

**MOTIVE**

**april 1958**



*Peterson*

**DRAMA**

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M O T I V E

APRIL 1958

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**COVER ARTIST:** NORMAN PETERSEN, student at Boston University School of Theology, is also a graduate of Pratt Institute art school in New York. Norman suggests the structure of the theater stage in his cover.

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— *Dramatists who point the way to a kind of poetic theater which could embrace the Protestant dialectic. . . .*

— *Plays that define the center of the Christian faith. . . .*

— *Drama as the medium for the expression of Christian truth.*

— *The incarnation as God's use of the dramatic form in human history, as God's action in human life.*

— *Religious engagement between play and spectator, an engagement which would exercise rather than sooth our souls.*

— *Plays that ask embarrassing and pertinent questions.*

— *The primary place for religious drama is in the theater . . . in the hands of theater artists . . . performed by theater craftsmen who are honestly offering their gifts to God.*

— *The church, not the theater, may be the future home of significant drama.*

— *. . . evangelizing the faith, spreading the gospel, and helping man in a trilogy of experiences; his relationship to God, his understanding of self, and his relationship to his world and to his fellow men . . . the media of religious drama is a most vital avenue of expression for this instruction.*

— *The foremost task of workers in religious drama for this day is to make drama relevant to people and the church which serves them.*

— *When children, in a creative play, are the brothers in The Prodigal Son, they can have an experience which makes the story and its meaning unforgettable.*

— *Religious drama is a necessary and important adjunct to the mass media of television.*

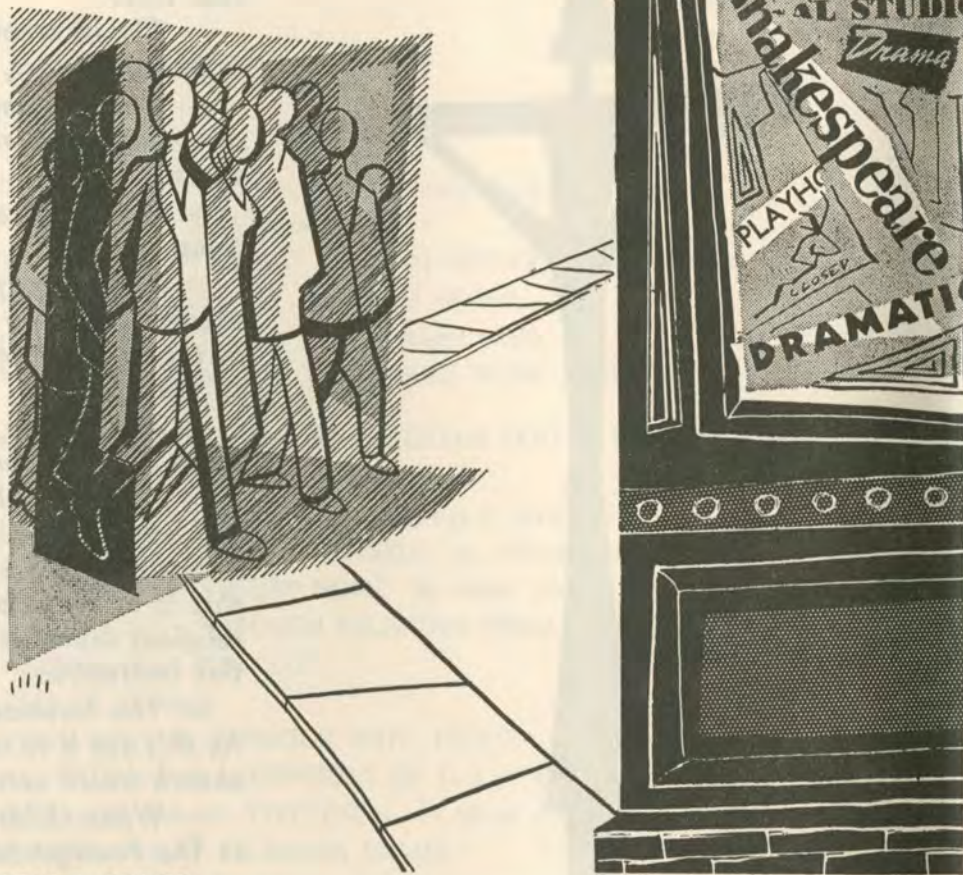
— *Workshops, courses in colleges and seminaries, a series of books of religious drama, a new play list, a concern of the National Council, a growing interest in the Board of Education of The Methodist Church—a history of fifty years and a coming alive in 1958—an illustrated list of plays.*

# religious drama 1958

— *We need new ventures with new ideas, and God willing, a new theology appropriate to our skills and rich in meaning for this generation. Is it time for Religious Drama to become prophetic?*

—Harold A. Ehrensperger, Guest Editor.

## part one: the dramatic experience



TOM F. DRIVER

# THESIS FOR A PLAYWRIGHT STILL

THE Christian drama movement—if we are to call a vast amount of activity a movement—is at a critical juncture. Its crisis is a Protestant one.

Protestantism is never put to more severe tests than when it sets out to speak relevantly to and through the artistic forms of culture. "The Protestant principle," writes Tillich, "implies a judgment about the human situation, namely, that it is basically distorted."<sup>1</sup> Although Protestantism has at its center the principle of protest, the arts function primarily as celebration. Therefore Protestantism has been more effective at voicing critical judgments (which does not

necessarily mean acting upon them) than at expressing the body of the faith in works of the imagination. A recent report prepared by a commercial firm for a major Protestant denomination says bluntly: "It is not yet clear that Protestantism can become the foundation of a lasting culture."

Here is the reason the contemporary movement in Christian drama continues to stand under the shadow of the English and French writers. If we are asked who have been the leading writers of Christian drama in recent years, we think of T. S. Eliot, Christopher Fry, Charles Williams, John Masefield, James Bridie, Dorothy

Sayers, R. H. Ward, Henri Ghéon, Paul Claudel, André Obey, Gabel Marcel, Ronald Duncan, perhaps others. The only American who could be put in the same class with that group (I am checking my memory against a recently published list of plays for the church) is Thornton Wilder, who is both theologically and dramatically unique. Most of those on the list are, if not Roman Catholic, inheritors of the Catholic tradition as it survives in the English churches. The task of building upon and reinterpreting the cultural forms has been easier for them than for writers from the typically Protestant countries, where the religious tradition has been

<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich: *The Protestant Era*. Chicago, 1948, p. 165.

subjected to much more radical criticism and revision.

The most successful Christian drama affirms the religious and cultural tradition. Take the plays of T. S. Eliot. *Murder in the Cathedral*, the best of them all, frankly reiterates the traditional understanding of the death of Thomas à Becket. Its depth of penetration and its use of devices from the Greek theater were unexpected, but its core is ritual celebration. Eliot's most recent play, *The Confidential Clerk*, apparently very far away from religious ritual, is actually a weaving together of three old, established cultural themes: a story of mistaken parentage (at least as old as Greek drama), drawing-room comedy, and the Christian problem of vocation. So also Dorothy Sayers recites portions of Anglican tradition and the Gospels, Paul Claudel and Henri Ghéon return to the medieval tradition, Charles Williams dramatizes orthodox theology, and so on.

The reader will object that Christopher Fry and James Bridie, from the group mentioned above, are Protestant, the one Quaker, the other Scots Presbyterian. Very well. Bridie, especially, has much to teach us of humor in approaching religious subjects. But

## IN HIDING

Fry, in my opinion, is often weak as a dramatist just because he has so little feeling for the historic tradition of the church and for the sense of genuine action contained within it. Fry is tempted to rhetoric (is that a Protestant vice?) and is a bad master for young playwrights.

NOW the Protestant playwright (and here I begin to think of that exasperatingly reticent American Protestant dramatist whose work we are so eagerly awaiting) has before him an almost impossible task. He must affirm the very tradition, the very faith, the very law, over against which

he would stand in protest. He is not quite as fortunate in this regard as the reformer Luther, let us say, who had a known adversary in Rome against which he could assert his radical critique wholeheartedly. Nor is he as fortunate as the Apostle Paul, who could make his stand quite clear against the Judaizers. No, the contemporary Protestant dramatist faces a world which is basically secular. Even when he addresses an audience of churchgoers, most often he confronts persons whose awareness of the great Christian tradition is vague. He must therefore teach them the law in the same breath that he proclaims to them the freedom from the law. He must make them religious and redeem them from religiosity in the same moment. In short, he must speak with a Yes and a No. He must, as they say, become dialectical.

There is only one good contemporary Christian play which seems to me to fulfill that requirement. That is Günter Rutenborn's *The Sign of Jonah*. It has the genuinely Protestant dialectic throughout. It stands in affirmation of the biblical prophetic tradition. It is also in affirmation of man, his aspirations and his institutions. Yet at the same time it stands radically over against these. Something within it looks with jaundiced eye at every figure, terrestrial or celestial, modern or biblical, who appears. It is this stance which gives the play its form. The double attitude of affirmation and negation results in the continual breaking of the dramatic action, a getting "out of it," so to speak. It produces an ambiguity as to whether we are in Nineveh or Babylon or Berlin or Chicago or at the Last Judgment, and as to whether we are the accusing or the accused. At the same time that the author is showing us that we stand within the tradition of the chosen people, and cannot choose otherwise, he is also showing us that we have no place to stand. We are reminded of that doubleness of attitude in Amos: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Adoption and rejection are part of the same Divine

work; mercy and judgment reach us together.

IT is surely because of this dialectic at the heart of Protestantism that many Protestants find so much to interest them in those secular playwrights who think and write dialectically. The influence of Pirandello, for instance, is apparent in *The Sign of Jonah*. Pirandello looked upon truth and illusion with the same bifocal vision with which Pastor Rutenborn looks upon guilt and innocence.

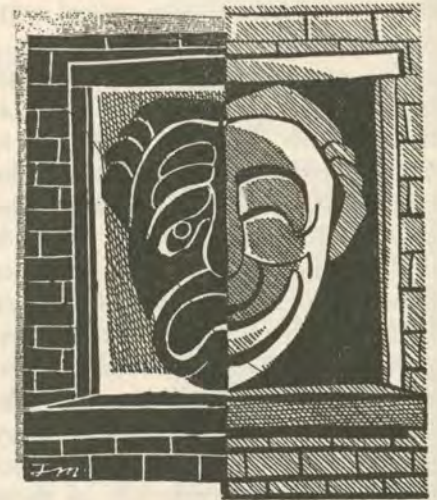
Bertolt Brecht attracts us for a similar reason. He has a way of turning our conventional notions of goodness and propriety upside down, not merely to shock us, although he does that, but to make us think twice about the traditions of virtue which we have received. As in Pirandello, this dialectic gives him a positive-negative attitude toward the stage itself. The audience is constantly being swept away by the action on the stage, then forcibly reminded of its presence in the theater. One's total self and the self which would like to be "lost in the play" are brought into dialogue, even as in Protestant worship the total self and the "worshiping self" ideally are made to confront each other. Liturgy and sermon stand together, yet in tension.

In America, the leading practitioner of dialectical theater is Tennessee Williams. He is, of course, a far cry from Pirandello or Brecht. He deals in irony and contrast, however, more consistently and successfully than most of his American confreres. His is a kind of theater essentially less psychological and basically more concerned with truth and morals than that, say, of Arthur Miller or William Inge, with whom he is often compared. Williams has, from the first, shown a strong desire to step outside the play he is writing and to warn his audience by one device or another that he is saying something more than what he appears to be saying. This is why Tom, in *The Glass Menagerie*, went to the side of the stage and established his own direct relation with the audience. This is why in play

after play Williams worked at the device of making his seemingly colloquial speech assume the multiple dimensions of poetry, so that the language itself could speak in obligato over its own major voice. It is because of this that, in *Camino Real*, Williams was able to write of a world of despair in which something conquers despair, or, in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, a world of mendacity in which truth can happen. We thought for so long that Tennessee Williams was simply giving us "life as it is" or depicting the sordid side of "the human situation" that we became blinded to the fact that he was all along speaking of dimensions of life which stand over against the merely natural, the merely sordid, or the merely defeatist. Every Williams play is a critique of the life it represents—not a critique in terms of social or moral reform, which would be merely to meet things on the same plane as that in which they already lie—but a critique as if from another plane, as if life somehow transcends itself. Such critique is even more valuable than that of the obvious moral reformer.<sup>2</sup>

No one will suppose, I hope, that I am suggesting Pirandello, Brecht, or Williams to be Christian dramatists. Pirandello embraced Facism, Brecht was a Marxist and Williams, when he is not bitter is a secular Romantic. What I am suggesting is that such playwrights as these will rightly command the interest, and to some extent the imitation, of the Protestant American playwright whom we are expecting. The reason is that these playwrights point the way to a kind of poetic theater which could embrace the Protestant dialectic.

CHRISTIAN drama has learnt very quickly that it cannot be prose drama. In England and France it tended to become poetic in a sense closely allied with the tradition of form and symbol which we call Catholic, broadly conceived. There is, however, another avenue for the poetic. It is the dialectic, in which the tradition is affirmed and denied at the same time. This is a "poetry" (whether it uses verse or not, who cares?) in which the stage bursts out of its still-remaining bonds of naturalism and confronts man both



with his grandeur and his misery, so that he may know himself. Indeed, he must be forced to meet himself. Too long he has been meeting merely characters upon a stage.

It is only as I see myself that I may know that I am seen by the ultimate eye.

<sup>2</sup> Since writing these words I have seen Tennessee Williams' latest work, *The Garden District*. The more important of the two plays produced under that general title, the one called *Suddenly Last Summer*, is a forcible reminder of how strong are the neurotic elements in Mr. Williams' theater. It is a disappointing work, one in which the dialectic has been ruined by the desire for shock effect. I let what I wrote stand, however, for Mr. Williams' earlier work (and even the opening part of this very play) sits in judgment upon what he has done most recently.

#### UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The program in Religious Drama at Union Theological Seminary, New York City, which was made possible through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, has the twofold purpose of bringing to the attention of all seminary students the importance of drama as a genuine expression of religion and art and encouraging them to explore the available materials in this area; and of providing for those with a more specific interest in this field both an opportunity for intensive study of the history and literature of religious drama and experience in the production of plays.

Several people share in the growth of this venture. The program has been a cherished dream of Mrs. Henry Pitney Van Dusen, wife of the seminary president. Professor Robert E. Seaver, prior to the inauguration of this intensive three-year experiment and in connection with his responsibilities for speech training, had generated considerable interest among students and faculty alike with imaginative productions of *For the Time Being*, *The Sign of Jonah*, *Androcles and the Lion* and *Billy Budd*. Professor John W. Bachman, chairman of the Faculty Drama Committee, and Dr. Tom F. Driver, first as a student and later as an instructor in Practical Theology, both inspired interest.

The program has claimed the interest and leadership of front-rank directors, critics and educators. E. Martin Browne, one of the founders of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain and a foremost British producer, was brought to the seminary to initiate the first semester of the program in September, 1956. Under his direction four plays were produced: *Christ in the Concrete City* by Philip Turner, *The York Nativity Play*, adapted from the full York cycle by Mr. Browne, *The House by the Stable* and its sequel *Grab and Grace* by Charles Williams, and *The Beginning of the Way* by Henzie Raeburn (Mrs. E. Martin Browne, who participated with her husband in the leadership of the semester's work).

The program continued during the second semester of its first year under the leadership of Mr. Seaver, who is currently director of the program. Participating with Mr. Seaver during the semester, each for one month, were Winifred Ward, John Mason Brown and Norris Houghton. In April, 1957, Dr. Tyrone Guthrie gave a special lecture. Two plays were produced: *Tobias and the Angel* by James Bridie which was directed by Chouteau Chapin, and *The Sign of Jonah* by Gunter Rutenborn which was directed by Mr. Seaver. This production was flown to Omaha, Nebraska, for a performance before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA.

In September, 1957, William C. Craig, on leave from the College of Wooster, joined the staff as guest lecturer for the first semester. Professor Craig gave a series of lectures on Drama in the Church, supervised the Drama Workshop and directed productions of Anouilh's *Antigone* and an original script by Walter Sorell on the theme of Everyman entitled *Everyman Today*. Since one of the aims of the program is the encouragement of artists who share a concern for exploration, experimentation and study of the relation of drama to religion, Earle Hyman, distinguished young Broadway actor, was invited to appear in the title role with the cast of seminary students.

In the second semester of the current year, Mrs. K. M. Baxter, president of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain and herself a playwright, joined the staff to give six of the series of lectures in Twentieth Century Playwriting and Its Relation to Christianity. Others in the series are Mark Van Doren, W. H. Auden, Tom F. Driver and Harold Bassage. While at the seminary, Mrs. Baxter is also conducting a small seminar on playwriting. The first of the semester's two productions, a stage reading of *David* by D. H. Lawrence, will be directed by Mr. Driver. The second, yet to be announced, will be directed by Mr. Seaver.

On July 28, 1958, the seminary will inaugurate a series of workshops in religion and the arts, oriented toward the dramatic arts and the mass media. During the first of the three weeks, there will be a general survey of all that's happening to shape man in his daily life. The second and third weeks will be organized into three work groups, one in drama, one in broadcasting and one in the film, exploring the communication of the Christian faith in a mass culture through these art forms. Cooperating with the seminary in this venture are the Department of Worship and the Arts and the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, and the Division of College Work of the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

In September of 1958, Mr. and Mrs. E. Martin Browne return to the seminary to assume responsibility for the program in the absence of Mr. Seaver who will be on a year's sabbatical leave. They will be assisted by Tom Driver.

Speaking recently of this program, Dr. Van Dusen said: "The recent revival of religious drama is one of the most important developments in contemporary church life. Doubtless it is in part an expression in the realm of the arts of the general religious quickening which is being widely noted. It has special importance because it is at the point where the religious awakening should make significant and mutually enriching contact with new movements in the secular arts, especially drama, which likewise characterize the present time."

## RETURN FROM MILTOWN

by Elwood Ellwood

ISN'T IT NICE THAT THEY ARE TREATING THE CHURCH RIGHT?

It almost seems as if the churches have arrived.

In the film dramas the clergy are seldom any longer cast as addleheaded nincompoops who can barely stagger through a quicky marriage ceremony. Nor are they the blue-nosed antagonists of good clean rowdyism so popular in the dramas of the past generation.

Rather, the clergy are the men on the make. They are generally handsome, in a virile way. They are clean cut. They might be successful insurance salesmen.

Which, indeed, it turns out that they are. For they are the new image of the successful. They win out. Not in the boisterous terms of the robber-baron days, but in the Carnegie days of winning friends and influencing people. Not only people; they seem to influence fate, for as the drama ends, they are in a deep well of darkness with a pillar of light cast upon

them, and the lesson is clear that events have turned out as they have directed.

It is quite a trick, if you can pull it off.

The only trouble is that the Christian drama never quite goes the way of a comprehensive clause to insure one's convenient fate.

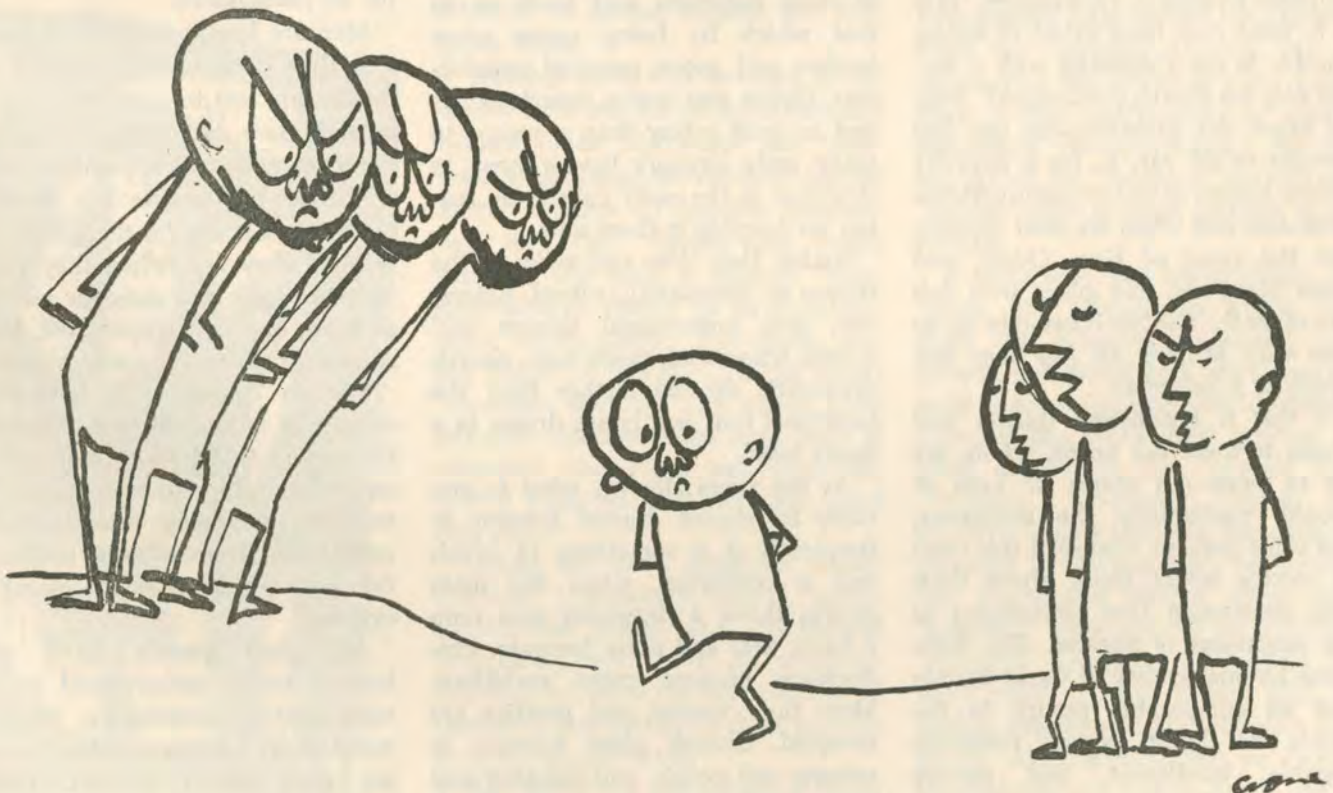
Quite the contrary. The Christian drama has an end as far as man is concerned. It is death. This is the end as a man.

Beyond that point the drama is God's.

But the new drama that treats the church right never gets the point. It usually says that the clergyman, not God, holds the Keys of the Kingdom.

This is heretical doctrine and bad drama. Drama with integrity of experience explores the twisting and turning of man to escape his fate as a man. This is the dramatic experience of the creature who refuses to ac-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 35)



MAKE UP YOUR MIND, EITHER JOIN THE CONFORMISTS OR THE NONCONFORMISTS

Writing from London where there are plenty of plays to see, Mr. Steele raises some thoughtful questions about drama's place in the church, if drama really has a place in the church.

# LOOKING OVER IN anger...

BY ROBERT STEELE

WHEN I survey the offerings of London theaters, except for the Royal Court, Dean Inge's prediction that the next prophet would speak from the stage seems mistaken. What prophets can anyone think of who use the stage today? Shaw certainly had some moments, but today he is set to music. Ibsen has remained in the scenery dock since the advent of V.D. posters appeared in urinals promising sure cures in secrecy. Fry did not bloom and seems preoccupied with waiting for mere French to translate. Eliot gave us enough to expect from one man in a lifetime. (Some oaf in Vol. 3, No. 8, Christmas 1957, *Christian Drama*, p. 17, wonders, "Has T. S. Eliot ever been asked to follow *Murder in the Cathedral* with a second play for church production?" Now we know the difficulty—no one has thought to ask Mr. E. for a sequel!) Wilder has given us two unforgettable three-acts and when we start dipping into the years of Rice, Odets, and Irwin Shaw we find plays with full sets of teeth. The list is brought up to date with Miller's *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*.

If this is insufficient theater and drama to meet our needs, whom are we to bawl out about it? Lots of people, particularly the audiences, and some persons who read this issue of  *motive*  might think about their own dereliction that contributes to the emptiness of theater. The Religious Drama Society of Great Britain and all comparable groups in the States, no doubt, possess relatively capable, intelligent, and sincere dramatists. But how many of them

give even thought and support, let alone work, to the healing of the fabulous invalid.

Many folk in so-called religious or church drama would have liked to work in theater. And they dote on the one who has. But they did not work hard or intelligently enough to make that grade. So they take to the chancel which is not so tough, where they can revel in the drama they love, lace up an ego, and smooth on balm to soothe a frustrated vocation. If they have rejected professional and community theater as hopeless, they have decided not to begin where they are, but to jump out of their doldrums and latch on to that which by being easier gives swifter and more personal satisfaction. Unless one sees a church as the end in itself rather than a means to many ends, drama's having been in churches in the early days is no reason for keeping it there now.

Rather than dive and swim in the stream of community, school, university, and professional theater and drama, where man meets man, church dramatists dip no farther than the baptismal font and house drama in a finger bowl.

As the years slip by, what is maturity for church drama? Because so frequently it is something to which one is converted, when the main stream threw a drowning man onto a bank, zeal and noise increase. Productions become more ambitious. More time, money, and prestige are invested. Church plays increase in volume and polish, and thinking and responsibility for living in the world

shrink. As drama in the church grows, drama outside the church stands still. As persons get a bigger bang out of preparing the next church play, they withdraw more from the world.

I SUPPOSE as an emergency endeavor for the mental and emotional survival of injured and sick persons, drama in the church may help for one more day. But we have clinics and hospitals where the therapeutic value of participation in drama is guided by a man who knows what he is doing, and who has a better chance of its restoring and building mental health for its participants.

Men are lonely, women are lonely, and their jobs are noncreative and deadening, and to live they must live outside their occupations. They can put years of time into painting shields and helmets, because life seems to have no other use for them. And how crushed they feel when they realize all their work was seen for less than an hour, and that stupid, fool, Henry Adams, Jr., forgot to carry his sword!

Church drama as a leisure-time activity is unhitched to opportunities for growth that lead to more growth and relationships to people that lead to more satisfying relationships to people, so it provides a shelter for the lost which risks becoming an asylum.

Aboriginal people have never learned to be embarrassed at their enjoyment of dressing-up. They are wonderfully healthy and free in wearing each others' clothes, making themselves look dramatic and more



interesting than they are. Dressing-up and the bit of grandness it makes one feel is like being Queen Elizabeth for a day. It does no harm and may do good for the tabloid consumers, but we can get that out of our system at fancy balls and in all kinds of drama in the community. This unconscious desire and need to get out of ourselves while personally helpful does not help a congregation to gain religious insight into themselves.

We love to see our children perform and to receive the plaudits afterward. Why not? But think of the clubs, community projects, interest and art groups, and schools that make it their business to give children an opportunity to learn and to be appreciated that are ever so much more constructive. Does John's sweet performance as the little-boy shepherd have any religious significance? Do thoughtful and searching persons who go to churches put on another pair of brain spheres when there is a drama, knowing that the "problems" and subject matter of church drama are for juvenile minds? Unfortunately, they do.



April 1958

THE work of religion and drama in life would be strengthened if church drama were to be eliminated. The demise of this effort to put theater in churches could directly and indirectly strengthen community and professional theater. To the extent groups *other* than the church perform dramas of significance, the church has done a good job. Unless the church is thought to be merely a shelter for the homeless, a prison or an asylum, or the shadow of life, the consequences of its existential worth will be found in homes, offices, schools, travel, science, and art. The church that is worth the valuable land it holds, merely because it has been there a long time, will be the one that is a springboard for religious living in the community.

I see no objection, as long as we have church schools and not just schools, to creative playmaking. This is not an escape from life nor a killer of time. It is different from lavishing energy, imagination, money, and work for one big night of drama by adults for adults in a church. Children in dramatizing stories for themselves are not avoiding what we owe to the integrity of drama, theater, and religious living.

Worship when it is denuded of the drama-frills will go on as before and better. When histrionics and playmaking-trappings are removed and no longer attempt to intrude between man and God, deeper and better thinking will have a chance. "Worship through drama" is an entertainment compensation for those who are unable to worship. To the extent "dramatic worship" (Ye gawd! How has this calamity fallen upon us?) is admitted, the blind and deaf are spared from learning they are blind and deaf.

Drama can have prophetic consequences. Community, school, settlement-house, prison, and professional dramatists, who have no sectarian axe to grind, have the best chances of educating and getting to those persons in need of education.

One cheers the folk who care about drama and theater and who wish art

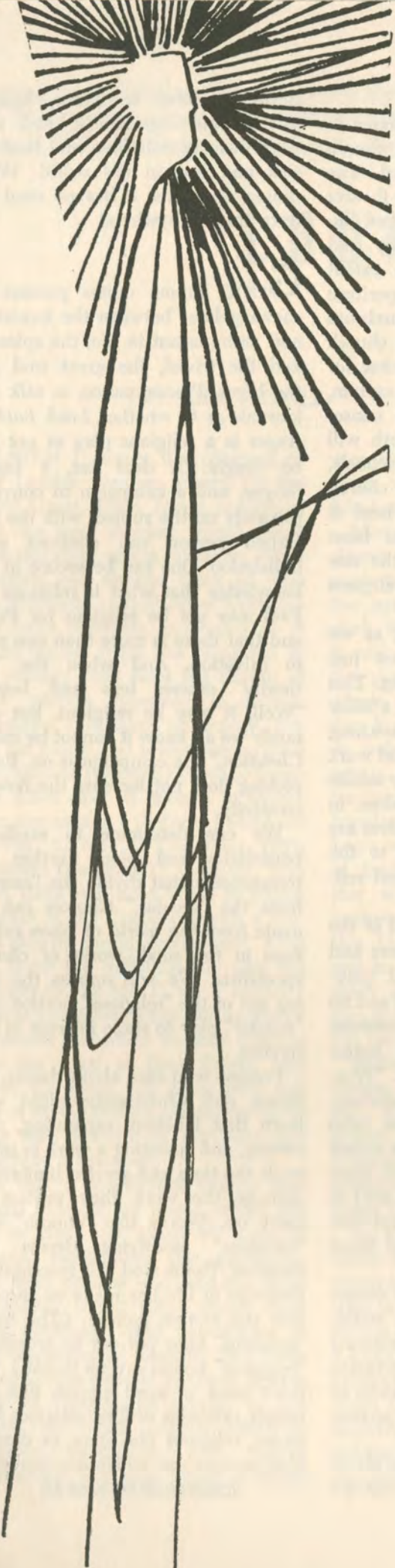
forms to have substance, beauty, power, and significance, and who wish them to enlighten and heal the sick and lost in the world. When drama does this, it has no rival entertainment anywhere!

GOOD drama unites persons by showing lines between the important and unimportant in life, the splendor and the trivial, the great soul and the bigot. Preoccupation in talk and journals as to whether *Look Back in Anger* is a religious play or not can be fought. A deaf ear, a frozen tongue, and a campaign to converse privately on the subject with the disturbed person can confront such hullabaloo. One can be secure in the knowledge that what is religious for Paul may not be religious for Peter, and that there is more than one path to salvation. And when the "authority" crosses legs and begins, "Well, it *may* be religious, but certainly we all know it cannot be called *Christian*," the campaign is on. Bone-picking does not increase the flow of creativity.

We can determine to eradicate boundaries and block further entrenchments that divide the "sacred" from the "secular." Choices can be made from the *world* of plays rather than in the small works of church specialists. We will oppose the lifting out of the "religious" portion of a "secular" play to stage in front of the reredos.

Persons who care about drama, religion, and Christianity might well learn that labeling, separating, narrowing, and recasting a work in order to fit the time and service limitations damage the work they profess to carry on. Words like "church" and "religious" modifying drama are abortive. Thank God this ignominious cleavage in life has made no inroads into the motion picture. (The tepid "religious" films put out by would-be "religious" bodies are no threat.) We don't want or need church film societies, ministers of film, religious film music, religious film stars, or church film productions which are made to

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 29)



# KERNEL OF MEANING FOR WORK IN DRAMA

BY

**E**MBEDDED in the Christian faith is the confidence that spirit and flesh interact in strange and beautiful ways. There is the deep knowledge that man is creature and that fellow creatures respond to each other properly with tenderness. There is the equally deep knowledge that man carries the image of God and may, therefore, formulate in time and space a giveaway hint of eternities. And so a Christian's proper response to God is, "fill Thy image in me with the meaning Thou hast created me to live toward."

The evidences of these responses take many forms: acts of devotion, meditation and tender self-giving. They inform all forms of a Christian's life who wills them to be willed in him. He is a whole, responding person not to be cut in two as body and soul. It is to his glory and to the glory of God that he accept and enjoy his creaturehood, in aware relationship with his fellow creatures. This is the path to his true destiny.

These two orders of response give life not only to a Christian but to an artist. He says to any of his fellows who will listen, "I must tell you something of what I know in myself and beyond myself." Because he responds to life as creature he is not to be blamed categorically as "profane." Because his subject matter or overtones are spiritual, his art object is not to be labeled uncritically as "sacred." The evidence of his responses—his art objects—is to be responded to wholly to see if there be any grasp of reality in them. Who dares predict to whom and through whom the Holy Spirit will speak?

**G**REAT artists neither play God nor make men or things into God. Shakespeare loves his clowns and his kings with deep tenderness as he shows them under judgment of Something-Beyond-Them-All. Fry chuckles to a death-

motive

# THOSE WHO

RUTH WINFIELD LOVE

ridden world that death is a part of life and that as we know the joy of being creature we laugh ourselves into life. (See *Phoenix Too Frequent*) Thornton Wilder writes a poem in celebration of life under the stars that also stand in God's creation (see *Our Town*), so that they and the ordinary folk to whom ordinary things happen move in almost liturgical procession toward the altar of God.

The drama lives almost completely in this knowledge of man's creaturehood and destiny. One who has claimed his sonship to God in Jesus Christ and cannot escape trying to give evidence through working in drama finds himself living with the renewing pain of tenderness and in the hard path of destiny. To work in drama is to expose the raw nerve ends of all one has been or dreamed or hopes to be by God's grace, as the stuff out of which a new symbol of reality is structured fully and freshly. It is to know judgment and response and love.

The foregoing is a frail attempt to suggest the kernel of meaning at the center of eight years' experience in developing the Wesley Intimate Theater at Nashville, Tennessee. The Theater is set up in the Foundation's big living room. Audiences of one hundred and twenty-five sit on levels to see three productions a year played four to six times each. Playing space is a 9x12 rug plus aisles to entrances. In the summers, a "stock" schedule with the company doing its cooking, and trips to Europe producing for and with church drama groups have tested theories further.

Some conclusions follow. They are to be understood as partial statements of some of the grounds in reality we have stumbled on or that have pounded into our thick skulls or have suddenly illumined a Dantesque ring of hell. The "we" is a host of students, faculty and friends who have acted, sewed, listened,

criticized and loved as producing groups and audiences.

1. Any play performed must sustain careful scrutiny as theatrical art, and must define the center of the Christian faith that man is creature impressed with God's image. A clear description of a perimeter far from the center can locate the center very accurately.

2. Confidence in the released energy of the primal responses of a person to God and to his fellows welcomes inexperienced persons—even maimed ones. (What case histories come to mind!)

3. The capacity of the audience to enter into experiences of reality must be honestly felt. Curtain speeches and aftercurtain discussions are regular expressions of the expectation that the audience be more than receptacles.

4. Every effort must be made to open producing groups and audiences to the form-content of the play so that it may speak as a unity to unities. A disciplined rehearsal schedule over a long enough time for maturation into freedom is the first requirement. Original music, art exhibits, hostesses, between-act-punch—everything that requires persons to be themselves points in this direction.

5. All possible techniques are to be investigated and used but never is the dead form to be mistaken for the life from which it was abstracted.

6. Much more than simple rules of "count to ten" must carry the pulsations of response of one creature to another over the bristling barriers of unlovableness we set before each other in the intensity of these experiences. To love is to know the free flow of tenderness through careful control.

7. The process of realizing another person sufficiently to project him on to the stage for audiences to realize takes the actor into great depths of self-realization. The conscious residue from playing a character that seems alienated from good is, in our experience, a deep sense of tenderness for the character and a deep wish never to be so alienated. "It feels terrible."

8. Pride must be reduced to the most

insignificant dimension possible. Pride in limitations is one of the last to go. To step from behind fears of inadequate technique or equipment is to step into the presence of many pilgrims who long to exchange greetings with fellow searchers along a high, high road.

9. There is real risk involved. The players may fail to contact reality. The audience may not engage in the experience. People will pre-judge, fear and sneer. But then, a philosophy professor will sit up all night grappling with the reality of the drama and classrooms will turn to the church for illumination and even judgment.

10. The director has specific responsibilities for co-ordination, stimulation and pruning, but as co-creature he may not strip an actor of his final freedom. Nor may he use sneaky, sentimental means to manipulate the actor to his own desires. Nor may he blackmail the actors by subtly implying that if they feel differently from the director they are challenging the divine right of directors, and, in church projects, of God himself. His central job is to understand more, love more, and have deeper faith in the play, the persons and in God than anyone else in the process.

11. The kind of unity finally achieved is based on the unity of the play itself, of honest and fully felt love of persons in the process for each other, the play and its people and, most of all, for God in whom rests the reality only dimly glimpsed by play, players and audience. This sort of unity is a gift of grace undeserved but joyously received.

12. Prayer-without-ceasing is inevitable to ariate the entire intricate process of playmaking and every person in it to the love and judgment of God.

The awful moment when God's image within us and our deep sense of creaturehood are fused in the experience of theater may be a moment of revelation. And all of us—actors, director, audience, and crews—stand whole before God and man knowing ourselves as persons and as a community to be both judged and loved. This is our eternal destiny.

# drama as an expression of christian truth

BY E. MARTIN BROWNE

THE purpose of this article is to explore the nature of drama which we are considering as a medium for the expression of Christian truth, and then to suggest some ways in which we might develop that expression. One is apt to think primarily of what one wants to say and to regard the art form as secondary, as a means to an end, instead of realizing that the essential quality is the truth of the artistic experience. It is the dramatic experience itself which is valid. Drama is not a medium of exposition. It is a medium through which an experience is communicated.

To analyze the nature of this dramatic experience I would like to take you a long way back, to the very dawning of human life, because nothing in human expression is older than the drama. We see this in tribal dance, which can still be found in certain parts of the world. The origin of drama as we know it in the West today was in just such a tribal dance and song from ancient Greece.

So we begin with a type of community expression which is essentially and absolutely religious. It is man's attempt to communicate with that beyond him which he feels as a power overmastering his own life. He hopes that by offering himself as a medium of communication with it he may receive into himself some

of this power. This sacrificial exchange is the basis of the development of drama.

This sacrificial exchange is the basis of the use of drama as an expression of truth. It may seem odd to use the word sacrificial—it may seem that one is going back into a quite outworn aspect of religion and one which in certain respects we don't want to return to at all. But in its essential I think there's no doubt that we do want to return to it.

I will not attempt to be theological but rather to stress this from the viewpoint of the actor's experience. The true portrayal of a part in a play depends upon the actor giving his body, his mind, and his spirit to be the medium of expression of another character. The truth of that expression will depend upon the extent to which he has made himself available. He has emptied himself in a positive way, a way which allows him to be filled with the life of the other characters so that his understanding of that character will be deep and profound, in fact a religious understanding. This is the answer to the old question, "Is it bad for one to play Judas?" The answer is, "No, it's profoundly good for one to play Judas because it means that one comes to understand the person of somebody who has sold himself to sin, and likewise to understand the extent of one's own po-

tential sinfulness." This kind of exchange is the essence of what the actor in every sphere has to do if his work is to ring true.

WE talked of the tribal dance as the beginning of drama. We could move on to the Greek tragedy as the developed form, one of the highest art forms that has ever appeared in the theater, developed from that primitive beginning. Still we see there a pattern which is not naturalistic: it is not an attempt to reproduce the actual way that individual human beings or a community of human beings live and speak. It is a highly patterned, a highly poetic, highly ceremonial form linked with the religious ritual on which it is founded, and much more analogous to that than to a documentary account of any section of human life. And drama continues essentially to be this for two reasons. First, there is no intervening photography in drama as in the motion picture. It is the direct expression by a body of human beings to another body of human beings who join with them and exchange with them in this experience. And therefore it is the experience itself which is the valuable thing to both parties.

But the most important thing of all about drama for us as Christians is: *that it partakes of the nature of incarnation*. I suppose we would agree that is how we see the pattern of human history as Christians, that the coming of God to earth as a man, the Word made flesh, is the climax of all human development in all fields. This is an event in history, in time and in space. It is *beyond* history; but it is also *in* history, in time and in space, the climax of all aspects of human development. So we see the Incarnation as God's use of the dramatic form in human history, as God's action in human life. The word drama itself simply means "doing."

The *Christian* drama began from Christian liturgy. In the earlier Middle Ages we find that out of parts of the Christian service of worship there developed fragments of dramatic expression. The famous and supposedly the first one, of course, is the *Quem Quaeritis* Trope of Easter. Two of the deacons concerned in the service are directed to sit at the altar, or later at the special place set apart to represent the tomb of Christ, and three others with cloths over their heads come up the aisle as if seeking something. The two at the tomb address them, "Whom

motive



seek ye in the sepulchre, O followers of Christ?" They reply, "We seek Jesus who was crucified." And the two representing the angels reply to them, "He is not here. He is risen. Come see the place where He lay." And they look into the tomb and begin the *Te Deum*.

That, you see, is a tiny dialogue forming part of the Easter service. It is so small, so quickly over that its nature was doubtless imperceptible to the people who first heard it; they never thought of it as the beginning of a new art form, but that is in fact what it was. Out of it developed a very elaborate dramatic presentation of the stories of Christmas and Easter and of other festivals, so that the presentation of the biblical story in dramatic form became a quite highly developed art within the church. Now this still has a significance for us because we find ourselves with a liturgy which continually and rightfully needs renewal, not by being broken apart and put together differently but by its being revived within its own form. Liturgy is the form in which the Christian community has found its way to worship God, and the parts of that form have each their own tradition, their own significance, going far deeper than the conscious experience. The levels below consciousness are every bit as important as the levels of consciousness. When we are tempted to think of drama as a didactic form of expression, a form which appeals only to the mind and the conscious emotions, we should realize that there's a danger of neglecting the most important part of drama, the subconscious. Development of dramatic forms connected with liturgy ought to take that fact into account. There is a great deal to be done here and we are just at the very beginning of understanding it.

**A**LONGSIDE drama within the church, in the Middle Ages, there developed a great popular Christian drama; what we call *the mystery plays*. This happened all over Europe and there are, of course, a number of survivals, the Passion Play at Oberammergau, and others that have carried on continuously since pre-Reformation times in France, in Austria, in Spain, most of them in a fairly quiet way. But in most of Europe the tradition has been completely broken. In England in the last few years we have revived a number of mystery plays and found that they continue to have *appeal* for audiences. So what we speak

of as the *entertainment* value in the dramatic art is absolutely essential in the presentation of Christian truth. Drama has to hold, to convince, to grip an audience, to provide a dramatic experience, before anything can be conveyed through that experience. The mystery plays have proved to be valuable in terms of dramatic experience for modern audiences. They have proved to be of great power for players who have been able to express themselves sincerely using this material from a civilization which is so far off from our own: no period is more difficult for the modern mind to understand than the Middle Ages. It is much easier for us to understand Greece or Rome than it is to understand medieval Europe. Why then are the plays still valid? Simply because they were created by a society which, whatever its faults in other respects, was an integrated Christian society, founded upon the Christian faith, a biblical faith which saw human history from the Christian point of view; which saw it with the Incarnation as its climax and which judged every aspect of human life in the light of that event.

**T**HE mystery plays as they developed became cycles covering the whole of human history, seeing it in terms of human life as lived by the people who wrote and played them. There is no sense of what we call "period" in these plays, that is to say, there is no attempt to visualize biblical stories as events happening in another country, in another part of the world, in another century. This is something of which, perhaps, medieval thought was incapable; which it didn't attempt to do because it didn't want to. It wanted the experience of this biblical life to be immediate, contemporaneous in terms of life as it was lived and of people as they were known to the writers and the players. In the plays, therefore, life is immediate; these people are real; the shepherds in the Yorkshire play are Yorkshiremen who, with true Yorkshire canniness, are not going to give something for nothing.

But our own situation in Western civilization today is radically different. We are far more conscious of ourselves and our own need than of seeking God for himself or accepting a pattern of life which he has dictated. Contemporary Christian drama, at any rate in the Western world, must approach the situation from that angle.



Here perhaps it would be well to make a distinction which arises from the fragmentation of modern society and the self-consciousness of the individual. At the time when the mystery plays were produced, there was, of course, no professional theater. There was no division between what the actors were doing and what the audience was doing; they were all engaged in the same festival, which happened once every year. But today there is a sharper and sharper distinction (though of course there is a great deal of overlapping) between drama which is done for the benefit of the performers and drama which is done for the benefit of the audience. As the *ideal* Christian community today, the ideal Christian church, is a completely integrated community, so the *ideal* drama is a completely integrated performance.

But we have to accept the situation as it is. We have to say, "We are doing this in order that those who see it, as many people as possible and as diversified as possible, shall come to certain realizations." So we've got to be clear when we are planning for drama whether we are considering the performers or those who are going to see it. We have to provide for both, but we have to be clear which is primary in each case.

Thinking of those who see it, thinking of the appeal to the wide audience, we have to think how the Christian message can be conveyed through drama. I attach great significance to the indirect approach, the approach which reveals through a secular story that without God there can be no hope, there can be no satisfaction, there can be no completion of human life. T. S. Eliot moved from *Murder in the Cathedral*, an overtly Christian play, to *The Cocktail Party*, in which an entirely different approach is made. His group of characters are imbedded in an intolerable frustration; they have, in fact, got to the point at which



they know no answers to the question, "Who am I?" "Who or what am I that has any significance other than dust?" Eliot shows human souls being led to the point at which they can discover for themselves the answer to that question. Through discovering the answer it is implied, and I think successfully implied, that they will find their way to answer, "Who is He? Who is God?" What they have got to go through in the process of that discovery is a stripping of themselves, an emptying, a self-knowledge through suffering which is of the very essence of the Christian experience. This is how drama can most truthfully approach Christian experience for those to whom the language of Christianity is no longer known. There is a residual Christianity in our civilization, but the great majority of people don't in fact understand the Christian language and we have got to bring understanding of Christian truth through the language which they do know.

I WOULD like to end by reminding you that there are enormous areas which I haven't explored at all, areas of the world, areas of civilization, and also areas of drama itself. I believe even for us in the West there is a great deal to be done in media other than the drama of the Word. We are too much tied in our drama to the intellect. We have come out of the period in which, for instance, Shaw was one of the principal leaders, when drama was a thing of the intellect, of argument—a fascinating dramatic form, and we've got plenty of it still with us. But the subconscious levels of experience are even more important than the conscious. The re-emergence of poetry in drama has great significance because it speaks on those subconscious levels. And not only poetry is important to us, but also dance in all its forms and possibilities, the whole area of the visual and of movement, as well as the area of speech, and the communication between individual human characters.

This is the transcript of an address at a Religious Drama Seminar held under the auspices of The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., October 24, 1957, at Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania. The report of this seminar will be found in this issue.

## RELIGIOUS DRAMA—ONE & TWO

Living Age Books published by Meridian Books is publishing a series of volumes of religious drama under the auspices of the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches. Marvin Halverson, the secretary of the department, is the general editor of this series. **RELIGIOUS DRAMA 1** contains the complete text of five plays. *The First Born* by Christopher Fry, *For the Time Being* by W. H. Auden, *David* by D. H. Lawrence, *The Zeal of Thy House* by Dorothy Sayers, and *The Bloody Tenet* by James Schevill.

**RELIGIOUS DRAMA 2** is edited by Dr. E. Martin Browne of London. In the volume are 21 plays from the English medieval dramatic cycles. In addition to complete plays from the York, Chester, and Hegge cycles, there is also a version of *Everyman*. Dr. Browne has written a penetrating historical introduction and a concluding essay discussing the problem of modern productions of mystery and morality plays. **RELIGIOUS DRAMA 2** will be published in April and will sell for \$1.45. Copies can be secured through book stores in the paper-backed series or directly from Meridian Books, 17 Union Square West, New York 3, New York.

### THE BISHOP'S COMPANY

The concept of the Bishop's Company and drama-in-the-church began in 1939 in the mind of the founder-producer, Phyllis Beardsley. In 1952, with the advice and approval of Bishop Gerald Kennedy, the present company was formed and has performed continuously since. An invitation to appear at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches prompted the beginning of national touring and the company became an independent organization.

Members of the company are professional and serve without salary. No actor is admitted for a period shorter than a year.

The company's honorarium is \$150 with a division of any additional funds. Smaller

churches may ask an exception to this figure. Hospitality is asked for the company of ten.

Productions are designed for any type of architecture. The chancel and the sanctuary itself become the playing area. The minister is asked to preside; the drama becomes part of an evening of worship.

Plays in the repertoire, available for immediate booking, chosen for their significance and religious import are: Sidney Kingsley's *The Patriots*, Stephen Vincent Benet's *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, Reginald Rose's *Thunder on Sycamore Street*, Phyllis Beardsley's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, George Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan*, Cowen-Coffee's *Family Portrait*, and Christopher Fry's *The Boy With a Cart* and *A Sleep of Prisoners*.

In the interest of promoting new material for the total field of religious drama, of the twelve productions, four have been originals, four have been special adaptations of Broadway plays (with the approval of the authors or estates), four have been played as written.

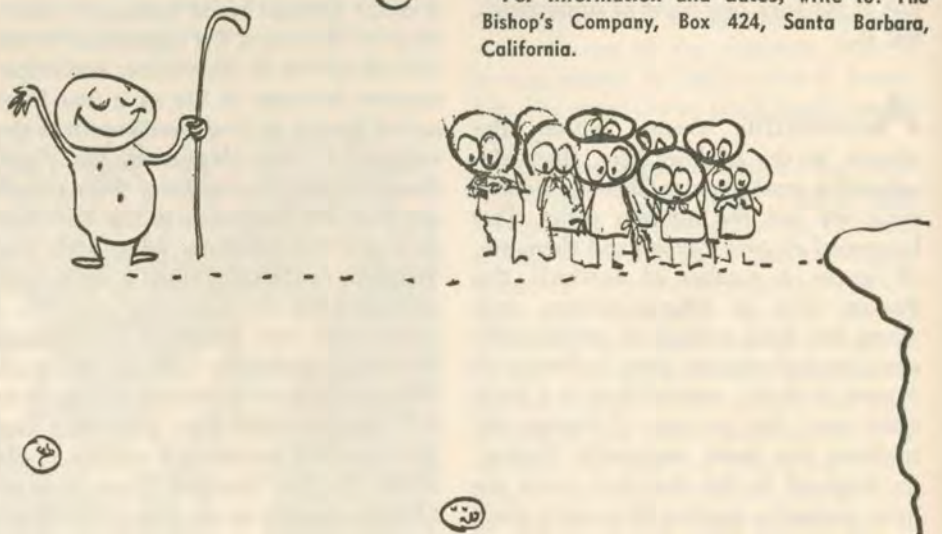
As a training ground for the particular concept of religious drama played in the sanctuary of the church using the simplest of costumes and no sets, adapting the staging to any playing area, the company has inspired others to start similar projects.

Twenty-six persons are now members of the company, individuals who have left their homes and occupations to devote a year to the Company. One third are professional actors, the others drawn from many other fields—teachers, secretaries, building contractors, an advertising executive, a dental technician, an architect, several students. The senior member is seventy-three, the youngest eighteen. Each is committed to a full year of touring.

Company members receive expenses and only \$10 per week.

Not only does the company play in houses of worship, but in colleges and universities where the same plays, with the same religious import are received. A six-week period of Concert Series for Redpath Bureau (1957) will be a twelve-week period in 1958.

For information and dates, write to: The Bishop's Company, Box 424, Santa Barbara, California.



BE CALM, NOW DON'T WORRY, ONE MUSTN'T LOSE CONFIDENCE, ETC.

motive



## DEFINITION

Religious drama includes not only a literature but body of acts and skills religiously inspired and motivated. Religious drama, as literature, is based upon a centrally religious theme and has a religious impact upon its participants and witnesses. This may include experiences of worship, plays for entertainment, educational drama, and creative dramatics. It is not concerned exclusively with propaganda and/or edification. It is not limited to acts of worship and chancel drama, although it may be any of these things. Religious drama is written, produced, and performed in a spirit of reverence and with concern for the enrichment of its participants, church, and community.

—A definition submitted by a subcommittee of the Religious Drama Committee of the American Educational Theater Association, Boston, 1957.

## AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL THEATER ASSOCIATION

At the annual conference of the American Educational Theater Association held in Boston last summer, the organization voted to adopt projects in the field of Religious Drama as part of the program of the association. This is the first time the association has considered projects in this field.

Five projects were adopted:

1. A survey to determine what is being offered in training leadership for religious drama.
  - a. What courses are being offered in colleges and universities.
  - b. Chief agencies working in Religious Drama, interdenominational, denominational, interfaith, international, agencies conducting workshops, and so forth.
2. A Committee on Publications that would list publications in Religious

Drama Departments in magazines and information in the field that is published with a certain amount of regularity.

3. A Committee on Religious Educational Drama, which would include study of the use of creative dramatics, informal drama, discussion drama, and role playing.
4. A Committee on Field Work Opportunities and Internees in Religious Drama in Colleges and Universities.
5. A Survey Committee on Churches that offer employment in the area of religious drama.

Committee members suggested for these surveys and projects include William Brasmer of Denison, James Carlson of Hamline, Robert Seaver of Union Theological Seminary, Alfred Edyvean of Butler University, Bertha and Albert Johnson of Redlands, Charles Ritter of Stetson University, Blanch Hoag of Canada, James J. Fiederlick of Drake, and James Warren of Scarritt College. Harold Ehrensperger of Boston University is chairman of the Religious Drama Section of the American Educational Theater Association.

## SPEECH ARTS

Baylor University Theater, under the direction of Paul Baker, has been experimenting in the field of Religious Drama since 1934. Recently they have been experimenting with Bible reading, and last summer with twenty-five students working three to five hours a day, they succeeded in finding ways to communicate the great lessons of the Scriptures. Three of the girls from the summer group formed themselves into the "Speak 4 Trio" and have made a record (*Word Records, W4013-LP, Scriptural Speech-Drama*) which is available at record shops, and which received the *Billboard Award* in the December 9, 1957, issue. This is an extremely interesting record with selections from Psalm 1, Jonah, Genesis, Exodus, Ecclesiastes, and Joshua.



OF COURSE I'M A CHRISTIAN!

PROGRESS REPORT by Jeanne Carruthers, Secretary, Office of Publications and Fine Arts, The Presbyterian Church in Ecumenical Mission.

Half a dozen specialists in religious drama; producers, playwrights and teachers of drama, sat down at a table in the library of the Inn at Buck Hill Falls in October to discuss with an equal number of representatives of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions the question, "How can the church in its own culture communicate through drama the spirit and teachings of Christ?" The period of discussion was preceded by a vital experience of religious drama when members of the seminar were given a private showing of the motion picture, *The Mark of the Hawk*.

At strategic intervals, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Browne of London read selections from the thirteenth-century York Mystery Cycle; the striking modern mystery play, *Christ and the Concrete City*; a great present-day play, "religious by indirection," *The Cocktail Party* by T. S. Eliot; and an unforgettable one-act play by Thornton Wilder entitled *Pullman Car Hiawatha*. Chandran Devanesen of India read two beautiful selections from his book *The Cross Is Lifted*. These experiences of creative art set the seminar quite apart from an ordinary discussion group.

The panel discussion was on the crucial subject of theater for an audience, "the Christian stage," and drama for the participants, educational or "creative dramatics." Mr. and Mrs. Martin Browne and Robert Seaver spoke on theater for an audience; Harold Ehrensperger and Mrs. Isabel Burger on theater for the participants. Together they opened up a vast and interesting field of exploration.

Four days later most of those who were at Buck Hill Falls met with Christian students and missionaries from fifteen countries in a forty-one-member workshop at Union Seminary in New York City. After two days of demonstration, and participation in four distinct forms of Christian drama, the students of the workshop wrote out two lists of findings: resources needed and resources available in all the countries they represented. It was astonishing to discover that these lists fitted in their entirety into the broader categories of the seminar findings.

There was expressed again and again the desire to break through to new forms. "Dramatists must attempt to break rigid form and try to discover new areas of creative awareness." "There are enormous areas which we haven't explored at all, areas of the world, areas of civilization and also areas of drama itself."

The combined findings of the seminar and workshop may be summarized as follows:

1. For what purpose do we emphasize the larger use of drama in ecumenical mission?

To communicate Christian truth more effectively; to seek to interpret for the benefit of all a deeper understanding of our own lives and the lives of others; to develop unity of feeling as a means of strengthening the feeling of unity; to make clearer the meaning of ecumenical mis-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 35)

# ON THE OFFENSE OF THEATER

BY JAMES R. CARLSON

It is incumbent upon the modern churchman to examine the resolute effort of early Church Fathers to keep the church free from the insidious influence of the theater. Again attempts are being made to effect a marriage between church and theater. This dangerous union can be more easily seen for the threat that it is if examined in the light of the pertinent early preachments that have been given to us. How much of anguish and suffering can we avoid if we listen to the admonitions which they contain! A sermon preached in England in 1375 is a model of devout fairness in its careful balancing of arguments both for and against the

plays that were then being taken into the church. These arguments against the theater are even weightier when we add the evidence from our own day and its efforts at playmaking in the church. Our reason cannot fail to show us the proper action to take against persistent efforts to profane sacred worship with the dramatic.

Let us examine the arguments of this venerable sermon. In the spirit of charity the early preacher first gives six reasons in support of the plays:<sup>1</sup>

I. They (the plays) are played

<sup>1</sup> The sermon is usually attributed to a Lollard or a Wycliffite. It is summarized in Philip A. Coggin's *The Uses of the Drama* on page 51.

to the worship of God and for his glory.

II. They do not pervert, but, by force of example, turn men to God.

III. They move men to tears and this in turn leads them to compassion and devotion.

IV. They often lead to God those men whose hearts have been proof against all other approaches.

V. Men must have some sort of relaxation and miracle plays are better than other japes.

VI. It is lawful to paint pictures of miracles, therefore, it is lawful to act them, and the dramatic method is more effective for teaching Holy Scriptures.

## part two: a home for religious drama

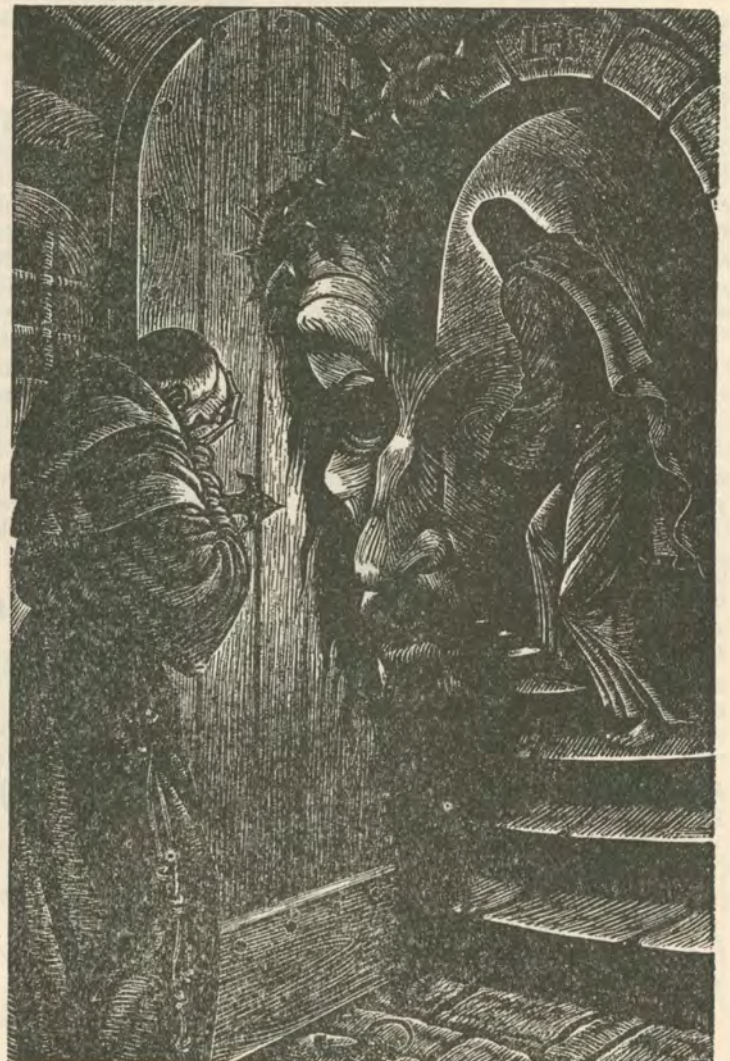


Illustration for *The Grand Inquisitor* by Fritz Eichenberg.



## the ancient debate

To these bold claims the preacher made this reply:

I. They are played not to the worship of God, but to the approval of the world.

II. It is true that men are converted by miracle plays, just as evil can be the cause of good, i.e., Adam's evil was the cause of Christ's coming. But more people are perverted than converted. Moreover, plays are condemned by the Scriptures.

III. Men weep, not for their own sins, not for their inward faith, but for their outward sight. It is not therefore allowable to give miracle plays, but reprehensible.

IV. Conversion is an act of God, therefore not true conversion can come from miracle plays, but only feigned conversion, for if he were truly converted a man would hate such playgoing.

V. Recreation should consist in doing works of mercy for one's neighbors, not in false vanity. The wicked deeds of the actors and spectators of miracle plays prove their worthlessness.

VI. Painting, providing it is true, Christian and restrained, may be a book to discover truth. But acting is an appeal to the senses. Good men, seeing that the time is already short, will not want to spend it in idle playgoing.

### PERSISTENT ARGUMENT

We now presume to affirm the preacher's case by adding support for his six arguments from the contemporary situation and thus to show the continuing danger of theater in the church.

I. We do not wish to suggest that modern church-actors (as actors do elsewhere in the theater) perform only for the awarding approval of the spectators; nor are they concerned—exclusively—with self-expression. Rather the church-actors now regard their reward as being in direct proportion to the "size

of the house." The success of the dramatic venture is most everywhere now decided by the number who come to watch, rather than by the glory it may give to Him who watches from above.

II. In the modern world there would seem to be little need for the church to provide temptations to test man so that he may by knowing evil come to good. A secular theater of great charm takes care of the necessary display of evil. In any case our church-actors are always careful to see that the plays which they use clearly and explicitly show us the reward of virtue and the punishment of evil; thus any real exercise of moral faculties by the spectator is avoided.

III. The tears shed in the modern theater are the only tears that modern man sheds. Transported as he is by theatrical illusion to worlds of the imagination, he spends his emotions over what is not. Returning to reality, he has no tears left for the evils of the world or of his own soul. It is indeed reprehensible for the church to default in showing man the real (not the theatrical) conditions in which he lives.

IV. There is a prevailing concern on the part of the church-actors that the message of the play "gets over" to the audience. It follows that the message must become simple, easy, and pleasing. On the other hand, the message of the gospel confounds the pagan and is a judgment to the unbeliever. The blasphemous desire of the player to transform the spectator represents his lack of faith. Transforming grace is the gift of God and not that of the theater or the actor.

V. The manufacture of theatrical illusion, if it is to be done in an acceptable manner, demands great expenditures of energy, time, and resources. Need we ask if all those who are hungry have been fed, if all the lonely have been befriended? Can we then practice the theatrical diversions when prior responsibilities are ignored?

VI. We come to the heart of the

educational problem. Dramatic methods employed by the church in its mandate to teach have diverted it from the purpose of its teaching. Playing at "theater" takes the time and energy of children and adults and keeps them from learning the gospel. The progressive heresies are being rejected by secular education as wasteful and ineffective. Can the church fritter away its precious moments of instruction with idle play-making?

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### "TO DO THE RIGHT DEED FOR THE WRONG REASON"

Surely we will need to decide what is appropriate to offer to the glory of God. The religious theater, if it is to be offered by the church, stands under judgment along with all other offerings. For the church to appropriate the tactics of the commercial theater and use the drama as an instrumentality to further inappropriate and limited ends will not only defeat the church's purpose but destroy the art of the theater.

This examination of the church's task is, unfortunately, more easily discussed in negative terms than in positive ones. Plays to make money for purchasing choir robes, plays to whip up ardor for mission projects, or plays to keep teen-agers off the streets serve useful purposes. But such uses do not suggest the central mission which the church has for the theater—or indeed for any of the arts. On the other hand, the alternative to these kinds of commercial propaganda and recreational dramatics is not the use of "drama as worship." This is true at least in so far as the public, liturgical aspects of worship are concerned. It is here where the drama has most frequently been abused and worship belittled. That easy identification of the "mood" of worship with that which is theatrical has led to church services full of atmosphere and warm feelings that drug spiritual response and conceal intellectual confusion. And likewise a vague attitude of worship and earnestness has confounded drama. This is the perversion to which both medieval and contemporary churchmen must object.

But in a broader sense worship encompasses all things done to the glory of God whether they be liturgical or not. Worship becomes man's only vocation. It seeks to inform all action and to inspire all life. Within this large domain the Christian apology for the theater can more appropriately be made.

Drama which is not allowed to work on its own terms is not likely to work at all. The churchman who would "take over" the theater and adjust it to his aims, no matter how worthy, will find that the theater is not easily brought to terms. It is not easily appropriated in ways which defy its structure and conventions. We will need to take a risk—the risk always present in working with the creations of man—and allow the artist to work in his own way.

Denis de Rougemont describes the work of art as a trap:

"It is a trap, but an oriented trap, a calculated trap for meditation."<sup>2</sup>

The play trap might be described as a device to unite attention on a particular expression of reality. The modern playwright will seek to express that reality even at the price of ugliness. It is not his concern as an artist to make something beautiful nor to flatter the concerns of the man who would use him. He sets the trap and hopes it will work to engage the audience in the special experience of the theater. This experience might be described as a complex of action taking place in the illusion of life which the artist creates. This is the "imitation of an action" of which Aristotle speaks. Reason and feeling are seen in the "imitation" in a way which is not possible in "real" life. Within and without the "imitation" the spectator ranges, sometimes lost, sometimes conscious of the boundaries. And the action within the "imitation" strikes out at the spectator's sensibilities, his convictions, and his ideas. An awareness may grow that is beyond ordinary comprehension and may be "twice as real." This is the theater "trap," not a thing of beauty and a



joy forever, but an action made out of life.

This would suggest that as Christians our interest in drama would not be limited to plays of religious commitment nor with characters and events drawn from the Bible nor the lives of the saints, although such plays may be appropriate means for celebration and renewal. Rather we might wish to find the most rigorous engagement between play and spectator, an engagement which would exercise rather than soothe our souls, regardless of subject matter. We will look for plays which ask the embarrassing



and the pertinent questions. The rooting out of doubts through such experience may be more important to faith in our day than even the traditional practices of prayer and meditation. There would seem to be a special premium on saying our "yes" or saying our "no."

The modern theater has exceeded the theater of the past in its effectiveness at involving men's feelings in the action of the play. The modern traditions of the play and the theater have combined to transport the audience easily and completely into the imaginary world that is set before it in a sturdy proscenium frame which holds the boundary between life and the stage in place. Such conditions may serve to make the action on the stage a more compelling engagement for man's mind and soul, but its danger is that it makes the separation between life and art permanent and thus it destroys their relationship. We are told that the generation nurtured on the mechanized theater of our century suffers a peculiar separation of sensibilities. Imagination has become an escape from life rather than a catalyst. The church will want to preserve the sense of active engagement between art and life. In this way she may serve the arts and glorify God.

Can we then begin to see the mission of the theater in the service of God? Can we begin to see the conditions which theater requires if it is to fulfill that mission? The kind of theater of which we dream may even be in the process of creation. Enthusiasms are engendered, beginnings appear, right questions are asked. The old conditions under which the medieval church used the theater and the medieval theater was sustained by the church, do not seem to apply. In an age of disassociated sensibilities when man is made robot by mechanization and when his imagination wanders in prefabricated dreams a new force is foretold. The church which is charged to serve at the point of crucial need will seek to heal the divided spirit and nurture the whole man. The theater may help in this mission.

<sup>2</sup> Denis de Rougemont, "Religion and the Mission of the Artist," *Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature*, edited by Stanley R. Hopper, New York, 1952.

# A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS

BY WILLIAM BRASMER

THE primary place for religious drama is in the theater where it is in the hands of theater artists. Although an occasional play performed in a church and dedicated to the fullness of Christ carries an import it never possessed in the theater, the future of religious drama work lies in the craft of theater artists and their expression of it in the community, university, and professional theaters in which they work. It is this work which the student, the lay person, and the minister must champion.

To say this is not to say that "theater is my religion," as Maxwell Anderson so coyly does in a paragraph often quoted by religious drama workers. Rather it is to confirm what T. S. Eliot states in his *Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry*:

*Religion is no more a substitute for drama than drama is a substitute for religion. If we can do without religion, then let us have theater without pretending it is religion; and if we can do without drama, then let us not pretend that religion is drama.*

Only recently at Denison University the Department of Theatre Arts turned down the opportunity to produce a play for the student religious program on the campus. I must admit that the request came late, as all requests do. ("Can you work up a three-act play for a vespers program by next week?" is the usual request, not only from students but from outside the academic walls as well.) But our refusal stemmed from a basic philosophical belief that religious drama has a more important place in the repertoire of a producing theater than it does among the many activities which cluster about the church.

In a liberal arts college, certainly, the theater must confront its audiences and its student artists with the challenge of ideas and experiences to be found in religious drama. The adoration of God is the province of the church. Drama and the theater presuppose a different response: the sensuous and intellectual enjoyment received from a series of conflicting actions seeking a balance of adjustment. Thus, essentially drama belongs in the theater where the ends of drama may have their most culminating effect. Therefore during each of the public subscription seasons of the Denison University

and Studio Theaters we have sought to include a religious drama in our schedule. Such plays as Ronald Duncan's *This Way to the Tomb* and Norman Nicholson's *A Match for the Devil* (both American premières) have been produced along with four of the religious works of Christopher Fry, James Bridie's *Tobias and the Angel*, Coffee-Cowen's *Family Portrait*, and recently W. H. Auden's *For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio*. Each of these plays has been produced during a year's winter and summer program of some eighteen full-length productions including the best of classical and of modern drama.

This philosophy is carried over into classroom work, where in a senior seminar course in "Religious Drama" there is scant mention made of the oft-times pertinent question, "How do I produce a play in my church?" This course is concerned primarily with modern dramatic literature and its inherent dramatic and moral values. Thus the main task for the student in the course is one of analysis. The analysis is nonhistorical in its approach and centers around "aesthetic" and "theological" criticism of the work under discussion. During the course of a semester some twenty plays are studied: the works of Shaw, Sartre, Eliot, Auden, Fry, Brecht, Capek, Nicholson and others.

If the accent in religious drama work must be on its production in the theater, then rightly the question arises, "Of what use can drama be in the church?" Before such a question can be answered it seems only logical to ask, "What kinds of plays are suitable?" In other words, "What is a religious drama?"

Most definitions of religious drama that I have come across are too broad. They seldom define a kind of drama. Rather they invent a loose definition for all of dramatic literature. For instance, in an issue of *motive* the following definition appeared: "Religious drama has come to be considered as including all drama that

A HOLY  
HOLY  
A HOLY

deals with life and the struggles of men . . . (it) must have some moral." This definition merely begs the question. It offers scant help for those who have to select a play for church production, for the definition easily includes the whole body of dramatic literature, from that which is most religiously profound to the latest propaganda piece from the Soviet Union.

**A**N acceptable and a workable definition of religious drama seems to me to be that of Una Ellis-Fermor. She aptly describes it as "a kind of play which takes religious experience for its main theme." Using this definition, as Miss Ellis-Fermor does in her book, *The Frontiers of Drama*, the religious drama enthusiast can easily sort out plays which would be suitable for his work. He need only apply the criteria of the relevancy or irrelevancy of the central theme.

Note that this definition does not mention two attributes which many feel are essential to religious drama: namely, that it should present solutions to problems and that it can be a substitute for the liturgy of the church. Those who wish for religious drama to have these attributes are surely wrong. The words "problem" and "solution" are anathema to biblical revelation and as Dorothy Sayers has so sharply pointed out in her book, *The Mind of the Maker*, "the artist does not see life as a problem to be solved, but as a medium for creation." Those who see in religious drama the making of a new liturgy should be reminded of Frederick Pottle's words in his essay, "Christian Teaching of Literature":

*Secular literature is not inspired Scripture, not matter of special revelation. It presents us with a second Nature, and this second Nature is just as formidable as the first.*

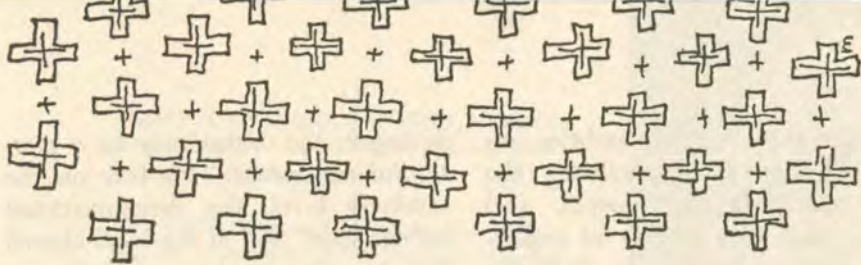
Let us return to the question "Of what use can drama be in the church?" Drama in the church can witness to the religious experiences of man. It can illuminate this "second Nature" in a profoundly moving way. It can, that is, if three conditions are met. First, it must be performed by theater craftsmen who are honestly offering their gifts to God. Too much shoddy theater work is performed in the name of church drama. We would not accept this kind of work from the architects who design our churches nor from the musicians who fill them with music. The history of drama in the church has a long heritage of artistry. The skill of the medieval guild craftsmen should be our goal and not that of the local community recreation program. Second, the production of religious drama must fulfill all the aesthetic qualities which make a play so satisfying in the theater. It must appeal to the senses. Sheer religious dedication is not enough. Third, we must not ask of the theater craftsmen that they be devout members of any specific faith or creed. Their religious commitment is not a criterion for casting them in roles. One need only ask that they be accomplished as artists and that they be

willing to give of their gifts within the context of a worship service.

Although the philosophy of the Department of Theatre Arts at Denison has been that religious drama belongs properly within the province of the theater, we have participated frequently in the production of dramas in churches. More often than not these plays have first been tested in a theater performance. Our most recent production of Henri Ghéon's *The Way of the Cross*, which has toured to some twenty-five churches, was the response first of five young actors and a director to a script that cried out to be performed. They sought first to create and then offered their creative gifts to the service of the church.

**T**HE general tenor of this essay has been that religious drama belongs properly in the theater. If this is so, then the theater with all its secular shortcomings must become the workshop for those who are interested in the field of religious drama. They must first learn the art of theater; they must love and cherish the theater, and although they will find themselves in a company a little lower than the angels—that is, at least, a good place to start.





# drama's

## ANCIENT FUTURE HOME

BY ALBERT JOHNSON

**T**HE church, not the theater, may be the future home of significant drama." That statement, which I made in a recent issue of "Worship and Arts," has not made me popular, particularly among my colleagues in the commercial theater.

Yet the commercial theater, dependent on a return of dividends to investors, dedicated to box-office appeal, enslaved by entangling union demands, and trapped in the spiral of inflationary costs, is rapidly excluding itself from a public that wants and seeks better drama at better prices in places other than outmoded legitimate theaters.

The commercial stage, a product of Western capitalism, is actually a Johnny-come-lately type of angel to an art that has flourished for more than five thousand years. In ancient Egypt and Greece, and during the Middle Ages, drama was related to religion much more than to material gain.

In a hundred years or less, the commercial theater, as we know it today, may be regarded as merely a passing phase in the long history of drama. Such prognostication might be dismissed as idle prophecy were it not for the challenging voice of urgency crying "change, change, change."

Born of the depths of human need, drama inevitably responds to human need. Mother to man's spiritual wants, she will take her stage where she can find it, be it the Theatre of Dionysos, Canterbury Cathedral, or a parish church.

What is the human need of "Now," this urgent cry for "Change"? Certainly it is not a thing to be satisfied merely through the intoxication of escape. The need is not met by Broadway nor the shows Broadway puts on the road. If it were, Broadway would have more hits and fewer

failures. Nor is the need met by those television plays which some sponsors insist must be subordinate to the commercials. If it were, we would not be a confused people suffering from "Sputnikosis."

**T**HE black, the brown, the yellow people of the earth are suddenly "aware." They move, they march, irrepressibly toward a new dignity, a new self-assertion on a planet they, too, possess. Suddenly, a sleepy nation only a few decades this side of serfdom, becomes a dominating power on an earth it can encircle with satellites of its own making. Suddenly that universe inside the atom explodes into a menace threatening extinction of life on this planet, and suddenly that universe around us becomes merely another sea for new Columboes to conquer.

In the wake of such upheavals, our Western ways face judgment, judgment before the race of men, and our Judeo-Christian culture is on trial, perhaps the final trial.

Can we win the case by military force? Can we win by emulating the materialistic power that engages us in the trial? Can we win the case even if we win the race for technological pre-eminence and scientific prowess? Drama, which both reflects and fashions human culture, can show us other ways to win.

Godlike, in their tragic masks, the ancient actors of Athens inspired nobility in men. Humble and steadfast in their faith, the actor-priests challenged medieval men to emulate the Master.

Where are the actors, the playwrights, the stage directors now who will evaluate the crisis of the centuries in the light of eternal verities? Where are the theatricians who, through

comedy and drama, will light the beacons in the night of trial?

Where are they? They are not likely to be found among the gifted sharpies dedicated to the making of a "fast buck" in show business. Where are they, these talented men and women who will answer the challenging cry for change with noble drama pertinent to our time?

They do exist. I have met them, here and there, as I have toured this land with plays relevant to religious life. They are those rare individuals who think in terms of what they can "give" rather than in terms of what they can "gain." Their beacons burn in places remote from the blaze of Broadway, though some are geographically adjacent to "The Street."

Some are in colleges and universities, some in seminaries, and some are in churches. They work quietly, devotedly, honestly, without much publicity, to bring to the church drama that is professional in the best sense of the word. They are removing the stigma, so justly attached to "Religious Drama" by the inept, poorly written, ill-prepared presentations of their predecessors. Against prejudices within the church and self-righteous ridicule outside, they pioneer on new horizons bringing an ancient art to its ancient home.

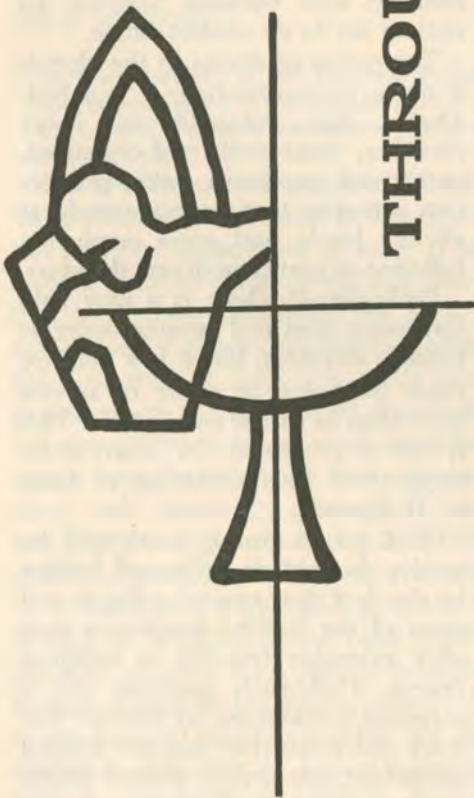
The return of drama to the church is not a prognostication; it is a fact. Drama has returned to many churches, some with well-organized, year-round programs, with production activities that engage people at all age levels, and some employing full-time or part-time drama directors.

Professionally, here is a new field for young men and women eager to become directors, but it is a field for those interested in a life of service more than in career and fortune. This is not a profession for starry-eyed, stage-struck kids dreaming of fame in Hollywood.

That young people motivated by service do exist, is evidenced further by the fact that several colleges and some of our leading seminaries now offer extensive training in religious drama. That such positions are a potential is evidenced by the fact that more and more churches are seeking competent, adequately trained drama directors or ministers of education or music with dramatic training.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 38)

# COMMUNICATION THROUGH RELIGIOUS DRAMA



BY ALFRED R. EDYVEAN

WE in the Christian tradition are interested in evangelizing the faith, spreading the gospel, and helping man in a trilogy of experiences: his relationship to God, his understanding of self, and his relationships to his world and to his fellow men. We believe that the media of religious drama is a most vital avenue of expression for this instruction.

In the first place drama is a *unique way of expressing an idea*, a theme, a message. Frank O'Hara defined drama by saying that it is a story presented on a stage by actors to an audience. The live author-actor-audience situation contains dynamic possibilities not found in any other media, certainly not in the motion picture nor in television. There are certain empathic lines flowing between audience and actors in a stimulus-response situation when the story is unfolded. This "feeling-in" atmosphere in the drama, this cooperation on the part of author, actor, and audience is a most vital part of drama's uniqueness. In a day of "spectaculars" in the motion-picture and television industries this "live empathic" quality keeps the drama unique as an art form.

Most of our references will be directed toward the religious drama in production, but we do not wish to minimize the power of this media as literary art. The drama in production creates an indelible impression on the minds of receptive people. The proscenium arch of the Goodman Theater in Chicago bears these words: "You too must bring faggots to this burning." A good drama stimulates our participation—we identify ourselves with the characters, undergoing similar problems that we have experienced—we are moved. When we have put ourselves wholly into the play, we seldom forget the experience, the theme or the characterizations. There is a high degree of learning potential in the drama.

In the second place, when the religious drama has been carefully selected on the basis of proper dramatic structure and a manageable setting within the limits of the group pro-

ducing it, the drama may be a *worshipful experience*. Our task on the seminary level, the denominational college level, and in the local church is to provide experience whereby the congregation or audience is exposed to valid and moving worship experiences. The religious drama provides an actual experience of catharsis. But it is more than the Aristotelian purgation of the emotions of pity and fear. The audiences may experience some of the aspects of true worship, the deepening of fellowship with man and God. The participant may experience a reverence for life under God and may be able to express this deepening of faith himself. It may be the means of a more vertical expression of self toward God, a step away from a former horizontal plane. It may become, in the words of Albert W. Palmer, "the conscious outreach of the soul toward God, the invitation for him to enter into the waiting and eager heart." And it may be a continuum of experience, for the individual leaves with a feeling of exultation, not depression, a feeling not quickly nor easily forgotten as contrasted with our feelings of depression and discouragement so often felt in some modern secular drama.

IN the third place, we feel that religious drama is a *therapeutic media of expression* and of vast importance to the seminary and the ministry. We now look at the drama as it may be of benefit to those taking part in the production, especially the actors. Such therapy may be observed in its *most dynamic* sense in the use made of drama in hospitals and clinics in the form known as psychodrama or "spontaneity drama" as J. L. Moreno calls it.<sup>1</sup> This form of therapeutic use of drama has had marked success as a means of rehabilitation of disturbed mental patients and also as a leavening influence for the normal person with minor problems. We are interested in the potential of religious drama as therapy for the ministerial student and Christian layman. When

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Moreno, *The Theatre of Spontaneity*, Beacon House, New York, 1947.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 29)

DRAMATIC INTERLUDES: MYSTERY, MIRACLE, AND MORALITY PLAYS FROM THE CONTEMPORARY THEATER

CHRISTIAN artists look to the Middle Ages for a prototype of integrity and wholeness as far as the artist's relationship to his faith and to the church is concerned. When the church was his "mother" and infused his time and his being, he developed naturally the forms which made of all the arts an extension of Christian worship.

The plays of this period grew directly from the liturgy and were for a time contained as "tropes" within the offices of the church. Other dramatic pieces were clearly inappropriate for presentation within the church and were taken over by craft guilds and other groups. A rich body of dramatic material evolved which celebrated Christian concerns. Central events of the Old and New Testaments were enacted in the Mysteries; the lives of the saints were remembered and rehearsed in the Miracles; the precepts of belief and behavior were allegorized in the Moralities. These works come to us today as a part of our living ecclesiastical and theatrical inheritance.

However, the communicative task of the church in contemporary culture is different from that of the medieval period, and the effective dramatic statement of the faith will need to employ new images and contemporary theatrical conventions. Indeed the most pertinent modern drama—pertinent to the church's task—seems to draw its subject matter from outside the canon of the church. At present modern secular drama serves the church by exploring man's lost condition and only occasionally suggests with its secular images the relevance of Christian affirmation.

Is it impertinent to ask that the theater do more, that it deal more specifically and explicitly with the tenets of the faith? Is the re-establishment of theological perspective and biblical images within the province of the dramatic statement? Although most modern attempts at such restoration in the theater have produced symbols imposed upon drama rather than growing integrally out of its structure, the possibility of good Christian drama presents itself. (It is similar to the problem of the contemporary painter who would not only paint man's estrangement but *man on his way*, a problem which was treated by Frederick Carney in the December *motive*.) Even in the modern world the Mysteries are still to be celebrated, the saints venerated, and moral questions explored.

THE list of contemporary "mystery," "miracle," and "morality" plays which follows are minor works and their parallels to the medieval prototypes cannot be pushed too far. Indeed their relevance to the contemporary religious theater does not depend upon it. Certainly they do not grow out of the liturgy of the church as did the medieval plays. But these plays do offer a group of pertinent short works that provide opportunity for interesting experiments in an ancient tradition. In some instances, I suspect, they are trial pieces or exercises of the playwrights repre-



Santa encounters Death in e.e. cummings' morality play, *Santa Claus*, at the Hamline University Theatre, James R. Carlson, director.

*Grab and Grace* by Charles Williams  
 Directed by E. Martin Browne  
 Program of Religious Drama, Union Theological Seminary, New York





The MSM production of Charles Williams' *Grab and Grace* in the Canterbury House at S.M.U. in Dallas. Paul Blanton, the new director of the MSM at Southern Methodist University, is responsible for the presentation.

sented. By and large, they are simple plays as far as their theatrical requirements are concerned and can be presented with some competence by amateurs and beginners. Even if presented rather poorly, the presentation doesn't last very long. The dramatic styles represented range from the psychological naturalism of Laurence Housman, to the lyric symbolism of W. B. Yeats, to the epic didacticism of Bertolt Brecht. This variation in style is perhaps more relevant to the "problem of religious drama" in the present day than is the question of subject matter and the explicit treatment of Christian themes.

—James R. Carlson

#### MORALITY PLAYS:

**SANTA CLAUS** by e. e. cummings (Henry Holt, New York, 1946)

This little morality play presents the conflict between Knowledge and Love. Santa Claus (who embodies understanding and love) outwits Death (full of knowing, empty of understanding) who is allied with the Mob in a carnival-like episode concerning the exploitation of a "wheel mine." (2 men, 1 woman, 1 child, mob)

**LET MAN LIVE** by Par Lagerkvist (*Scandinavian Plays of the Twentieth Century, Third Series*, Princeton, 1951)

A kind of "stage oratorium," this play brings together martyrs from many ages and circumstances to protest against man's eagerness to judge and to distort truth and justice in doing so. (10 men, 4 women)

**HE WHO SAYS YES, HE WHO SAYS NO** by Bertolt Brecht (in *Accent*, Autumn issue, 1946, Urbana, Illinois)

These two plays are modern arrangements of a traditional Japanese Noh play. In the first the virtues of responsibility and conformity to the community are presented, in the second the virtues of protest and change. The spectator is expected to deliberate, to argue,



The wedding scene from Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* produced by the Wesley Players at the Wesley Foundation, Nashville, Tennessee, under the direction of Ruth Winfield Love.

A scene from a new version of *Everyman*, produced in the Chapel at Redlands University (California) under the direction of Bertha and Albert Johnson.





and to decide. The first play has been made into an opera with music by Kurt Weill (*Der Jasager*, Universal Edition A.G., Vienna, 1930).  
**GRAB AND GRACE** by Charles Williams (in *Seed of Adam*, Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1948)

This is a sequel to a Nativity play, *The House by the Stable*, which follows the pattern of the medieval morality play in showing the conflict between good and evil. The wit and irony of modern attitudes make the play contemporary. (3 men, 3 women)

**EVERYMAN**, the medieval morality play, is included here because it has been brought up to date by contemporary authors. Albert Johnson's version is included as is that by Walter Sorell, even though neither of them is as yet published.

**OUR TOWN** by Thornton Wilder (Samuel French, New York City)

This is not strictly a morality play, but it is a modern play of significance in which the characters are not personalities so much as types, albeit, very real people. A contemporary classic.

### MYSTERY PLAYS

**ABRAHAM AND ISAAC** by Laurence Housman (in *PALESTINE PLAYS*, London.)

The sacrifice of Abraham is presented in the idiom of modern naturalism with more attention given to the psychological implications than in the Old Testament or in the fifteenth-century Brome play on the same theme. (1 man, 1 woman, 1 boy)

**HOLY FAMILY** by R. H. Ward (The Religious Drama Society, London, 1950)

An Advent play in which the traditional events surrounding the Nativity are presented by a chorus in alternation with comment upon its contemporary and eternal significance. The rhythm of the play reflects the order of the service of common prayer. (chorus of approximately 12 men and women)

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 48)



The final moments from *The Way of the Cross* by Henri Ghson, presented by the Denison University Theatre, Granville, Ohio, before twenty-five churches during their 1956 tour.



*Christ in the Concrete City*—Philip Turner  
 Rehearsal under the direction of E. Martin Browne (far right)  
 Program of Religious Drama, Union Theological Seminary, New York

Boston University School of Theology production of *Christmas in the Market Place*.  
 Direction: Suzanne Shelton and Harold Ehrensperger.



*Christ in the Concrete City* by School of Religion Players,  
 Butler University, Indianapolis, A. R. Edyvean, director.





*The Sign of Jonah*—Guenter Rutenborn, produced and directed by Robert E. Seaver, Program of Religious Drama, Union Theological Seminary



Masked players in William Butler Yeats's *Calvary* line theater, directed by James R. Carlson.



The opening scene in the Masque of Ronald Duncan's poetic drama, *This Way to the Tomb*, as presented by the Denison University Theatre, Granville, Ohio. William Brasmer, director.

The hillside shepherd scene from Henri Gheon's *Christmas in the Market Place*. This production by the Scarritt College (Nashville, Tennessee) Players used commedia dell'arte techniques. James Warren directed.





A scene from The Bishop Players Performance of Christopher Fry's *The Boy With a Cart* at the Air Force Chapel, Westover Air Base, Mass.



at the Ham-

## MYSTERY PLAYS

**THE BOY WITH A CART** by Christopher Fry (Frederick Muller, London, 1945)

The "People of South England" form the chorus for the dramatization of an account of the building of the church in Steyning by Saint Cuthman of Sussex. (8 men, 5 women, chorus)

**A PLAY OF SAINT GEORGE**, anonymous, a traditional folk play set to music by Dorothy S. Harris (unpublished, Hamline University Theatre, Saint Paul, 1957)

This version of the old English Christmas celebration presents assorted sword fights in which St. George downs his traditional enemies who are then miraculously restored to life. The piece has been made into a little "opera" which is to be presented in pantomime with music performed off stage. (6 men and singers)

**PARADE AT THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE** by Henri Gheon (in *Saint Anne and the Gouty Rector* by Henri Gheon and Henri Brochet, Longmans, New York, 1950)

A little French farce which celebrates the goodness, and the stubbornness, of the holy hermit Saint Kado. Kado makes a deal with the Devil and the good man's soul is saved only by the devotion of his constant companion, a talking cat. A stage manager, who talks directly to the audience, and other presentational devices are used. (3 men, 1 woman, 1 cat)

**THOR, WITH ANGELS** by Christopher Fry (Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1949)

Set in a Jutish countryside in A.D. 596, the play presents the struggle in a chieftain's mind between the pagan gods and the "One God" of Saint Augustine. The play was written for the Canterbury Festival of 1948. (8 men, 3 women)

**THE POOR MAN WHO DIED BECAUSE HE WORE GLOVES** by Henri Brochet (in *Saint Anne and the Gouty Rector*, Longmans, New York, 1950)

The play is based upon the legend of the murder of a poor saint who was thought to be rich. The tragedy is transformed by the realization that love has the power to bring good out of evil. (3 men)



April 1958

## MISCELLANEOUS . . .



The Baylor University (Texas) production of Ramsey Yelvington's play, *The Long Gallery*, a story of the integrity of a ranching family. Paul Baker is director of the theater.

A scene from Christopher Fry's *The Dark Is Light Enough* produced by the players of the Wesley Foundation at Nashville under the direction of Ruth Winfield Love.

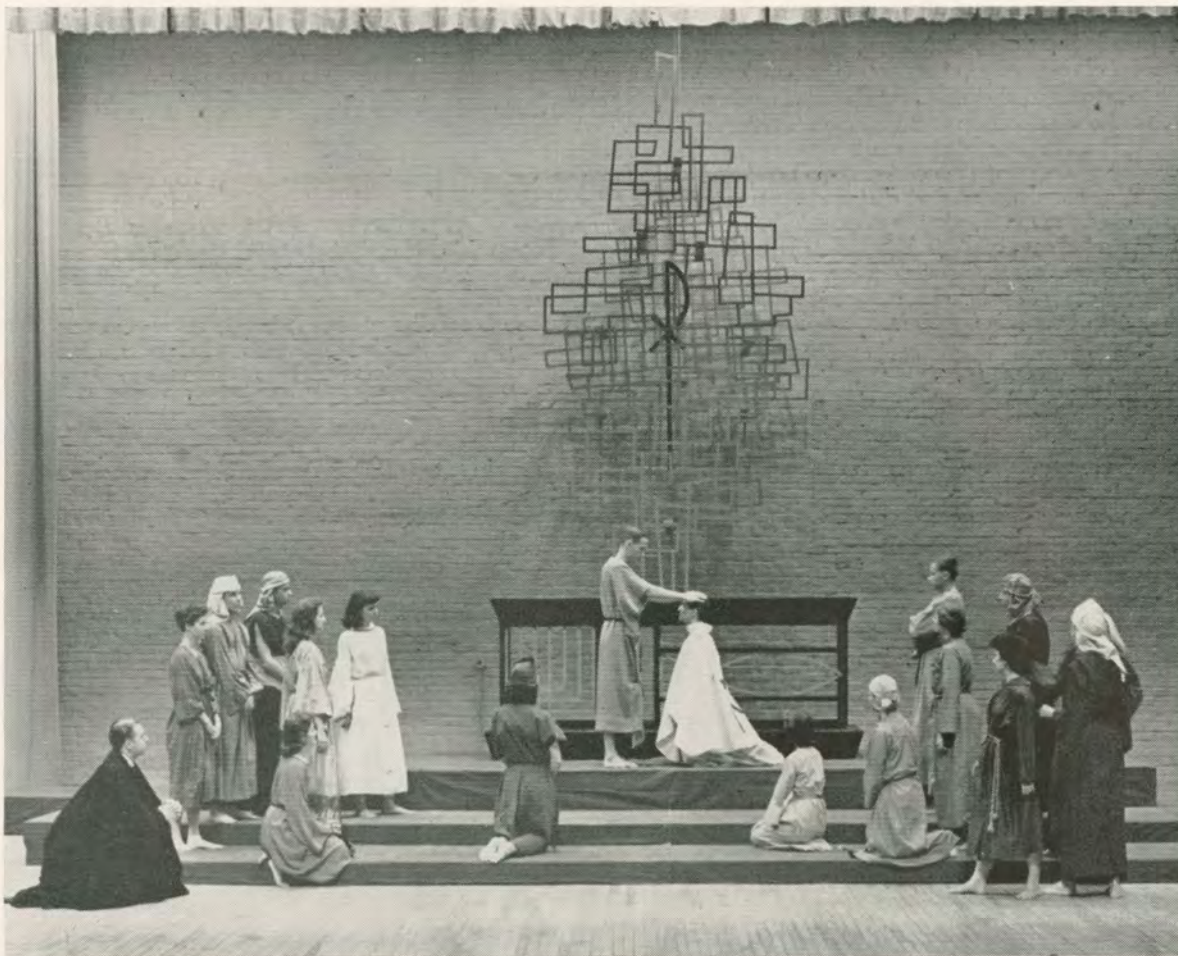




*Glory for the Land*, a play on Francis Asbury by Donald Mauck, was written with full notations as a thesis for the partial fulfillment of the doctor's degree at Boston University School of Theology last year. It was given its first performance by The Hilltop Players at the Lancaster Camp Grounds (Ohio) during the season of plays in the National Council of Churches' drama workcamp last summer. John Heineman played the part of Asbury. The play was under the direction of Jay Buell of Boston University School of Theology.

The Pilgrim Plays of British fame is one of their factory productions of Kay Bazter's *T'Other Shift*, a play especially written for the Religious Drama Society and particularly designed for evangelization in industrial areas.





A scene from the opening dramatic presentation of the theme of the conference at the Sixth Quadrennial Conference of the Methodist Student Movement at Lawrence, Kansas, last December. The script was written and produced by four students and a faculty member of the Boston University School of Theology. The *Man from Mark* served as interlocutor, moving from the biblical scenes to contemporary scenes which showed the relevance of Mark's gospel. The maze designed by Margaret Rigg was used as the conference symbol.

The fugal-chorus from the section entitled "The Summons" in W. H. Auden's *For the Time Being* as recently staged by Denison University Theatre, Granville, Ohio.



## RELIGIOUS DRAMA / EDYVEAN

an actor plays a role in an intense, spiritually motivated play, the chance for growth in character development and spiritual development is there. Not that the actor needs drastic rehabilitation, though he may; but that through this "role-playing" and through the co-operation enterprise of Christian fellowship, in working on common problems in the play, he may be able to understand his fellows' problems and feelings as well as his own to a more effective and meaningful degree. The awareness of the spiritual atmosphere and the purpose behind the production may bring about visible changes in the actor.

In the past five years of play production at the School of Religion at Butler University we have produced a dozen plays. In these productions we estimate we have used sixty different actors. We can recall a half-dozen of these students whose participation in the drama resulted in some very positive therapy; that is to say, the change was visible and noticeable to many of us. We are sure that others received similar satisfactions. The awareness of the spiritual adventure plus the therapy aspect in "role-playing" may impress a student to such a degree that he will begin to "give himself" physically and mentally to the role. (It must be said that such an experience may be quite trying on the director but the end-goal is very rewarding!) More than once the conscientious director in the religious drama sphere will actually sacrifice, if he must choose between two individuals who have similar talents for the role, by giving it to the one he thinks *needs* it at this particular time.

Another aspect of therapy in the drama is the group project where an entire church attempts a huge production, such as scenes from the passion play or the whole story of the life of Christ. In this production everyone has a part. This co-operative enterprise for the whole community tends to bind the group more solidly together.

In the fourth place, religious drama

serves some *very practical ends* for the seminary student and minister. Producing a drama provides a variety of expression for the whole student body and the local church as one way of fulfilling the year's program. It gives any group the feeling of artistic accomplishment, for the drama is one of the oldest and highest of the art forms. But perhaps more important for the individual participating, it provides a chance for expression in an artistic media. No matter how small the production or how much work it still needs on opening night, the student may feel that he is part of a great tradition, howbeit, a small part, *yet a part*. In the speech department we have all heard this question more than once, "Prof, I've had your basic courses in speech—now what?" Our immediate answer to this is, "Do some work in drama." In some ways it is almost impossible for a student to participate in a good drama without improving. The drama is one of the surest ways I know to break down inhibitions and grow in the speech realm. (Almost every competent speaker knows how to dramatize ideas.) The areas most open to improvement are the voice and the use of the body in expression. His voice projection, with all that such a term implies, generally shows marked improvement. The general carriage of the body and the use of gesture may be vastly improved in exposure to this unique media. It's an opportunity for some very practical experience with practical results.

In the fifth place, religious drama, when properly written, provides the kind of *framework for analysis and evaluation that is of great value to the theological student*. An astute investigation of the religious values inherent in the three great periods of drama, the Greek, the Elizabethan, and the Modern periods, provides the theologian with much material for study.

**W**HEN the play deals with universal truths, struggles, conflicts and hopes, the student may learn better to interpret man's role in life under God and man's relationship to man.

Like great poetry, drama is more than a criticism of life; it also gives us glimpses of what life ought to be. But the student must learn to interpret the great religious dramas, whether the drama be from the Book of Job, from Shakespeare, Ibsen, or Christopher Fry in a synthesis of Christian theology and dramatic structure. Hence we ask certain questions of the drama. Most important of these, for example, are: 1. What is the basic idea of man in the drama? 2. What is the God-man relationship? 3. What is the common struggle, or note of universality? 4. What signs of spiritual development? 5. Is there a note of hope in the drama? Some of us interested in religious drama feel that when the play recognizes some of the basic beliefs of man, it has a stature that most secular plays do not have.

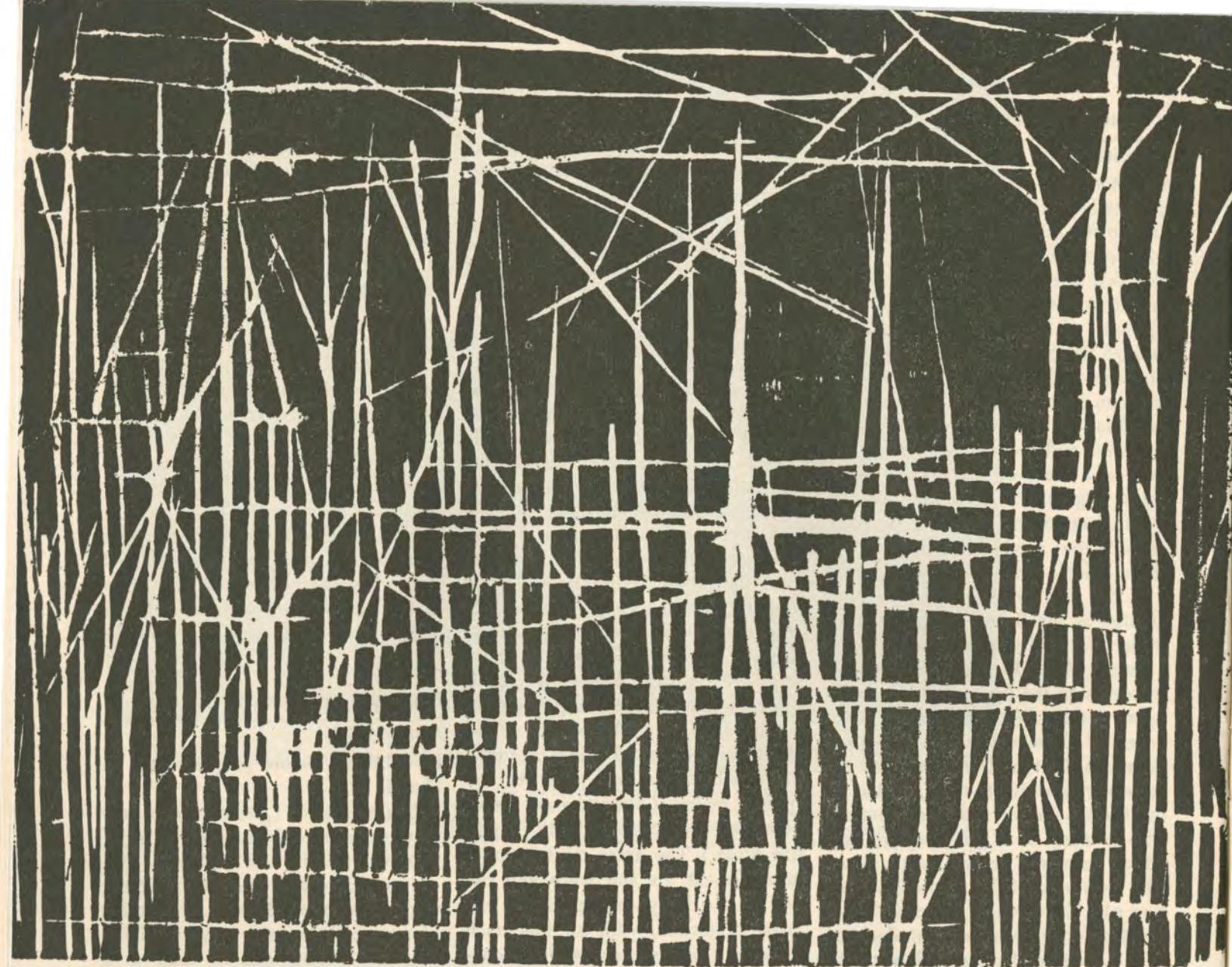
## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

## ANGER/STEELE

be exhibited before people sitting in church.

Drama-minded persons can see plays as means of helping us, all of us, to see ourselves, our problems, and our world; drama can be a potent wedge in opening doors to new worlds of sane and humane ways of living together. Drama can be used as a medium for a community to draw together and discover our common human-beingness. Drama if enlightened can enlighten, provided it goes to a ready audience.

Our artistic chancel, basement, and gymnasium orgies (which shriek the shame and torture of Judas Iscariot's mother when she is unable to avoid speaking to Jesus' mother when they meet at the well) are insults to persons who have not left real life. They are an insult to the art of drama, the history of prophetic religion, and religious living. And this kind of twaddle packaged in homilies is the bulk and backbone of what is meant by religious and church drama. Let's be done with these fitful flights, and use our feet and heads, abilities and talents, buildings, time, and money for work and living that hold the potentiality for growing and maturing.



Brown

part three: uses of drama

## MEANING COMING THROUGH WITH POWER

the values of creative drama in the church school

BY WINIFRED WARD

MARK Twain was an enthusiastic believer in the power of drama in the life of a child. In a letter to a school principal he wrote, "It is much the most effective teacher of morals and promoter of good conduct that the ingenuity of man has yet devised, for the reason that its lessons are not taught wearily by book and dreary homily, but by visible and enthusing action; and they go straight to the heart which is the rightest of right places for them."

It is on this basis that many church schools are exploring the possibilities of informal or creative drama as an implement to teaching. Not formal plays with memorized lines and directed action, but improvised drama in which a group, guided by a capable adult, creates plays from ideas or stories or actual events. Such plays are never written down, but remain always in a fluid state, different at every playing. Careful plans are

motive



made in advance, but specific dialogue and action are left to the actors. After each bit of the story has been tried by a group, it is evaluated by leader and children.

Here is a group, for instance, which has been studying the life of Joseph. In all the Bible there is probably no other story which lends itself so well to dramatization. Almost all the incidents can be played, but the favorite scene with many children is that in which Joseph, sent by his father to see how his brothers are faring, finds them pasturing their flocks near Dothan. The reaction of the brothers on seeing Joseph—"dreamer," favorite of their father—approaching at a distance, gives plenty of opportunity for emotional release, and children play the scene with zest. The action in which they plot to take his life but are restrained by Reuben; their compromise in throwing him into a pit and later selling him to a caravan of Ishmaelites on their way to Egypt, makes an exciting and meaningful scene.

It is a situation any boy of nine or ten can understand. The children need to know the story thoroughly and to have played the scene in which Joseph was given the fine coat. But they do not need lines. They get far more enjoyment and greater growth by planning the action and improvising the dialogue. Then, as they later play the episode in which Joseph forgives the brothers when they come to Egypt humbly asking to buy grain, they can better understand the forgiving spirit and the feelings of those forgiven.

ONE of the values of informal dramatics is the experience it gives in thinking on one's feet, and freely expressing his own ideas. It makes for poise and for independence of thought, qualities needed for any kind of leadership. The player must be alert, for he never knows what others will say to him nor just what will happen in the scene.

He may have some such experience as did the boy who was acting the part of a hunter in a school play. As he was picking his way stealthily through the woods—made of flimsy cardboard trees—he accidentally touched one of them and sent it toppling to the ground. The audience burst into laughter, and the teacher thought her play was ruined. But the boy, accustomed to improvisation, stopped, looked at the fallen tree, shook his head, and said sadly, "There's a lot of dead wood in these parts!" At which the audience laughed at his quick wit, and watched the rest of the play with fresh interest.

Creative plays are not designed, as a rule, for any audience except the members of the group who are not playing at the moment. The purpose of this kind of drama is entirely for the development of the children who participate. Such plays are a definite risk for any audience except a small, informal group that understands the purpose of creative drama, or for an audience of children the same age or younger than the players. For there are sure to be grammatical errors, gaps in the

action, and an O.K. or two! Furthermore, it is next to impossible to do creative thinking in the presence of a formal audience.

The value to boys and girls who participate in creative drama is potentially great. What they get from it depends entirely on the guidance of the teacher or leader. It provides much experience in creative thinking—more than in almost anything else they do providing they are wisely encouraged. It is one of the strongest possible incentives for working together because a play is so fascinating to children. And since human beings with their various points of view are the material with which the children work, they grow in understanding of people, in sensitivity to their thoughts and feelings.

Psychiatrists believe that the most vital use of creative dramatics is as a controlled emotional outlet. All the arts offer opportunity for channeling emotions into constructive uses, but drama is unique in its concrete use of people and social living as material. It offers a child many vicarious experiences in conflict situations, and the decisions made by the characters he plays, and the group discussions they cause, can give him standards for solving his own problems.

In medieval days the church found that it could make Bible stories understandable and impressive to the people by dramatizing them. Today we are finding that an even better way for the Bible to get over into the lives of boys and girls is for them to create dramatizations of great stories themselves. The truths Jesus taught when he told the story of the Good Samaritan or the Talents; the Rich Young Ruler, The Sower, or The Prodigal Son, were vivid because the stories were dramatic. The people could see themselves as the characters in the parables, and the meaning came through with power.

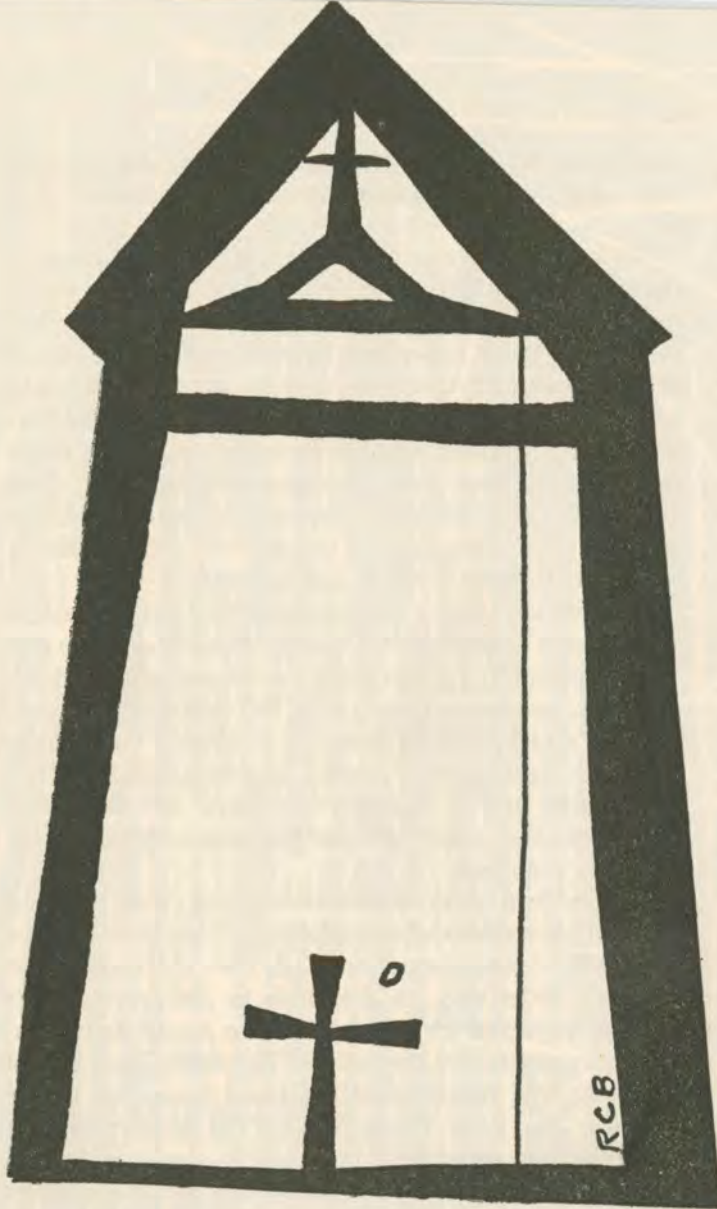
#### STORIES TO DRAMATIZE

Winifred Ward's excellent collection of stories to dramatize (Children's Theatre Press, Anchorage, Kentucky) contains many stories that can be used in religious education. The following ones printed in her book are especially recommended:

*For primary children: Ask Mr. Bear, by Marjorie Flack; The Elves and the Shoemaker, by Grimm; The Little Blue Dishes, author unknown; The Little Pink Rose, by Sara Cone Bryant; Why the Evergreen Trees Keep Their Leaves in Winter, a nature myth.*

*For Juniors: The Clown Who Forgot How to Laugh, by Eleanore Leuser; The Dwarf and the Cobbler's Sons, by Mary B. Pulver; How the Robin's Breast Became Red, by Flora J. Cooke; Mrs. Mallaby's Birthday, by Helen E. Gilbert; Paddy's Christmas, by Helen A. Monsell; Roads, by Rachel Field; The Wonderful Weaver, by George Cooper.*

*For Intermediates: A Christmas Promise, by Ruth Sawyer; A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens; Our Lady's Juggler, a legend; The Stone in the Road, a folk tale; The Bishop's Candlesticks, by Victor Hugo; The Voyage of the Wee Red Cap, by Ruth Sawyer.*



## SMALL, BUT NOT IN DIMENSIONS OF THE

**R**ELIGIOUS drama has been primarily emphasized in large- or middle-sized churches, student groups, or the professional theater. In these groups, it has been thought, the circumstances of drama are right, since there is money, leadership, and time for producing plays. Because of the high levels of proficiency that our commercial theater, television, and movies have reached, there has been a feeling that drama can only flourish in a relatively cultured atmosphere. Yet drama is being performed in places where there seem to be little of these things. In small urban and rural churches unskilled people are producing and enjoying religious drama. These presentations may not measure up to professional standards, but they are enriching and lifting the lives of people. The desire for religious drama is a universal one and is not to be relegated solely to the cultivated taste.

The heart of Christianity is in the local church, and if drama is to be of lasting value to the Christian faith it must establish itself as an organic part of the local church's program. Drama can be a tremendous help to churches if it is accessible and usable to relatively un-

trained people who are not going to attempt something that is beyond their grasp. Consequently if drama is to become more meaningful it must fit into the character of the local church, whether small or large.

What is the small church's character? Each church is different. In spite of this fact the small church does have a characteristic profile. It may be urban or rural, and its membership may be anywhere from as few as ten to as many as two hundred. It may have only one building. Sometimes the minister shares his duties with other churches. Yet smallness doesn't necessarily mean limited attitude, ability, or accomplishment, for small churches often surpass large ones in being more spiritually and socially alive. The limitations of material things are many times offset by gains in intimacy of fellowship and worship.

**W**HAT characterizes drama in the small church? Its most important aspect is its family quality. In large churches drama is usually performed by small units, i.e., church-school classes, distinct age groups, or specialized drama interest groups. In a small church the entire family is involved, either in presenting or witnessing the performance. Those who have directed drama in rural areas will easily recall rehearsals when all the family came to watch, even though only a son or daughter was in the play.

In a small church there may be an interrelatedness of work and worship which a large church may never know.

Those who have attended small church plays are often amused at the "drama" which precedes and follows the evening's program. Women talk across the pews as men

straggle behind and share the latest observations on weather, politics, or the minister's new suit. But when the play is presented they remain attentive and quiet. But once the play is over the air is filled with conversation. Drama is a social as well as a worship event. Herod's performance will be discussed around the dinner table, in the school yard, or in a barber shop for sometime to come. Sunday evening then, was a church event—not an isolated performance. As in medieval times the "audience" is of common mind and understanding. These seeds sown in the performance are watered and nurtured by a body of believers and worshipers. The fruit of the play's influence is realized within the life of a group, for little Alice will most likely remain in that church during her life and neighbor Molly will be buried by its members. Drama to these people is a part of a way of life, a participation in a common worship of God.

Thus the simple interior of a church becomes a place for drama, not theater. Theater is an evening's entertainment, laughter, or sharing of the sublime. When the curtain falls one may feel that he has been moved in a

genuine way and that he is a better, deeper, and richer person for the experience. But the fact remains that never again will he be with the people who made up that particular audience. On the other hand church drama is an act of the will in a moment of worship. In this act of commitment a person finds a closer relationship with God, a relationship which binds him to his fellow man in love. This fellow man is the same one who sings and prays with him each week. If drama is meaningful then it helps church members to be responsible to each other and to the world in a way that no theater audience can be. Drama in a small, related Christian fellowship takes on a new dimension—a dimension of responsibility as well as response.

**A** small church usually is found in a small community or neighborhood. Naturally in an atmosphere of this type people do not have the variety of experiences that people living in cosmopolitan communities have. The walls of a man's life tend to touch each other and life becomes confining. People want to go beyond their immediate neighborhood, town, or nation. They want to touch the borders of the world. The actions of a Wise Man or the lines of a Roman soldier can transport a farmer or factory worker into a world different from his own. A young girl playing a poor Japanese peasant in a missionary play understands the experiences of people living in lands that she will never visit. In her performance friends and relatives may come to see new aspects of her personality.

Sometimes small-church people falsely try to imitate the type of professionalism that is beyond their grasp.

## SPIRIT

BY JAMES H. WARREN

What drama they have seen has usually been on a stage; so they try to bring the stage into their church by erecting platforms and curtains. They do not realize what unique staging facilities they have in their own church. The choir loft, the pulpit platform, the communion area, the aisles, and even the back door are all a part of a "stage." Actors may use the entire church as a playing area, giving a flexibility to staging which many a professional wishes he had. As actors move up and down the aisles they use "arena" or "in-the-round" technique. As they perform around the pulpit or in front of the altar they use "proscenium" technique. And the multiplicity of entrances and exits would make Shakespeare envious. If small-church people would depend more upon imagination and less upon "things" they would find a new richness in their dramatic experiences. The ever frustrating problems of a five-dollar budget and inadequate rehearsals would be solved by creating the dramatic illusion through emphasis upon interpretation. Extraneous trappings would not only become unimportant but sacrilegious.

April 1958

Unique staging facilities in a church extend beyond the building itself. What about nature? A small brook may be a perfect setting for an outdoor drama.

Even the roof top of a church can be a stage, as one small urban church realized.

**M**ONOTONY is a serious threat to a small-church program, so consequently teachers and workers need the stimulus of new ideas and methods. A more creative outlook on methods is needed. Take discussion drama for instance. Here is drama that is meant to be read out loud, not for performance values, but for mental stimulation. Wouldn't it help if a class read a scene from a play and discussed it? Or wouldn't this be a new way of creating discussion for the Sunday evening youth fellowship group? Perhaps the young people might like to rehearse a reading once or twice, present it to their own friends, or give it to a neighborhood church. Some churches share ministers, since they can't afford a full-time one. In this case readings might be an excellent substitute for the sermon on those Sunday mornings when the minister is visiting the other church.

Churches need to present plays that are not always biblical in nature. Modern situations with conflicts of modern times should be investigated for use. As valuable as pageants are, there is more need for dramas. Programs that use choral speech and rhythmic movements should be tried, especially if this type program is not too complicated or advanced. Variety is the spice of life, church life included.

But small churches cannot do these things without help.

Wesley player groups, or drama departments in liberal arts colleges may wish to let some of their students do practice directing in the small church, or may wish to tour suitable church plays in the rural areas. They might wish to set up rural community drama festivals, which would include the small church. Services of this kind would do a great deal to develop closer college-community relations.

**T**HE foremost task of workers in religious drama for this day is to make drama relevant to people and the church which serves them. The unique manner in which drama can answer the spiritual needs of men must be found, and an original, creative program of religious drama must grow out of the program of the church. The character of different types of churches must be discovered and religious drama must find ways of answering the needs of these churches. As we have seen, what is good for one group may not be good for another. Different, inventive approaches will have to be devised. A program for drama in the small church must be formulated, for here is an area of need. The lessons that can be learned from the small church may shed light on the use of religious drama in other fields.

# RELIGIOUS DRAMA ON TELEVISION

BY ALFRED R. EDYVEAN

**R**ELIGIOUS drama is a necessary and important adjunct to the mass media of television. The broadcasting industry has had a "hands off" policy as far as drama is concerned on public service time in a local situation. Without doubt this is due to the often in-artistic and impractical attempts at drama by the church. In the recent revival of interest in religious drama some groups have proved their ability not only to do a semiprofessional production but in some instances also to present a really accomplished professional job. In certain areas of the country it is possible for some church federations and councils of churches actually to produce religious drama on television on public-service time. In these areas the television stations have not only permitted such productions but have often encouraged them. Certain criteria must be kept in mind, however, if such a venture is to be profitable for all concerned.

## ONE

If the particular church group does not have a capable drama group in the community sponsored by the church they should enlist the aid of an established drama group nearby such as a recognized university theater or a civic playhouse. Television is no media to use as an experimental training ground for a drama group. Many local communities have formed amateur drama groups when time has been offered by a station—this is not a good procedure. Sometimes religious organizations on campus such as The Wesley Players or the Lutheran student organizations may have capable drama groups that have been in operation for some time.

## TWO

It is most important that the producers of drama on television on public-service time be aware of the vast limitations of space, lighting, and movement in most local television studios. Such limitations must be kept

in mind right from the beginning especially in the selection of the play.

## THREE

It has been found advantageous for such drama groups to work in terms of drama vignettes rather than lengthy productions. This is due largely to the fact that for every five minutes of drama on the air you need so many hours of camera rehearsal which is often not possible to any great extent on sustaining time. You will be forced to work with cuttings from dramas or short original vignettes or adaptations. It has been our experience that the drama should be a part of a larger block of time allowing discussion of the dramatic events by a competent critic. Within the framework we are discussing the dramas should not exceed fifteen minutes and in the early productions a four-to-five-minute vignette would be ideal.

## FOUR

With some creative thought and help from the technicians at the studio one finds that religious television drama may be very inexpensively and yet effectively staged. One of the techniques is to use effective lighting and a limbo setting.

## FIVE

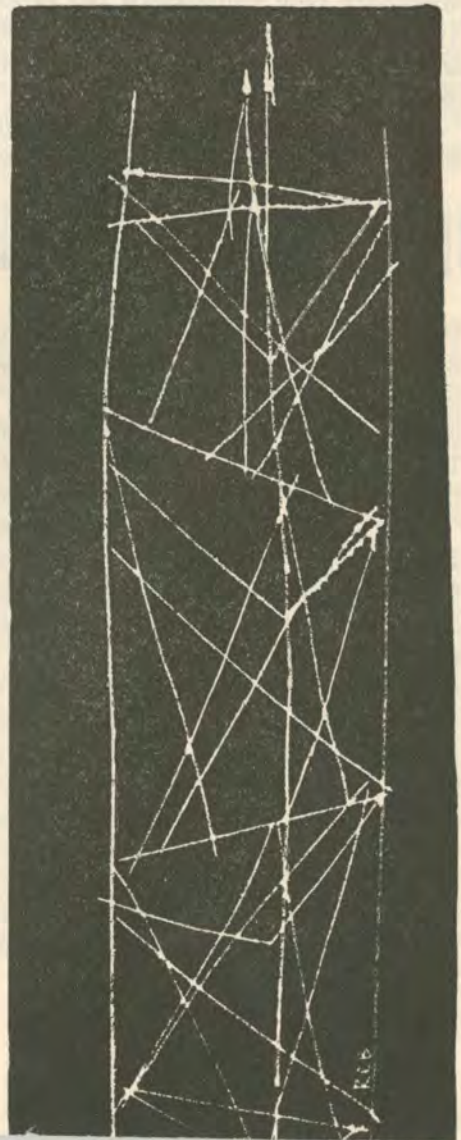
It is of great advantage to work with a small cast. Within the limitations suggested in television two or three actors are ideal. When you use more than three your difficulties are greatly increased. Some roles may be suggested or even spoken by a narrator limiting the action to the main characters.

## SIX

While most television studios will not be able to grant sufficient camera rehearsal to do even a four-minute vignette, much effective preparation and rehearsal may be possible through the technique known as the "dry-run

rehearsal." In this technique you may use any room in the church where you have adequate space and effective lighting. In this room you try in a mock fashion to assimilate as much of the studio as you can, blocking the exact space you will use, the exits and entrances, the position of the furniture. You may wish to arrange some lights so that the actors may be climatized to the glare. Ask them to play to a dummy camera even if it be a large cardboard box on a chair. A simple but effective device known as a Bretz box will enable you to see to scale what the television camera sees and will allow you to have a degree of efficiency in rehearsal.<sup>3</sup> After hours of rehearsal you may be ready for your camera rehearsals at the studio.

<sup>3</sup> Rudy Bretz, *Techniques of Television Production*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1953.



## DRAMA WORKSHOPS

### METHODIST

The third annual Methodist Drama Workshop will be held at Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, May 31 to June 7, 1958. The work of the week will be divided into work groups in production, directing, rhythmic interpretation and formal drama, drama resources, costuming and makeup, and worship. Each delegate will choose two of these work groups for concentrated work. *Leadership includes* James Carlson, Hamline University; Martha Cornick, DePauw University; Arthur Risser, University of Wichita; James Warren, Scarritt College; and Harold Ehrensperger, Boston University. Argyle Knight of the Board of Education of The Methodist Church is director, and information and registration blanks may be secured from him, *Box 871, Nashville 2, Tennessee.*

### LAKE FOREST

The tenth anniversary of the Drama Workshop of the National Council of Churches will be held at Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, Illinois, from July 26 to August 2nd. For this tenth anniversary, Argyle Knight, chairman of the Drama Committee on the Commission on General Education, and Helen Spaulding of the National Council as administrative head have assembled an outstanding faculty which will include Amy Loomis, who was the originator of the Workshop at Green Lake, the predecessor of this one; James Carlson, Arthur Risser, and Harold Ehrensperger. *Information* about the Workshop may be secured from Helen Spaulding at *257 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York.*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

### PROGRESS REPORT

sion, its content, historical significance and contemporary relevance; to counter the projects in drama of opposing religions, ideologies, and cultural forces (e.g., Hinduism, communism, nationalism, secularism) by making Christian drama one of the strong educational and evangelistic "weapons of our warfare."

#### II. How can plays Christian in content and spirit be found or created?

Discovery and encouragement of Christian playwrights; a continuous search for suitable scripts both by local leaders and visiting specialists; use of Stony Point Training Center and the establishment of Christian cultural academies overseas.

#### III. How can dramatic talent be discovered, trained, and used?

DISCOVERY: through Christian colleges, student centers, theological seminaries, student Christian movements, national Christian councils, local churches; conferences and workshops.

TRAINING: at Stony Point Training Center; in drama courses of educational institutions, academies overseas, workshops and seminars at various places overseas and in the U.S.A.; apprenticeships in churches for students in drama departments of colleges; by international teams



who would remain in a given place long enough to train a local drama group; scholarships. USE: local drama groups, staffing institutions and academies, international drama teams, international exchange of expert leadership, indigenous traveling groups of players; on radio, T.V. and films; in projects such as rural, industrial and student evangelism and education; drama festivals.

#### IV. How can a world-wide exchange of ideas and experiences having to do with drama be facilitated among Christians?

By interrelation of cultural academies in various countries; use of drama specialists in countries other than their own; exchange of manuscripts; regional conferences and workshops.

#### V. How can a major drama be found and produced professionally which will interpret adequately and with popular appeal the concept of ecumenical mission?

Intensive study of the project and thorough exploration of possibilities, directed by board-staff committee with professional counselors; present to boards results of study with detailed recommendations for action, for approval and implementation.

Both the seminar and the workshop closed looking toward a future of intensive exploration and creative discovery. Never was there a suggestion that the West has found all the answers and is prepared smugly to give them to the rest of the world. "Nothing in human expression is older than the drama," it was agreed, "and nothing can express better the ecumenical mission of the church in our One World than theater."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

### RETURN/ELLWOOD

knowledge that he is not the master of his own fate.

Now film and television makers know that modern man is disillusioned with his own ability to manage his fate, so they have given him a medicine man to play magic for him, not the Christian prophet. The twisting and turning are mostly phony for we always know that sooner or later they will say the magic words, or the clergyman will, and things will turn out all right.

In fact, it is saying the right things that makes most church drama everlastingly boring, and showing the right things which makes the commercial religious drama so heretical. The first lives down to verbal expectations and the second wallows down in dramatic sensationalism well mixed with sentimentality.

Both are using the Gospel for their ends, hardly its own end of a call to repentance. The Gospel is insurance, and the clergyman of most film dramas its spectacularly successful salesman.

Why not make a bit of a change?

And speak the language of the Gospel; it is not the language of the insurance salesman.

And it is wondrously dramatic, this drama of salvation. This dramatic experience is one which sets us free of our clawing for the best kind of insurance. In fact, it destroys all these petty and sentimental comforts and drives us into His slavery. And when all the appearances have been rearranged into the unfamiliar pattern which thwarts our pride, perhaps a glimmer of the bitter joy of salvation shall show through.





part four:  
renaissance  
of  
religious  
drama



## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

BY HAROLD A. EHRENSPERGER

**D**RAMA that has been called religious is becoming conscious of its uniqueness. This number of *motive* celebrates almost fifty years of the new interest in drama as it expresses religious values and as it is used in the church. It was in the first decade of the twentieth century that pioneers in the church both in New York and Chicago began to look for ways in which religious experience could be given dramatic expression. The Drama League of America was founded in 1911, and from its start sponsored an interest in drama in the church. By the third decade of the twentieth century, in 1924 to be exact, the Federal Council of Churches had created a committee on religious drama, and in the same year the first volume of *Religious Dramas* was published. Some years before this, the Drama League, under the leadership of Mrs. A. Starr Best and Rita Benton, had published lists of plays for community and church uses and had investigated the use of the dramatic method in religious education. Rita Benton's two books of Bible plays were published in 1922, and Helen Willcox's *Bible*

*Study Through Educational Dramatics* was published in 1924. Another early book in this field was Grace Sloan Overton's *Drama in Education*, published in 1926.

By 1930 significant drama experiments were being carried on by Hulda Neibuhr in New York, and by Mrs. Best and her Pilgrim Players in the First Congregational Church in Evanston, Illinois. Dr. Walter Russell Bowie was experimenting with dance interpretations in New York City, and Elizabeth Edland had published her *Principles and Technique in Religious Dramatics* as a result of experiments she had carried on in New York City. Actually the interest in the educational use of drama and the beginnings of drama groups in churches were approximately at the same time. Phillips Endecott Osgood in St. Mark's Church in Minneapolis was one of the pioneers. His book, *Old-Time Church Drama Adapted*, contained a preface which is still an excellent statement of the meaning of the revival of drama in the church. Much of the theory he expounded is still valid today. His work in the Episcopal Church helped

to make that denomination a pioneering church in this whole area. At the present time it is leading in its use of drama in the educational program.

The Methodist Episcopal Church began its Department of Plays and Pageants under the direction of Lydia Glover Deseo about 1927. With the depression, most of the drama organizations ceased to function, and it was not until 1934 that the Methodists revived the Department of Plays and Pageants and kept it going until the late 1930's.

Fred Eastman began his interest in drama in the early 20's and the department at Chicago Theological Seminary, along with the one at Boston University, were among the first of such departments in this country. Fred Eastman's interest was logically in writing because plays were needed. His relationship to this whole field has left a residue of material which is significant as a pioneering venture. Along with Fred Eastman's contribution in plays was that of Dorothy Clarke Wilson who had turned out some sixty plays, many of which have become extremely popular. Other

writers who were effective in this field were Edna Baldwin, Mary Hamlin, Anita Ferris, Helen Willcox, Rosamond Kimball, Marshall Gould, Tracy Mygatt, Dorothy Leamon, and Marion Wefer.

The revival of the interest in religious drama after the depression was significant because of the pioneering work that was done in several local churches. Amy Loomis's leadership in her work in the Fountain Street Baptist Church in Grand Rapids was outstanding. Perhaps no other church achieved so complete a program and carried on for a longer time with such a high standard. The educational use of drama in the Riverside Church in New York under Hulda Neibuhr's leadership, Mrs. Best's pioneering venture at the First Congregational Church in Evanston, and Von Ogden Vogt's work in Chicago with both worship and drama are examples of the way in which drama had come back into the church.

Carolyn Joyce's productions at the Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church in Minneapolis have also been consistently good over a long period of time. The Allen Richardsons have worked in Webster Groves, Missouri, and valiant groups have done good work both in the churches of Des Moines, Iowa, and through the Protestant Players in Detroit. Ruth Winfield Love's work with the Wesley Foundation in Nashville is another notable achievement. Nor should the leadership in their respective communities of other people go unmentioned: John Patterson, Arthur Risser, Margaret Barnes, John Heineman, Reece Hearn, Daryl Montgomery, Omal Trick, Nels Anderson, Angus Springer, Roberta Anderson, Pearl and Allison Long, Marie Roper, Verna Smith, Iva Wonn, Louise Massey, Edna Alee, Cecile Wry, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Sliker, Edith Steed, Georgiann Goodson, Martha Odom, Mrs. Chester Prince, Sue Ann and Carl Glick, Jon and Phyllis Baisch, and Margaret Huffman. These have been some who have believed and have worked.

**I**N 1936 the guest editor of this issue of *motive* was asked to construct a

dramatic calendar for churches for the "International Journal of Religious Education." The days of the month were to be celebrated by plays, and from September, 1936, to July, 1937, the Journal published a dramatic calendar with descriptions of plays for various days in the Christian year, as well as plays that celebrated biblical characters and outstanding figures in church history. The whole calendar was reprinted as a pamphlet, and it went through several printings before it passed out of circulation.

The department established by Esther Willard Bates at Boston University's School of Religious and Social Work was among the first such departments in American universities. Fred Eastman's department at Chicago Theological Seminary was also a sign of the new awakening. In 1927 a department was organized at Garrett Biblical Institute with the guest editor as professor of drama. Hulda Neibuhr transferred her work to McCormick Seminary in Chicago, and later Dr. Alfred Edyvean began his work at the School of Religion at Butler University. Boston University School of Theology began a drama department in 1953. It is hoped that in the fall of 1958 Boston University will be offering a Master's Degree in Fine Arts in Religious Drama with courses in the School of the Theater and in the School of Theology. In 1955 through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, Union Theological Seminary initiated its three-year drama project under the direction of Robert Seaver, bringing to this country E. Martin Browne whose work has been the professional direction of all T. S. Eliot's plays and the mentor of much that has gone on in England's revival of interest in religious drama. Descriptions of these ventures occur in other parts of this number.

Courses in drama in the church are now found in many colleges and universities. Mildred Hahn Enterline has worked in many different parts of the country and is now at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania. The work of Albert Johnson at Redlands University has been exemplary, as has been

that of William Brasmer at Denison University and Paul Baker at Baylor University in Texas. Since 1952, Orlin Corey has been at Georgetown College (Kentucky) where a separate religious drama department is being inaugurated this year. The distinguished work at Lon Morris College in Texas under the able leadership of Zula Pearson is well known as is the department at Huntingdon College in Alabama. A center that is making history is found at Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, where James Warren has become an acknowledged leader in taking drama to the small church in the rural areas. James Fiederlick at Drake, Charles C. Ritter of Stetson University, and the consistently good work at Hamline University under James Carlson's direction are other examples of directors and centers that have made serious drama have large dimensions.

Under the direction of E. Martin Browne, England's interest in religious drama has resulted in the Religious Drama Society with its headquarters library and staff, its traveling *Pilgrim Players* (now discontinued) and its noteworthy publication, *Christian Drama*. Because of its efforts, religious drama in England has achieved a place of importance and an acceptance by the professional theater. The Society has published play lists as well as plays, and has been instrumental in seeing that good plays have been printed by established publishing houses.

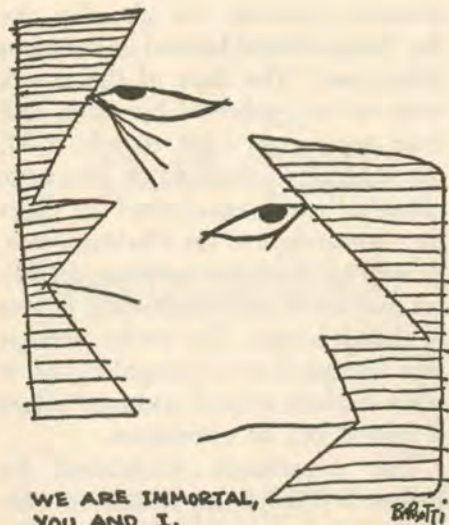
**I**N 1953 a group of players later to be known as "The Bishop's Company"



began giving plays at the Vermont Square Methodist Church in Los Angeles. Phyllis Beardsley's devoted work has caused persons like Merle Harbach and Marina Caldwell to sacrifice much to help bring the company to its present success. It is now a national touring company with a home base and a permanent repertory group. Bill Penn founded the Broadway Chapel Players and has produced consistently high-standard plays in New York.

The Religious Drama Workshop of the National Council of Churches was started under Baptist auspices at Green Lake in 1949 through the leadership of Amy Loomis. Argyle Knight as chairman of the Drama Committee of the National Council's Education Department has carried on when the workshop was taken over as a project of the National Council. Now in its tenth year, it has affected the work of over a thousand persons who have attended its sessions. Its effective results owe much to Helen Spaulding of the National Council who has been its administrative head. The leadership of Art Risser, Roberta Anderson, James Carlson, John Patterson, Margaret Barnes has been notable. The Methodists, under the leadership of Argyle Knight, began a workshop in 1956 and are holding the third one this summer in Nashville. A Drama Workshop has also been held in Denver. Mr. Knight has also kept alive in the General Board of Education of the church the drama interest which was neglected when the Methodists united. Scarcely any national youth or student conference has been without dramatic expression and few church conventions are without some dramatic presentation.

The Drama Caravans of The Methodist Church have taken drama and dramatic instruction to many communities under the direction of James Warren. An ecumenical drama caravan flourished for two years but was given up last summer in favor of the permanent work camp Drama Workshop at the Camp Ground near Lancaster, Ohio. Here under Jay Buell's direction, a five-week repertory of plays, which included an original



biographical play on Francis Asbury by Donald Mauck, was presented. Drama caravans have also crossed the Atlantic. Under the direction of Joe Brown Love and Ruth Winfield Love, young Americans have played before many European audiences and have talked to leading exponents of religious drama in several countries.

Something over a year ago, the National Educational Theater Association invited E. Martin Browne and Robert Seaver of Union to Chicago for its convention. This was the beginning of an interest which found fruition in a session of the National Conference of the Association in Boston in August, 1957. At that time, projects were outlined and a statement of religious drama by definition was formulated. Several significant projects are now being carried on under the chairmanship of the guest editor of this issue.

Publication of plays of religious significance has been spasmodic but with the formation of the Commission on Drama of the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches, a plan was initiated which has led to the publication of the first volume of *Religious Drama* by Living Age Books. This is under the editorship of Marvin Halverson, director of the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council. A second volume in this series, edited by E. Martin Browne, will be devoted to the medieval plays and will be available this year. The Drama Commission has also published a new list of plays for churches.

*The Christian Century* has engaged Tom Driver to review New York plays in its pages, and unusually perceptive criticism has been appearing.

WITH the intelligent use of drama in the educational program of the church, with theological seminaries establishing departments in which drama is to be studied and used, with the National Council of Churches establishing a drama commission, and with the teachers of drama in colleges and universities initiating projects in this field looking forward to university training of persons to work in Religious Drama—with all of these things in progress, there is reason for hope that at long last this aspect of drama will achieve a home and a status that will recognize its uniqueness and its legitimacy as belonging in the great training of persons to work in Religious Drama is again finding itself both inside and outside the church.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

#### DRAMA'S/JOHNSON

In recognition of this need, the Southern California Council of Churches, with the blessing of the National Council of Churches, is sponsoring a six-week intensive training program, the first of its kind, this summer at the University of Redlands. The program will grant six units of academic credit, and will be open to a limited enrollment of a dozen or so carefully selected enrollees. Practical performance and production experience, supplementing the training in theory and technique, will include engagements in Redlands Bowl. For this pilot program, the council is providing some scholarship aid.

DRAMA has returned to her ancient home, but her future in the church is a challenge that staggers the imagination. The human need in this exploding world cries out for the best our playwrights, actors, and directors can produce. That "best" may come via the commercial theater, but there is an even-Steven chance that the church will be the institution to bring about the drama renaissance.



# AN APPRAISAL AFTER PERSPECTIVES

BY AMY GOODHUE LOOMIS

LOOKING back over more years of experience in the field of Religious Drama than I care to count, I am startled by two developments. The first is the frightening success of the Religious Drama Movement in the United States. The second is the stubborn resistance to new religious *ideas* within a fellowship which experiments so boldly with new *techniques*.

First of all, one is encouraged and impressed by the many aspects of the drama in worship. Chancel drama, created expressly for use in the church sanctuary and within the framework of liturgy or services of worship is now an accepted commonplace, particularly in its seasonal aspects. Many Protestant churches use some of drama at Christmas or Easter-tide.

Pageants, symphonic dramas, and occasional liturgies are now on most denominational convention and conference programs and local church calendars. In this area, obviously, Protestantism is still groping for the beautiful drama of ritual it lost with certain strict interpretations of the Reformation.

The drama of religious content has become one of the most significant tools of an expanding concept of religious education. It serves to make vivid Bible stories, tales of the church's heroes and saints, and the history and activities of the mission fields.

Under the heading of Creative Drama we find an astonishing *variety* of developments. Traditionally a technique for using and guiding the fecund imagination of childhood, this technique now opens new dimensions for group dynamics. Role-playing and socio-drama have been seized upon by church educators as long-sought devices for their task of educating Christians.

Psycho-drama and its attendant therapies belong in the realm of psychiatric medicine and should be considered the tools of highly trained and specialized practitioners. Respectable church educators and drama direc-

tors make no effort to intrude into the field of medicine and in fact such attempts are severely punishable under the law in a few of our more enlightened states. But exploration in contemporary life situations under the white searchlight of Christianity is an acceptable aspect of one new dramatic teaching technique. The creative experience of group empathy is no longer the prerogative of childhood.

The drama of entertainment, long frowned upon by the godly, is now reinstated. Here, the trend under church auspices is toward the play of social or historical significance. Comedy based on ideas and character and true to some vague standard of "cleanliness" has become a friendly partner in Christian recreation.

Groups of interested laymen and clergy are becoming skillful readers of plays. The reading-rehearsal is now an accepted form of entertainment and they have followed these play-readings with stimulating discussion periods.

WHETHER or not we like it, plays of various propagandas are at present a vigorous development of Religious Drama in many denominational situations. Youth groups under denominational pressures have produced more than their quota of those heavily loaded plays and pageants.

A comparatively recent phenomenon under the heading of Religious Drama is the establishment of acting groups under denominational leadership and financial responsibility. The Catholic University of Washington, D.C., pioneered this area with its fine groups of young players. The Bishop's Players of Methodist heritage, the Drama Trio of Redlands, California, the Hilltop Players of Lancaster, Ohio, name only a few of the exceptionally fine organizations of this type.

So extensive and so important has the growth of Religious Drama become that training centers for the highly specialized skills which serve it are found in increasing numbers. The National Religious Drama Workshop under the Division of Christian Education of the N.C. C.C., week-end Religious Drama Workshops sponsored by schools, seminaries, and local churches are almost taken for granted today.

The Wesley Players have for twenty-five years shown the way to better plays and productions on college campuses. An expedition of Religious Drama enthusiasts under these auspices visited similar student groups in Europe in a sort of overseas caravan. The National Catholic Theater Conference maintains a permanent headquarters for the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of literature and guidance for its student and community groups. Under the auspices of the Hillel Foundation on many campuses, Judaism is exploring its own rich heritage of Religious Drama from both Scriptural and folk sources.

INEVITABLY in such a summary certain groups and valuable developments have been overlooked or omitted.



Crane

IT'S NOT THAT I'M APATHETIC, I JUST DON'T GIVE A DAMN.

For instance, radio and television are just beginning to explore the possibilities of Religious Drama. The moving-picture has its particular problems to meet, but productions made under denominational or ecumenical guidance still fall within the scope of Religious Drama.

Here is evidence of a peculiarly successful project. I find this success frightening. The National Religious Drama Workshop publishes an occasional news letter, and reading it is a source of real disturbance to some of those who have pioneered. Such an embarrassing record of local church rhythmic choirs! Such a plethora of Nativity pageants! Such desperate eagerness on the part of professional and volunteer church-school workers for those promising new teaching gadgets, creation dramatics and role playing!

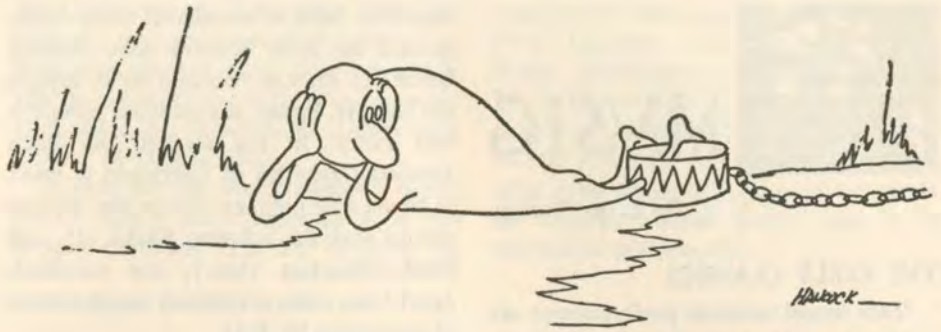
What are the values and where are we going! It's a far cry from the bath-robed horrors of church basement drama all too common in the early part of this century to a production of, for instance, *The Sign of Jonah*, presented by a distinguished theological seminary in New York City and found worthy of serious attention by Brooks Atkinson.

The danger in our success seems to me to be twofold. First, with characteristic American fervor we have seized upon a *word*, a *name*, a new *method*, and all too often

we have given it superficial service. Whatever else Religious Drama may be it remains *an art* and as such it must be served *in depth*.

The second danger lies in a subtle sense of limitation. Our long years of insecurity within the church, culminating in an almost too ready acceptance, have developed in us a feeling that Religious Drama must never startle or offend. Why not? Too often the literary quality of our religious plays is guided by market expediency. Our brave new skills, the dance, the choric reading of great poetry, the exploration of our Christian society and the Christians in it through certain drama and role-playing are met on all sides by the cry, "Be careful! Go slowly. This may not be acceptable to our conservative brethren." Are we to have no concern for our possible offense of liberal thinkers? Are we to pour the fragrant new wine of precociously developed skills into the musty bottles of a traditional nineteenth-century interpretation of Christian theology?

**W**E need new writers with new ideas, and, God willing, a new theology appropriate to our skills and rich in meaning for *this* generation. Is it time for Religious Drama to become prophetic?



WHY DON'T I WATCH WHERE I'M GOING ?

## PLAYS FOR THE CHURCH

A highly selected list of plays for the church has been compiled by a committee of the Commission on Drama of the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches. Robert Seaver served as chairman of the committee and was assisted by Margaret Barnes and Harold Ehrensperger. The list is alphabetized with a categorical index listing short and long plays, as well as plays under subject headings, including discussion plays and the mysteries and moralities. Complete information is given about each play, and a statement of its use and values makes the information doubly significant for directors of drama in the church. The list is available from the Office of Publication and Distribution of the National Council, 120 East 23rd Street, New York 10, New York, at 50 cents per copy.

## BEST PLAYS FOR THE CHURCH

The Board of Christian Education of the Evangelical and Reformed Church is reissuing *Best Plays for the Church*. This list of plays, compiled by Mildred Hahn Enterline, will be available in June, 1958. It will list over 300 plays arranged by seasons and by grades of difficulty in production. The plays that are fit for chancel adaptations will be indicated and there will also be a list of plays for children, as well as plays for reading. The introduction has been completely rewritten so that suggestions are made on methods of production.

The list can be secured from the Board of Christian Education, 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania. The price has not yet been established.

## SUMMER CHURCH THEATER

This summer, from mid-June to the end of July, the University of Redlands will offer a unique opportunity for students, laymen, and professionals interested in lifting the standards of dramatic productions in the church.

Under the personal instruction of Albert and Bertha Johnson, a limited number of summer students will receive intensive training along with actual experience in acting and directing religious dramas which will be presented in leading Southern California churches, neighboring mountain church camps, and in the world-famed Redlands Bowl.

The program will grant six units of university credit, and is under the sponsorship of the Southern California Council of Churches.

Some scholarship aid is available. For information write Director, Summer Drama Program, University of Redlands, Redlands, California.

## THE DRAMA TRIO FROM COAST TO COAST

Out of the West each year comes the Drama Trio from the University of Redlands, Redlands, California. Conceived four years ago as a convenient itinerant unit, the Drama Trio, composed of two men and a woman, all undergraduates, has crossed the continent four times to play request engagements on three major television and radio networks and to perform in schools, universities, and churches in more than a hundred cities from coast to coast.

Hailed as something new in the entertainment world, the Drama Trio is actually as old as the

ancient Greek theater where three players portrayed diverse principal roles of the tragedies of Sophocles.

Performing without scenery or properties and with no special costumes, the three young players rely on the spoken word well spoken, and the art of pantomimic movement to project provocative plays pertinent to current religious problems.

The plays, all written especially for the Drama Trio by playwright Albert Johnson, head of the drama program at the University of Redlands, include *Roger Williams and Mary*, a lyrical treatment of the early colonial struggle for religious and political freedom, and winner of a Freedoms Foundation award in 1956; *Adam and Eve Meet the Atom*, a challenge to conscience in the atomic age, and winner of nomination for the Emmy award following the Trio's telecast of the play last year; and *Conquest in Burma*, based on the heroic lives of Adoniram and Ann Judson, first American missionaries to the Orient, which premiered recently at the Philharmonic Auditorium in Los Angeles.

The remarkable success of the Drama Trio is due largely to the skillful direction of Bertha Johnson, wife of the author, who adapts the movement of the play to any stage or chancel in a few short rehearsal minutes, taking full advantage always of whatever natural setting the place affords.

Since the first year of its operation, the Drama Trio has, in point of fact, been twins. Two Trios, each playing the same repertoire, are in constant demand by churches throughout the Southwest during the school year, and between semesters one unit flies east for a tour of the Atlantic Coast, while the other unit tours the West Coast.



BEAUTY BE MINE



# MUSIC

By L. p. Pherigo

## THE EARLY CLASSICS

Two recent oratorio performances are outstanding. Markevitch leads the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, and the choir of St. Hedwig's Cathedral in our best version of Haydn's *The Creation* (Decca DX-138). The soloists are Irmgard Seefried (s), Richard Holm (t), and Kim Borg (bass). The performance is clean, brisk, moving, and thoroughly musical. The same can be said of the new *Christmas Oratorio* of Bach (Decca ARC 3079-81). It was one of the last recordings made by Fritz Lehmann. It was planned for Lehmann to do all six of the cantatas that comprise the Oratorio, but he actually did only the first four; it was completed by Gunther Arndt. The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra is augmented by the Berlin Motet Choir and the RIAS Chamber Choir, and the soloists are Gunthild Weber (s), Sieglinde Wagner (alto), Hulmut Krebs (t), and Heinz Rehfuss (bass). I would rate these performances as superior to all rivals; the Bach oratorio set won the *Grand Prix du Disque* for 1957.

Collectors of early classical music will do well to keep up with the releases of Decca in the *Archive* line. The Bach oratorio above is part of this series. Especially noteworthy also is the High Renaissance group of records recently released featuring the music of sixteenth-century composers, including des Pres, Palestrina, and Orlandus Lassus. Records are available individually. Performances are carefully and authentically prepared and the records (by Deutsche Grammophon) are real phonographic treasures. The Lassus record (ARC 3076), for instance, contains nine German songs, seven chansons (in French), two madrigals (in Italian) and four villanelles (in Italian)—all beautifully performed by Rudolf Lamy and the Lamy Singers.

Also in the *Archive* series is a fine group of Bach cantatas. Note especially *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*, and *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (ARC 3063), both well performed by Fritz Lehmann. In the first the Berlin Philharmonic plays

superbly, with a wonderful oboe background for Miss Weber's solo. Helmut Krebs (t) sings in excellent style, though the bass, H. Schey, is somewhat pompous and stuffy. In the second, the Bach Festival Orchestra of Göttingen is weak at times, but Lehmann keeps the rhythm steady and the soloists, Krebs (t) and Fischer-Dieskau (bar.), are excellent, apart from some occasional exaggerations of expression by F-D.

The guitar recital of Julian Bream (Westminster XWN 18428) serves Bach's cause well. Bream was a pupil of the great Segovia but not an imitator. He is not so romantic as his teacher, and maintains a steadier tempo. His control is excellent, and the net effect is a purer classicism than Segovia attains, at the expense of some excitement. Bream has also recorded an interesting collection of lute music by John Dowland (XWN 18429).

Another outstanding instrumental record is a collection of music for two violins, performed by the two Oistrakhs (Decca DL 9950). Bach's *Concerto in D Minor* and *Trio Sonata in C Major*, Tartini's *Trio Sonata in F*, and Vivaldi's *Concerto Grosso in A Minor* (Op. 3, No. 8) are all done with such precision and style that I do not hesitate to give the highest recommendation. The Tartini is not otherwise available.

Carl Weinrich continues his Bach organ series with nine Preludes and Fugues (Westminster XWN 18427 and 18499). His are not great performances, but they are probably the best we have, for the most part. Miss Marlowe's harpsichord performance of Bach's *Concerto in D Minor* (Capitol P 8375) is not up to Landowska's standard, but her recording of Bach's *Six Clavier Concerti after Vivaldi* (Capitol P 8361) is important because it is the only version available.

Important reissues from Westminster:

Bach: Three Motets. Vienna Academie Kammerchor, Ferdinand Grossmann (XWN 18205).

Bach: *Geistliche Lieder* (complete). Hildegard Roessel-Majdan (contralto) and Hugues Cuenod (t), with harpsichord and cello (XWN 4405).

F. Couperin: Three *Leçons de Ténèbres*. H. Cuenod, principal tenor (XWN 18581).

Handel: Ten *Flute Sonatas*. John Wummer, with harpsichord and cello (XWN 2222).

## CHAMBER MUSIC

Especially noteworthy are performances of the Schubert *Quintet in A*, Op. 114 ("The Trout") (RCA Victor LM-2147) and the Beethoven *Septet in E Flat*, Op. 20 (Decca DL 9934). The Schubert "Trout" has been recorded many times. The first great recording featured Artur Schnabel, but this is a rare collector's item that I've never heard. It has never been put on LP. Some more recent versions have been quite good, but this new one is more than good—it's a truly great performance. The artists are all distinguished players—Szymon Goldberg (violin), William Primrose (viola), Nicolai Craudan (cello), Victor Babin (piano), and Stuart Sankey (double bass). They achieve a remarkable ensemble. The Beethoven *Septet*, on the other hand, is modestly performed by an anonymous chamber group from the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. But even so, it is an equally great performance, easily surpassing all the others—even the Toscanini version. These two records deserve an unqualified and enthusiastic recommendation.

Others are very good. The Janáček Quartet plays the *Quartet No. 7* of Dvorák very beautifully (Decca DL 9919). The contrapuntal lines are clearly brought out, and the relaxed approach found here suits this music ideally. The Beethoven Quartet (one of Russia's finest) gives us two examples of conservative modern Russian music, with Gliere's *Quartet No. 4*, Op. 83, and Miakovsky's *Quartet No. 13* (Westminster XWN 18423). There are no other recorded versions of either quartet.

The Juillard Quartet plays on two new RCA Victor records. On one they play the Mozart *Quartets* K. 387 and K. 465 (LM-2167) and on the other the Haydn *Quartets* Op. 74, No. 1 and Op. 77, No. 1 (LM-2168). Both are excellent records, but since there are several equally good versions of the Mozart quartets, their Haydn performances are the most important. The Hollywood Quartet's performances of the last *Beethoven Quartets* (Capitol PER-8394; 5 records) are second to none—not even the Budapest—to judge by my review copy of *Quartet No. 14*, Op. 131. The players gave these quartets at the last Edinburgh Festival, and won the highest critical acclaim.

Reginald Kell, the clarinetist *par ex-*

motive



cellence, is represented on two new records, with Brooks Smith, pianist. On one he plays a group of "encores," mostly arrangements, half from the classical period, half from the modern (Decca DL 9926). The other record is perhaps more important, with Saint-Saens' *Sonata for Clarinet*, Op. 167, Alec Templeton's *Pocket Size Sonata*, Szalowski's *Sonatina for Clarinet*, and *Six Studies in English Folk-song* by Ralph Vaughan Williams (Decca DL 9941). Kell has no competition on any of these, and, indeed, none is needed.

A stunning example of virtuoso ensemble playing is provided by *The Concert-Masters of New York* (Decca DL 9955). Under the direction of David Broekman, a small string group composed mostly of violinists divide their time between Bach and Paganini, with the latter coming off best. All the music on this record, except the Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 (without harpsichord), is music for solo violin.

A fine record of French Horn music, called *Around the Horn*, presents a newcomer in recording, Joseph Eger (RCA Victor LM-2146). He plays the Mozart *Horn Concerto No. 3*, K. 447 (with Rosenstock and the RCA Victor Orchestra), the Haydn *Trio in E Flat*, the first recording of Rossini's *Prelude, Theme,*

*and Variations* and Bernstein's *Elegy for Mippy I*, and a number of transcriptions. Eger also gives a short and interesting talk on the instrument he plays so well. He's not quite, however, in a class with Aubrey or Dennis Brain.

In fact, the only recent chamber music record that I can't recommend is the Mozart *Serenade No. 10*, K. 361, for

wind instruments. In this performance by Fritz Lehmann and members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (Decca DL 9918) everything is done with great precision and finesse, but it never comes to life. It sounds dull and routine to me, even after reading a glowing review in an English journal which calls it "a marvelous performance."

## CHORAL SPEECH RECORD

Recordings of choral speech are rare items. When a recording like Paul Baker's *Speak Four Trio* (Word Records W4013-LP) comes out it creates a bit of excitement in the area of interpretation. For Mr. Baker's ensemble of three women reading (or "acting"? or "chanting"?) selections from the Bible is highly interesting fare. The Trio's approach is not orthodox in any manner. It is filled with amazingly swift changes in tempo, repetitions, sound effects (all created by the human voice), musical incantations, and effective vocal quality changes. Done with good diction and a keen sense of the dramatic, it gives one a new awareness of scripture. One senses that the Trio is playing upon the subliminal feelings of people as the major story line is carried forth. For example, during the Creation story, one of the Trio repeats strange sounds immediately after the line "and the fruit tree yielding fruit" which give the impression of subterranean movement, of earth bursting forth with new life. Another example is the effect of trumpets during the Joshua sequence. For a moment vowel sounds are transformed into trumpet calls and one can "feel" the walls fall-

ing. At another time one gets the impression of multitudes of people as the Trio repeats sentences at quick, staccato pace. Yet through all of this, Mr. Baker seems to be working for "suggestion," "mood," "depth experiences," not literal imitation. With his agile, dynamic Trio he, for the most part, achieves these goals.

The weaknesses of Mr. Baker's approach are a certain "theatrical" effect on some readings, where technique and experimentation seem to dominate sincere feeling and interpretation, and an overemphasis of tempo change to the point of being jerky and staccato. In other words his technique works in most cases (as in the dramatic narratives of "Jonah," "The Creation," "Joshua"), but doesn't in others) Psalm 1 and Ecclesiastes). The nervous energy imparted to the latter disturbs the listener rather than conveys meaning to him.

All in all, this is an excellent recording. As the record jacket says, Mr. Baker's *Speak Four Trio* creates a "new dimension in communication." That is not at all an empty claim.

—JAMES H. WARREN

# BOOKS



## LOOKING FOR A PLAY?

Since most of this issue of *motive* is given to a discussion of drama, I can do no less than call your attention to three recent publications of plays. They are the kind of drama that an alert group of players will want to consider.

*Religious Drama/1* (*Living Age Books*, \$1.45), edited by Marvin Halverson, has the text of Auden's "For the Time Being," Fry's "The Firstborn," "David" by D. H. Lawrence, "The Zeal of Thy House" by Dorothy Sayers, and Schevill's "The Bloody Tenet."

Finally, one of Fry's best plays, "The Firstborn," a story of Moses, is going to get on Broadway. We must give the editor a vote of thanks for resurrecting "David," and this is the original publication of the first drama commissioned by the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches, "The Bloody Tenet," the struggle of conscience and state in Roger Williams.

What could be more fun than to put *Finnegans Wake* on stage? A free adaption of passages from *Finnegans Wake* has been made by Mary Manning (*Harvard University Press*, \$3.25), and what does it turn out to be?—a resurrection dream, "necessary for every Finnegan who, having fallen off his ladder, hopes to rise again with a whiff of the Holy Spirit."

The miraculous language of Joyce requires to be spoken. This adaptation of Joyce's epochal novel picks up a structure the reader often misses—birth to death and the dream in between.

After Tom Driver went to the revival of the York mysteries during the Festival of Britain, he wrote about their beauty and power for *motive*. We have since been pestered with in-

quiries, "Where can we lay our hands on the text?"

Now it is available, *The York Cycle of Mystery Plays*, a complete version by J. S. Purvis (*The Macmillan Company*, \$5).

These plays have the deceptive artlessness and crudity that today seem outright sophistication when placed beside the mannerisms and techniques of the contemporary theater. They reveal the thought and piety of an age when religion was taken seriously. Best of all, they are theologically important to a day when Christian education is trying to get over its second-story versions of faith. In these plays man is always face-to-face with the eternal, and there is none of the foolish dichotomy between this world and the supernatural.

## THE CENTRAL ACT OF FAITH

For Christians, one symbol sums up their participation in the drama of salvation above all else: the celebration of Holy Communion.

It has been prettified and sentimentalized beyond endurance. At the same time it returns as the central act of faith, without which we never know ourselves as Christian, members of the body of Christ. It has therefore been normal and to be expected that the liturgical reforms now going on should focus upon this offering.

*Before the Holy Table* (*The Seabury Press*, \$1.25), edited by Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., et al., is a guide to the "celebration of the Holy Eucharist, facing the people, according to the

Book of Common Prayer." A short preface puts the effort at corporate participation in its proper light, and then follow detailed directions for Anglicans in the administration of the rite. Included are drawings and photographic reproductions which make clear positions and movements.

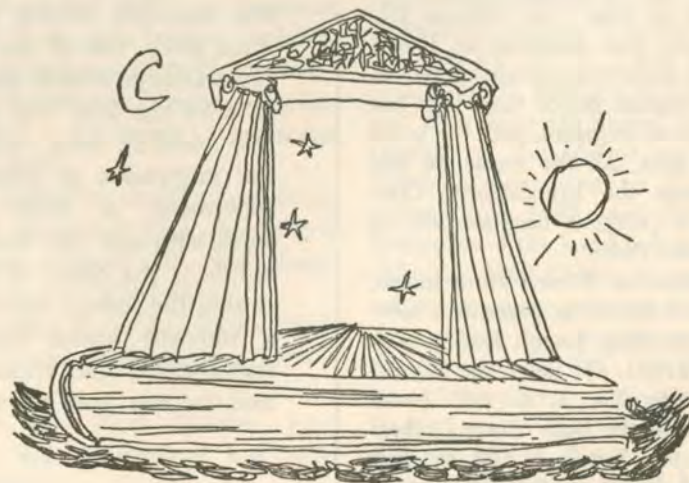
Unfortunately, the Lord's Supper is both the central act of the Christian community and the occasion for its splintering. That the religion of the Christians is a scandal could hardly be better substantiated than to point to the divisions at the Table which is supposed to spell unity.

From the tradition of Methodism comes a possible medium for intercommunion which is freed from some of the difficulties now associated with Holy Communion. It is the Love-feast, once characteristic of Methodism, now almost forgotten. It was also integral to the life of primitive Christianity, only to fall into disrepute by the fourth century.

Wesley first encountered the Love-feast among the Moravians in Savannah. On returning to England, the societies he founded usually had a rule providing for the intense fellowship and testimony of the Love-feast.

As happened with the original Fetter Lane Society the Love-feast sometimes became an occasion for dissension, as Charles Wesley wrote in 1740: "My soul was exceedingly sorrowful at the love-feast, to find so little love, and so much dispute. . ."

Nevertheless, it is to the profit of Methodism, and perhaps of the whole





IS THIS MY CHANCE ?

Church, to rediscover the semisacramental unity to be found in this ancient and precious occasion. The best available guide is inexpensive: **Frank Baker, *Methodism and the Love-feast*** (*The Macmillan Company, \$1*).

#### IN THE YEAR 1958

The combination of fanfare for the International Geophysical Year, the advent of Sputnik and the breast beating occasioned by U. S. educational inadequacies, makes us all eager to know what is going on in the universe. One as scientifically inept as myself is therefore comforted to a measure with as readable a volume as **Rudolf Thiel's *And There Was Light*** (*Alfred A. Knopf, \$6.95*).

The book is a nontechnical history of astronomy. It is full of detail regarding both the investigations and the eccentricities of the pioneers of astro-

nomical investigation: Kepler's marital indecision, Hevelius' marvelous observatory, and the conversion of the piratical Yerkes into an enthusiastic donor for scientific investigation. It does not, however, let the human interest details take over from the main job—i.e., tracing the story of the universe as astronomy sees it.

The details of the facts are put into the proper framework of theory. The speculations concerning meanings are just as carefully presented as the investigations that have buttressed them. A pleasant and elementary introduction to a science that even in its deepest plunges is still itself in an elementary stage of development.

While this wonderful universe swirls about us, so do the faiths that give it substance. The faculty of Louisville Presbyterian Seminary has organized an investigation into the

competing claims encountered today: ***The Church Faces the Isms***, edited by **Arnold B. Rhodes** (*Abingdon Press, \$4.50*).

This symposium has an intriguing organization: The point of reference in biblical interpretation and those *isms* which are predominantly biblical such as Fundamentalism and Adventism; the *isms* which are both biblical and cultural such as Judaism, ecumenism and the healing sects; and the predominantly cultural *ism* illustrated by racism or naturalism.

A big difficulty encountered by the editor is in the evaluation of a highly organized and disciplined outfit such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, for instance, and then a parallel diagnosis of something as inchoate as secularism. Even more detrimental is the lack of insight into the symbols of our culture that are to be found in the arts: literature (especially poetry and novels), the visual arts, music, etc. Of course, the defense can be made that such an investigation is not proper to this kind of objective exploration. But until we can live within the self-defining language of such knowledge, we will never really know nor understand.

For it seems to me that totalitarianism, racism, perfectionism, fundamentalism, etc., are not the real problems. The real *ism* is the lack of meaning in any *ism*; but perhaps just another *ism*—nihilism.

I cannot but rejoice that sitting on the bench of our Supreme Court is a justice who believes in something, not in nothing. **William O. Douglas** has a faith in ***The Right of the People*** (*Doubleday and Company, \$4*).

As is proper for a justice, this faith in freedom is vigorously illustrated by constitutional debate in the courts. Douglas is not afraid of prejudicing himself either before or after the fact: he believes in man's right to be let alone and in the authority of the civilian free from military meddling.

At this moment when that champion of liberty (even libertarianism), the Republic of France, is threatened by her generals, it is time for other champions of the right to defy governments and armies, to count both the



Crane

basis of those rights and to be devoted to those principles which make them live. Justice Douglas is here a valiant champion. I think he is one of the great men of 1958 . . . more important to us than those who can orbit a satellite.

*Harper Torchbooks*

- G. G. Coulton, *Medieval Faith and Symbolism* (Part I of Art and the Reformation), \$1.85
- The Fate of Medieval Art in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Part II of Art and the Reformation), \$1.35
- Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*, \$1.25

- Josiah Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, \$1.75
- Roland H. Bainton, *The Travail of Religious Liberty*, \$1.45
- Alexandre Koyre, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, \$1.60

*Anchor*

- Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 95 cents
- Charles S. Peirce, *Values in a Universe of Chance*, edited by Philip P. Wiener, \$1.25
- David Riesman, *Constraint and Variety in American Education*, 95 cents
- Van Wyck Brooks, *America's Coming of Age*, 95 cents

C. G. Jung, *Psyche and Symbol*, Ed. Violet S. DeLaszlo, \$1.25

*Pelican*

- J. E. Fison, *The Faith of the Bible*, 85 cents
- Saint Luke, *The Acts of the Apostles* (a new translation by C. H. Rieu, with excellent introduction, chronology, and extensive notes), 85 cents

*Reflection*

- George L. Hunt, *Ten Makers of Modern Protestant Thought*, 50 cents
- Stanley I. Stuber, *Denominations—How We Got Them*, 50 cents
- Jack Finegan, *Questions and Answers on Religion*, 50 cents
- William Neil, *Modern Man Looks at the Bible*, 50 cents

*Phoenix*

- David Cecil, *Victorian Novelists*, \$1.75
- B. A. Botkin, ed., *Lay My Burden Down—Folk History of Slavery*, \$1.65



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# contributors

Tom F. Driver is known to *motive* readers for his incisive drama criticism and for his writing in *The Christian Century*. Having received his Ph.D. at Columbia, he is now teaching at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He wrote the libretto for the National Student Conference Oratorio, "The Invisible Fire."

Robert Steele recently returned to London to complete work on motion pictures shot during the past three years in India. Prior to that he worked at the Ohio State University on Payne Fund Communication Research projects dealing with films, radio and press. He and his wife have produced a four-hour-long film on the life and work of Gandhi, to be released soon and shown in two parts.

Ruth Winfield Love has been associated with drama in the church for the last twenty years, in the student movement, in Wesley Players, in drama caravans to Europe, and in creative work in worship and drama. She is at present working with her husband at the Wesley Foundation at Kent State University in Ohio.

E. Martin Browne has been responsible for the founding and for the continuous leadership of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain. He has directed all of T. S. Eliot's plays professionally, and is well known also in England as the producer of the York Mystery Plays at York Cathedral.

James R. Carlson's name appears several times in this issue. He's on leave this year from Hamline University, where he directs drama, to study in New York City.

William Brasmer is associate professor of theater arts at Denison University, Granville,

Ohio, and managing director of the Denison Summer Theater.

Albert and Bertha Johnson teach at University of Redlands in California, and are responsible for the Drama Trios which have been touring the country.

Alfred R. Edyvean is head of the Department of Speech, Radio, Television, and Drama of the School of Religion, Butler University, Indianapolis.

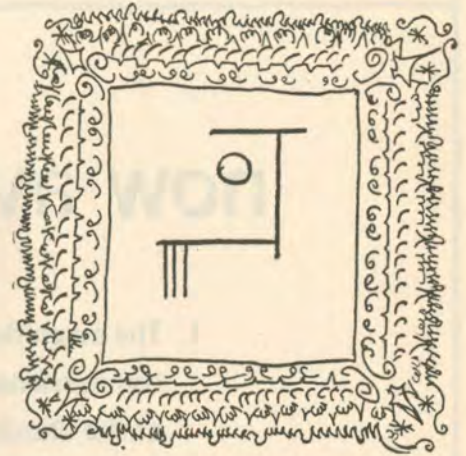
Winifred Ward is professor emeritus of Creative Drama and Children's Theater, of the School of Speech of Northwestern University, and is the leading authority on informal drama in education in this country.

James H. Warren is assistant professor of Speech and Religious Drama at Scarritt College in Nashville. He has directed the Drama Caravan of The Methodist Church.

Amy Goodhue Loomis is now teaching at Vincennes University in Indiana after having headed a drama department for the Baptist Church in the North and the Green Lake Drama Workshop.

Harold Ehrensperger, guest editor of this issue, is associate professor of Religion and the Creative Arts at Boston University School of Theology. He founded *motive* and was its editor for ten years. He is the author of *Conscience on Stage*.

**ARTISTS FOR THIS ISSUE:** Malcolm Hancock, Robert Charles Brown, Jim Crane, Charles Barsotti, Toni Petersen, wife of April cover artist, Norman Petersen, Bob Wirth, Fritz Eichenberg, Marcella Kolb, Jim McLean, Jack Morse and Gregor Thompson Goethels.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

## MYSTERY PLAYS

**CALVARY** by William Butler Yeats (in *PLAYS AND CONTROVERSIES*, Macmillan, 1924)

One of Yeats's "Four Plays for Dancers," this provocative verse drama presents a masked figure symbolizing Christ as he is confronted by Lazarus and Judas. Lazarus protests his resurrection from death which has provided his only escape from conflict, and Judas justifies his betrayal as a protest against unbearable authority. (chorus of 3, 6 men)

**THE SIGN OF JONAH** by Guenter Eutenborn (Lutheran Student Association, Chicago, 1954)

The drama is a trial presided over by a judge and three archangels with Jonah as a kind of prosecuting attorney. Man is judged for the crimes of this and every age and displays his customary skill at denial, rationalization, and counter accusation. (7 men, 3 women)

**THE FOOL OF GOD** by Roger Robbennolt (*THE PIPER*, Hamline University, St. Paul, Spring issue, 1956)

In this play a traveling company of actors and mimes presents the "tales" of the Advent, the Temptation, and the passion in a style based upon the *commedia dell'arte*. (10 or more men and women)

**THE WAY OF THE CROSS** by Henri Gheon (Dacre Press, London, 1952, 1955)

In this play based upon the devotions of the 14 Stations of the Cross the actors engage in a kind of dramatic litany in which they play themselves and the participants in the events of the passion. (narrator, 3 men, 2 women)

**CHRIST IN THE CONCRETE CITY** by Philip Turner (Religious Drama Society, London, 1956)

The Passion of Christ is enacted by, and set before, a group of people who represent an urban community. The play alternates between the biblical events and contemporary comment upon them. (4 men, 2 women)

**CHRISTMAS IN THE MARKET PLACE** by Henri Gheon (Secured through Baker's Plays)

A Christmas folk play in contemporary setting with traditional mystery play atmosphere reminiscent of medieval strolling players and the *commedia dell'arte*.

**THIS WAY TO THE TOMB** by Ronald Duncan (Religious Drama Society, London)

A satirical play in verse.



HOCK



ILLUSTRATION FOR T. S. ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*: EAST COKER

G. F. KENNER

a  
drama in  
two acts  
and a  
conjunction

ACT I

*(A fraternity lounge. Furniture is the sturdy type favored by fraternities, with only an occasional leg of a chair missing and one end of the imitation leather couch sadly sagging. The boys engage in conversation.)*

- A: I wish I knew what an existentialist is. I think I'm one.  
 B: You think you are one and you don't even know what it is!  
 A: Of course, I don't have to know what I am to be something.  
 B: O God, give me strength!  
 C: Quit cussing, you know it offends the housemother.  
 B: That was not blasphemy, only despair.  
 A: Guess you are the existentialist, not me.

- B: I'm not going to be one if I don't know what it is.  
 C: No existentialists for me. I prefer a Tri Delt.  
 B: Some day you're going to find one of those gals who will break your heart instead of the other way around.  
 C: Then I'll be willing to be an existentialist.  
 E: Why don't you quit talking about existentialists and women? You'll never know much about either one.  
 A: Ah, but the human interest.  
 C: Anybody know where the foam-rubber ping-pong paddle is?  
 A: Lookit there. This indulgent culture we live in . . . even puts foam rubber on the ping-pong paddles. It must be to indulge the ball.  
 C: Don't be nuts. It's to put a good cut on the ball.  
 A: Oh, I see. It is economics then, instead of comfort. Everybody wants his cut. Incidentally, if you're thinking of buying a hat, I know a guy who'll get it for you at 10 per cent off of wholesale.  
 E: But nobody in this fraternity ever wears a hat.  
 A: Think of the bargain. I did not say wholesale, I said 10 per cent off of wholesale. Like my old man always says, only a fool will pay the list price for anything, and now it is 10 per cent off of wholesale. Only a fool will pay wholesale.  
 E: But nobody wants a hat.  
 A: I didn't want *The Reader's Digest* when I subscribed to it the other day. But that salesman had such a bargain I could not resist. One dollar for fifteen months!  
 C: Maybe the jokes will be worth it.  
 B: Except 10 million other people will know them too. So what's the advantage of a *Reader's Digest* joke?

- A: Like I say, what a bargain!  
 E: O.K. I'll get a hat; but I won't wear it.

ACT II

*(Same scene and characters, four hour later.)*

- E: Who sat on my hat?  
 B: What color is it?  
 E: Green, I think.  
 C: Probably somebody sat on it. Like he did on the ping-pong paddle and broke off the handle. It's enuf to make an existentialist out of a guy.

*Enter Soren Kierkegaard. Rather, he does not exactly enter, he appears. The boys, being inured to miracles such as Volkswagens and the Kentucky basketball team, hardly notice. But they are polite.*

- A: Can I help you?  
 KIERKEGAARD: Are you aware that it is in the living room that the battle must be fought?  
 C: Come again?  
 KIERKEGAARD: It is better to go from church with misgivings . . . than to go home filled with bravado and become despondent in the living room.  
 B: I don't get the point.  
 KIERKEGAARD: You can't. You are absolutely committed to relative ends.  
 B: What to do about it?  
 KIERKEGAARD: Die away from immediacy.  
 A: You mean join a monastery?  
 KIERKEGAARD: Of course not. I said stay in the living room. No supermen please. Be enthusiastically human and humble before God.  
 E: But the world's afire!  
 KIERKEGAARD: Refuse to be frantic and hunt up your new hat.

ACT III

. . . . if . . . .  
 (ORTMAYER)