

Inherit the Wind

By Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee

ACT II

Scene 1

The courthouse lawn. The same night. The oppressive heat of the day has softened into a pleasant summer evening. Two lampposts spread a glow over the town square, and two WORKMEN are assembling the platform for the prayer meeting. One of the WORKMEN glances up at the READ YOUR BIBLE banner.

FIRST WORKMAN

What're we gonna do about this sign?

SECOND WORKMAN

The Devil don't run this town. Leave it up.

(BRADY enters, followed by a knot of reporters, HORNBECK brings up the rear; he alone is not bothering to take notes. Apparently this informal press conference has been in progress for some time, and BRADY is now bringing it to a climax.)

BRADY

– and I hope that you will tell the readers of your newspapers that here in Hillsboro we are fighting the fight of the Faithful throughout the world!

(All write, BRADY eyes HORNBECK, leaning lazily, not writing.)

REPORTER

(British accent)

A question, Mr. Brady.

BRADY

Certainly. Where are you from, young man?

REPORTER

London, sir. Reuters News Agency.

BRADY

Excellent. I have many friends in the United Kingdom.

REPORTER

What is your personal opinion of Henry Drummond?

BRADY

I'm glad you asked me that. I want people everywhere to know I bear no personal animosity toward Henry DRUMMOND. There was a time when we were on the same side of the fence. He gave me active support in my campaign of 1908 – and I welcomed it. (*Almost impassioned, speaking at writing tempo, so all the reporters can get it down*) But I say that if my own brother challenged the faith of millions, as Mr. Drummond is doing, I would oppose him still! (*The WORKMEN pound; the townspeople begin to gather*) I think that's all for this evening, gentlemen. (*The reporters scatter.* BRADY *turns to HORNBECK*) Mr. Hornbeck, my clipping service has sent me some of your dispatches.

HORNBECK

How flattering to know I'm being clipped.

BRADY

It grieves me to read reporting that is so – biased.

HORNBECK

I'm no reporter. Colonel. I'm a critic.

BRADY

I hope you will stay for Reverend Brown's prayer meeting. It may bring you some enlightenment

HORNBECK

It may. I'm here on a press pass, and I don't intend
To miss any part of the show.

(REVEREND BROWN *enters with MRS. BRADY on his arm.*

HORNBECK *passes them jauntily, and crosses down stage.*)

BRADY

Good evening. Reverend. How are you, Mother?

MRS. BRADY

The REVEREND BROWN was good enough to escort me.

BRADY

Reverend, I'm looking forward to your prayer meeting.

BROWN

You will find our people are fervent in their belief.

(Mrs. BRADY *crosses to her husband.*)

MRS. BRADY

I know it's warm, Matt; but these night breezes can be treacherous. And you know how you perspire.

(She takes a small kerchief out of her handbag and tucks it around his neck. He laughs a little.)

BRADY

Mother is always so worried about my throat.

BROWN

(Consulting his watch)

I always like to begin my meetings at the time announced.

BRADY

Most commendable. Proceed, Reverend. After you.

(BROWN mounts the few steps to the platform, BRADY follows him, loving the feel of the board beneath his feet. This is the squared circle where he had fought so many bouts with the English language, and won. The prayer meeting is motion picture, radio, and tent-show to these people. To them, the reverend brown is a combination Milton Sills and Douglas Fairbanks. He grasps the podium and stares down at them sternly. BRADY is benign. He sits with his legs crossed, an arm crooked over one corner of his chair, Brown is milking the expectant pause. Just as he is ready to speak, DRUMMOND comes in and stands at the fringe of the crowd, BROWN glowers at DRUMMOND. The crowd chants.)

BROWN

Brothers and sisters, I come to you on the Wings of the Word. The Wings of the Word are beating loud in the tree-tops! The Lord's Word is howling in the Wind, and flashing in the belly of the Cloud!

WOMAN

I hear it!

MAN

I see it, Reverend!

BROWN

And we believe the Word!

ALL

We believe!

BROWN

We believe the Glory of the Word!

ALL

Glory, Glory! Amen, amen!

(RACHEL *comes on, but remains at the fringes of the crowd.*)

BROWN

Hearken to the Word! (*He lowers his voice*) The Word tells us that the World was created in Seven Days. In the beginning, the earth was without form, and void. And the Lord said, "Let there be light!"

VOICES

Ahhhh.. !

BROWN

And there was light! And the Lord saw the Light and the Light saw the Lord, and the Light said, "Am I good, Lord?" And the Lord said, "Thou art good!"

MAN

(*Deep-voiced, singing*)

And the evening and the morning were the first day!

VOICES

Amen, amen!

BROWN

(*Calling out*)

The Lord said, "Let there be Firmament!" And even as He spoke, it was so! And the Firmament bowed down before

Him and said, "Am I good, Lord?" And the Lord said, "Thou art good!"

MAN

(*Singing*)

And the evening and the morning were the second day!

VOICES

Amen, amen!

BROWN

On the Third Day brought He forth the Dry Land, and the Grass, and the Fruit Tree! And on the Fourth Day made He the Sun, the Moon, and the

Stars – and He pronounced them Good!

VOICES

Amen,

BROWN

On the Fifth Day He peopled the sea with fish. And the air with fowl. And made He great whales. And He blessed them all. But on the morning of the Sixth Day, the Lord rose, and His eye was dark, and a scowl lay across His face. (*Shouts*) Why? Why was the Lord troubled?

ALL

Why? Tell us why! Tell the troubles of the Lord!

BROWN

(Dropping his voice almost to a whisper)

He looked about Him, did the Lord; at all His handiwork, bowed down before Him. And He said, “It is not good, it is not enough, it is not finished. I... shall... make... Me... a... Man!”

(The crowd bursts out into an orgy of hosannahs and waving arms.)

ALL

Glory! Hosannah! Bless the Lord who created us!

WOMAN

(Shouting out)

Bow down! Bow down before the Lord!

Are we good, Lord? Tell us! Are we good?

BROWN

(Answering)

The Lord said, “Yea, thou art good! For I have created ye in My Image, after My Likeness! Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the Earth, and subdue it!”

MAN

(Deep-voiced, singing)

The Lord made Man master of the Earth... !

ALL

Glory, glory! Bless the Lord!

BROWN
(Whipping 'em up)

Do we believe?

ALL
(In chorus)

Yes!

BROWN

Do we believe the Word?

ALL
(Coming back like a whip-crack)

Yes!

BROWN

Do we believe the Truth of the Word?

ALL

Yes!

BROWN
(Pointing a finger toward the jail)

Do we curse the man who denies the Word?

ALL
(Crescendo, each answer mightier than the one before)

Yes!

BROWN

Do we cast out this sinner in our midst?

ALL

Yes!

(Each crash of sound from the crowd seems to strike RACHEL physically, and shake her.)

BROWN

Do we call down hellfire on the man who has sinned against the Word?

ALL

(Roaring)

Yes!

BROWN

(Deliberately shattering the rhythm, to go into a frenzied prayer, hands clasped together and lifted heavenward)

O Lord of the Tempest and the Thunder! O Lord of Righteousness and Wrath! We pray that Thou wilt make a sign unto us! Strike down this sinner, as Thou didst Thine enemies of old, in the days of the Pharaohs! *(All lean forward, almost expecting the heavens to open with a thunderbolt. RACHEL is white. BRADY shifts uncomfortably in his chair; this is pretty strong stuff, even for him)* Let him feel the terror of Thy sword! For all eternity, let his soul writhe in anguish and damnation –

RACHEL

No! *(She rushes to the platform)* No, Father. Don't pray to destroy Bert!

BROWN

Lord, we call down the same curse on those who ask grace for this sinner – though they be blood of my blood, and flesh of my flesh!

BRADY

(Rising, grasping brown's arm)

Reverend Brown, I know it is the great zeal of your faith which makes you utter this prayer! But it is possible to be overzealous, to destroy that which you hope to save – so that nothing is left but emptiness, *(BROWN turns)* Remember the wisdom of Solomon in the Book of Proverbs – *(Softly)* “He that troubleth his own house... shall inherit the wind.” *(BRADY leads BROWN to a chair, then turns to the townspeople)* The Bible also tells us that God forgives His children. And we, the Children of God, should forgive each other, *(RACHEL slips off)* My good friends, return to your homes. The blessings of the Lord be with you all. *(Slowly the townspeople move off, singing and humming “Go, Tell It On the Mountain.” BRADY is left alone on stage with DRUMMOND, who still watches him impassively, BRADY crosses to DRUMMOND)* We were good friends once. I was always glad of your support. What happened between us? There used to be a mutuality of understanding and admiration. Why is it, my old friend, that you have moved so far away from me?

(A pause. They study each other.)

DRUMMOND

(Slowly)

All motion is relative. Perhaps it is you who have moved away – by standing still.

(The words have a sharp impact on BRADY. For a moment, he stands still, his mouth open, staring at DRUMMOND. Then he takes two faltering steps backward, looks at DRUMMOND again, then moves off the stage. DRUMMOND stands alone. Slowly the lights fade on the silent man. The curtain falls momentarily.)