: If two playwrights got together with the intention of bashing the Christian faith and those who adhere to its doctrines they could not do a "better" job than play they could not do better than Inherit The Wind. Portray something as based upon history, then humiliate the Christian people, humiliate prayer and humiliate the Bible and you have the recipe for Inherit the Wind.

Possible points a student could make: I find this book/movie to be extremely offensive and intolerant to my religious beliefs. If it were factual, I would not mind reading it. However since it is blatantly fiction, I find it to be upsetting and solely serve the purpose of humiliating my religious views.