

# DRAMA AND THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH



A Brief Historical Review of the Development of  
Drama Surrounding the Church of God From  
Eden Until Now with Emphasis on How Drama  
Entered the Seventh-day Adventist Church with  
Suggestions for Reversing this Trend.

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December 2000

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### I - INTRODUCTION

Seventh-day Adventist churches and institutions are increasingly using theatrical productions (drama) and contemporary Christian music in an attempt to draw and hold youth and satisfy the desire of the "baby boomer" and "GenX" generations. It is time for parents, pastors, and institutional leadership to review the stand they have taken on drama. The question that **must** be answered is, "What is the inspired counsel given to this church concerning the use of drama and is it applicable for today?"

This is a relevant question that needs exploration in view of the increasingly supportive attitude toward drama in Seventh-day Adventist churches and institutions throughout the world. Are we as a church and as individuals fully prepared to discern the issues involved in the use of drama? Are we so grounded and settled in the truths of the Seventh-day Adventist church that we will not be deceived by creeping compromise?

Are we so fully surrendered to God that the Holy Spirit can give us spiritual discernment to enlighten our minds concerning the proper method of "bundling the gospel?" Have we become so accustomed to movie industry drama viewed on our television screens that we are unable to discern how it has become a snare to us, our children, and our church? Are we, through a systematic, daily study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, preparing our minds so that we will allow nothing to cause us, our family, or the church to forsake truth even though treason, apostasy, and persecution will prevail (and some of that from within the ranks of our own church)?

Whenever a method of presenting truth is suggested, Paul's counsel to Timothy is needed: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." —2 Tim. 2:15

The best guide for Seventh-day Adventist Christians who want to use a method to "bundle the Gospel" is again given by the Apostle Paul. He says it all in one verse: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." —Phil. 4:8

And what other church has such magnificent, timely, and authoritative writings to magnify God's word than the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Here are two examples:

Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world. —*The Great Controversy*, p. 624,625.

It is not enough to know what others have thought or learned about the Bible. Everyone must in the judgment give account of himself to God, and each should now learn for himself what is truth.—*Education*, p. 188.

What a lesson have we here for parents and guardians of youth, and for those who minister in the service of God. When existing evils are not met and checked, because men have too little courage to reprove wrong, or because they have too little interest or are too indolent to tax their own powers in putting forth earnest efforts to purify the family or the church of God, they are accountable for the evil which may result in consequence of neglect to do their duty. We are just as accountable for evils that we might have checked in others, by reproof, by warning, by exercise of parental or pastoral authority, as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves. —*Testimonies*, vol. 4, 516.

While it has become politically correct in some circles to cry "the Bible and the Bible only," there need be no apology for studying statements from the so-called "Victorian-age" prophet of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to guide our decision in using drama.

The April 29, 1999, special issue of the *Adventist Review*, maintains that the church still holds to the 17<sup>th</sup> fundamental belief which says:

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a **continuing and authoritative** source of truth which provide for the church comfort, **guidance, instruction, and correction**. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Emphasis supplied.)

In fact, contrary to the "opinions" of some, who identify the Spirit of Prophecy as a "lesser" light than the Bible, one must remember that the Spirit of Prophecy originated from the same Holy Spirit that inspired the Bible writers. For a detailed study on the lesser and greater light, see Elder Lawrence Nelson's sermon entitled "Facing the Crisis," With the Lesser and Greater Light - Part 1 and Part 2 (**Appendix 1**)

For, if Satan can downgrade the Spirit of Prophecy, by this and other implications, so that the Testimonies are neglected—left on our shelves to collect dust, *he knows* that God's people may not detect his final deceptions—deceptions that the Spirit of Prophecy not only points out clearly, but also tells us how to avoid. Never forget that, if possible, Satan would have *all of us* perish! (Authors Emphasis) Nelson, Part 1, p. 8.

Consider carefully this quotation from *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 48:

The *very last deception* of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony.-- Letter 12, 1890. (Emphasis supplied)

It is the purpose of this paper to briefly explore the historical developments of drama as first introduced by Satan in the Garden of Eden, during Old and New Testament times, during the Dark Ages, and its entrance into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.. Finally, recommendations will be made on how to use practical methods to guide parents, teachers, institutional leaders, and pastors to teach our youth to grasp, practice, and share primitive godliness without the use of theatrical presentations.

## II - DEFINITIONS

Often the argument is used that words like "theatrical" and "drama" as used by Ellen White had different meanings than they do today. A comparison of usages as defined in authoritative dictionaries of her time period versus today was made. This comparison demonstrated that the meaning of these words has not changed over the last 166 years. Please refer to these definitions as you read this paper.

## DEFINITIONS

**Actor** - "n. He that acts or performs; an active agent. 2. He that represents a character or acts a part in a play; a stage player." *American Dictionary of the English Language*. Noah Webster 1828, Vol. I, p. 3.

**Actor** - "n ... **1** : one that acts: DOER **2 a**: one who represents a character in a dramatic production **b** : a theatrical performer **c** : one that behaves as if acting a part." *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1984, p. 54.

**Hypocrite** - *Strong's Concordance: 5273*, hupokrites (hoop-ok-ree-tace'); from 5271; an actor under an assumed character (stage-player), i.e. (figuratively) a dissembler ("hypocrite"): **5271**, hupokrinomai (hoop-ok-rin'-om-ahee); middle voice from 5259 and 2919; to decide (speak or act) under a false part, i.e., (figuratively) dissemble (pretend): KJV-- feign.

NOTE: Every time the word is used in the New Testament, it was used by Jesus. It is found fourteen times in Matthew, one time in Mark, and five times in Luke, each time referring to the Pharisees.

It is interesting to note that the Greek word *hypocrite*, used for some two thousand years, defines an individual as an actor who assumed another character or a stage-player. The definitions for actor used in 1828 and 1984 also define an actor as a stage-player. An *actor* or *hypocrite* will be pursued in depth later.

**Drama** - "n. [Gr \*D"μ", from \*D"T, to make.] a poem or composition representing a picture of human life, and accommodated to action. The principal species of the drama are tragedy and comedy: inferior species are tragi-comedy, opera, &c." *American*, 1828, Vol. I, p. 67.

**Drama** - "n [LL *dramt-*, *drama*, fr Gr, deed, drama, fr. *dran* to do, act] ... **1** : a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usu. involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance." *Webster's*, 1984, p. 381.

**Dramatize** - "v. t. To compose in the form of the drama; or to give to a composition the form of a play." *American*, 1828, Vol. I, p. 67.

**Dramatize** - "vt ... **1** : to adapt (as a novel) the theatrical presentation **2** : to present or represent in a dramatic manner." *Webster's*, 1984, p. 381.

**Fiction** - "n. [L, *fictio*, from *finigo*, to feign.] 1. The act of feigning, inventing or imagining; as, by the mere *fiction* of the mind. *Stillingfleet*. 2. That which is feigned, invented or imagined. The story is a *fiction*." *American*, 1828, Vol. I, p. 82.

**Fiction** - "n **1 a** : something invented by the imagination or feigned; *specif* : an invented story **b** : fictitious literature (as novels or short stories) **2** : an assumption of a possibility as a fact irrespective of the question of its truth {a legal - } **3** : the action of feigning or of creating with the imagination." *Webster's*, 1984, p. 460.

NOTE: Since acting, drama, plays and theatrical performance frequently use fiction, this subject will be expanded later.

**Play** - "n. 7. A dramatic composition; a comedy or tragedy; a composition in which characters are represented by dialogue and action. 8. Representation or exhibition of a comedy or tragedy; as, to be at the *play*. He attends every *play*." *American*, 1828, Vol. II, p. 36.

**Play** - "n 7 a : the stage representation of an action or story b : a dramatic composition : DRAMA." *Webster's*, 1984, p. 902.

**Play** - "v. i. 14. To act a part on the stage; to personate a character. 'a lord will hear you *play* to-night'. *Shak*. 15. To represent a standing character. 'Courts are theaters where some men *play*.' *Donne*. *American*, 1828, Vol. II, p. 36.

**Play** vi 3 b (1) : to act in a dramatic production (2) : SHOW, RUN {what's - *ing* at the theater}." *Webster's*, 1984, p. 902.

**Theater** - "n. 1. Among *the ancients*, a edifice in which spectacles or shows were exhibited for amusement of spectators. 2. In *modern times*, a house for the exhibition of dramatic performances, as tragedies, comedies and farces; a play-house; comprehending the stage, the pit, the boxes, galleries and orchestra." *American*, 1828, Vol. II, p. 92.

**Theater** - "n 1 a : an outdoor structure for dramatic performances or spectacles in ancient Greece and Rome b : a building for dramatic performances c : a building or area for showing motion pictures." *Webster's*, 1984, p. 1222.

**Theatric, Theatrical** - "a. Pertaining to a theater or to scenic representations; resembling the manner of dramatic performers; as *theatrical* dress; *theatrical* performances; *theatrical* gestures." *American*, 1828, Vol. II, p. 91.

**Theatrical**, also **Theatric** *adj* ... 1 : of or relating to the theater or the presentation of plays {a - costume) 2 : marked by pretense or artificiality of emotion." *Webster's*, 1984, p. 1222.

### III - A "BRIEF" SURVEY ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF DRAMA

#### In Eden:

The introduction of drama into the home, school, and place of worship is not a new concept. Satan used drama in the Garden of Eden, our parents' first home, school, and church. Playing the part of a beautiful serpent with the tree of good and evil as his prop, he convinced Eve, through his cleverly prepared lines (lies), to accept his suggestion that she could become as God and never die. From that single play, acted out with the backdrop of Eden, this planet was plunged into seething rebellion.

On the other hand, before the Fall, God spoke directly with our parents. He instructed them with absolute truth and gave them a mind equipped with total recall in order for them to retain His instructions. And even after the Fall, He did not abandon them. He personally promised Adam and Eve that there was a way of escape. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." —Genesis 3:15. As oral tradition became corrupted, God provided His instructions in written form. Never the less, whether by oral tradition or in written form, God conveyed to man, at the onset of sin, that Satan's head would be wounded (defeated) and His Son's heel would be wounded (victory). This promise required the sacrifice of the God-Man called Jesus. No play acting here! His life, death and resurrection was and continues to be a reality.

### **Old Testament Times:**

Many examples of play-acting can be drawn from the Old Testament. Here are three: Jacob pretending to be Esau, Joseph's brothers rehearsing the lines they concocted concerning the supposed death of their brother before their father (with a prop to support their lies—a bloodstained coat), and David feigning madness. Each instance was used to deceive, just as Satan did in the Garden of Eden.

David Lee places this issue in proper perspective when he writes in his pamphlet entitled *Drama? Truthful? or Pretentious?*, p. 8.

But did not God employ drama to Bible times? Yes, if by "drama" is meant activities which are unusual and grab people's attention. But we have found no evidence that God's messengers ever employed "drama" in the sense that drama-advocates today employ the term.

On a number of occasions priests (as in the whole sanctuary service) and prophets (Isa. 20:2,3; Jer. 24:1-10; 27:2-12; 32:1-19; Ezek. 4:1-5:4; 12:2-7) made graphic representations **designed by God** to convey a message to His backslidden people. (See Ed 41; CG 19: "figures and symbols... animated imagery.") It should be noted that in giving these visual lessons, the messengers never surrendered their own individuality. Their visual "sermons" involved pain, suffering, and time, and were **designed by God** to awaken the curiosity, inquiry, and empathy of an insensible, "stiff-necked" people. They were not a mere "mime" or pretense or impersonation. They were a painful, prayerful reality! Of some of the sacrificial rituals, God declared His abhorrence (see Psalm 51:16, 17; Isa. 1:10-28). Indeed, He "gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live. And I polluted them in their own gifts" (Ezek. 20:25, 26). He desired a loving, obedient relationship with them, not the bloody, sacrificial system (see Jer. 7:19-30). "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30, NIV).

We believe that it is unfair to cite the Old Testament sanctuary rituals and Ezekiel to defend pretentious drama. Those who cite their extreme efforts to touch hearts, might

gain greater truth and power by fasting and prayer for modern Israel for 180 days+, as did Ezekiel! (Emphasis Supplied)

A. W. Tozer in his book, *The Menace of the Religious Movie*, clarifies the subject more fully:

The profession of acting did not originate with the Hebrews. It is not a part of the divine pattern. The Bible mentions it, but never approves it. Drama, as it has come down to us, had its rise in Greece. It was originally a part of the worship of the god Dionysus and was carried on with drunken revelry. —"Excerpts from *The Menace of the Religious Movie*," p. 15 (**Appendix 3**).

### **In Christ's Time:**

Drama, acting, and theatrical productions were prominent among the Greeks and assimilated by the Romans. Amphitheaters were built throughout the Roman Empire and theatrical productions were known to Christ and His followers. Yet, nowhere in Scripture do we find Jesus or any of the writers of the New Testament exemplifying or suggesting the use of drama to present the Gospel.

On the contrary, Christ's method of giving the Good News of salvation was through healing (the medical work), teaching (the educational work), preaching (evangelism), and one-to-one conversations (personal witnessing). The Gospels are full of His examples in using these methods.

His commission to his disciples was, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19, 20). It certainly was not, "Go ye therefore, and set up theatrical performances." Note the following inspired counsel:

The Lord has given evidence of His love for the world. There was no falsity, **no acting**, in what He did. He gave a living gift, capable of suffering humiliation, neglect, shame, reproach. This Christ did that He might rescue the fallen. While human beings were instituting schemes and methods to destroy Him, the Son of the Infinite God came to our world to give an example of the great work to be done to redeem and save man. But today the proud and disobedient are striving to acquire a great name and great honor from their fellow men by using their God-given endowments to amuse.--Manuscript 42, 1898. {Ev 267.1}

Whatever is done under the sanctified stimulus of Christian obligation, because you are stewards in trust of talents to use to be a blessing to yourself and to others, gives you substantial satisfaction; for all is done to the glory of God. I cannot find an instance in the life of Christ where He devoted time to play and amusement. He was the great Educator for the present and the future life. **I have not been able to find one instance where He educated His disciples to engage in amusement of football or pugilistic**



**games, to obtain physical exercise, or in theatrical performances;** and yet Christ was our pattern in all things. Christ, the world's Redeemer, gave to every man his work and bids them "occupy till I come." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 229. (Emphasis Supplied)

Some imply that Ellen White's writings do not reveal an across-the-board condemnation of all enacted programs. She was primarily speaking against the low songs and lewd gestures, of sensational drama that portrayed vicious habits and sinful propensities. But in Manuscript Release 909 as recorded in *11MR* pages 334 thru 342, she counsels a mother who was taking her children to the theater as follows:

Had you, my sister, followed on to know the Lord, you would during this period of time have had enlightenment from the Sun of Righteousness. Your only safety lay in following in His footsteps. But in not decidedly taking your stand to give no sanction by your presence to the **theatrical performance** of your children, you have encouraged them in their choice of the use they have made of their talents. Their capabilities and power belong to God, but they are not now being used to gather with Christ. All their talents were lent them to use to the honor and the glory of God, that they might win souls away from everything that pertains to this class of fascinating amusement that absorbs the mind and draws it away from God and from heavenly things. But they have not had an experimental knowledge of what is truth. The principles of truth have never been stamped upon their souls. The deceptive temptation that they can be a blessing to the world while serving as actresses is a delusion and a snare, not only to themselves, but to your own soul. Said Christ, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Can the Lord Jesus Christ accept these **theatrical exhibitions** as service done for Him? Can He be glorified thereby? No. All this kind of work is done in the service of another leader. *11MR*, p. 335.2 (Emphasis Supplied)

**There is an abundance of theatrical performances in our world, but in its highest order it is without God.** We need now to point souls to the uplifted Saviour. Deceptions, impositions, and every evil work are in our world. Satan, the wily foe in angel's garments, is working to deceive and destroy. The object of the death of Christ was to declare His righteousness, and no man, woman or child can do this in his own strength, or by his own words. *11MR*, p. 338 (Emphasis Supplied)

### **During the Dark Ages:**

After the "conversion" of Constantine, the Christian Church (which eventually became the Roman Catholic Church) assimilated unconverted and untutored pagans into their congregations. The half-converted pagans brought with them the liturgy of the mass, the pageantry of the priestly garb, the hypnotizing chants of the singers, and the magnificent cathedrals (formerly pagan temples) with their frescoes, statuary and paintings. Attending mass was a repeat theatrical performance for the worshipers. The Bible was banned and tradition took the place of "thus saith the Lord."

Commenting on drama that took place during the Middle Ages Tozer, continues:

The Miracle Plays had their big run in the Middle Ages. They were dramatic performances with religious themes staged for the entertainment of the populace. At their best they were misguided efforts to teach spiritual truths by dramatic representation; at their worst they were shockingly irreverent and thoroughly reprehensible....

Those who would appeal for precedent to the Miracle Plays have certainly overlooked some important facts. For instance, *the vogue of the Miracle Play coincided exactly with the most dismally corrupt period the Church has known*. When the Church emerged at last from its long moral night these plays lost popularity and finally passed away. And be it remembered, *the instrument God used to bring the Church out of the darkness was not drama; it was the Biblical one of Spirit-baptized preaching*. Serious minded men thundered the truth and people turned to God.

Indeed history will show that *no spiritual advance, no revival, no upsurge of spiritual life has ever been associated with acting in any form*. The Holy Spirit never honors pretense.

Can it be that the historic pattern is being repeated? That the appearance of the religious movie is symptomatic of the low state of spiritual health we are in today? I fear so. Only the absence of the Holy Spirit from the pulpit and lack of true discernment on the part of professing Christians can account for the spread of religious drama among so-called evangelical churches. A Spirit-filled church could not tolerate it. —Tozer, pp. 16, 17. (Author's emphasis.)

What a contrast to the Biblical and unpretentious services of the Waldenses of the Piedmont Mountains. High in these secluded schools, youth were taught to memorize great portions of the Scripture and many were prepared by their schools to be missionaries to all parts of Europe. When they left their secluded mountain homes to share the gospel, they were accompanied by an older, experienced companion who taught them how to work for the salvation of men, women and children who had been kept in spiritual darkness by the papal system.

No theatrical performances were practiced by these heroes. Their very lives witnessed to the real drama of life and death.

In many cases the messenger of truth was seen no more. He had made his way to other lands, or he was wearing out his life in some unknown dungeon, or perhaps his bones were whitening on the spot where he had witnessed for the truth. But the words he had left behind could not be destroyed. They were doing their work in the hearts of men; the blessed results will be fully known only in the judgment. — *The Great Controversy*, p. 75.

### **Drama in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church:**

## **During Ellen White's Lifetime**

### **1866 - After Observing Dr. Jackson's Danville, N.Y. Program:**

On August 16, 1865, Elder White suffered a right upper extremity stroke from the extreme pressure of his constant labor for the church. In a *Review* (while the *Review* has had several name changes since its inception, for purposes of brevity in this paper, all quotations from that periodical will be referred to as *Review*) article dated February 20, 1866, and entitled "Our Late Experience," Ellen White explains their personal journey toward regaining her husband's health. They went to Dr. Jackson's institution. Dr. Jackson and his physician staff recommended activities for regaining health that the Whites could not approve. One of those activities was the attendance of the theater. Mrs. White's first statements concerning theater attendance is the following:

We were unable to attend Dr. Jackson's morning lectures but a few times for the following reasons: The first and greatest reason was, the heated atmosphere of the hall had a painful and benumbing influence upon the brain of my husband. When he dwelt upon the subject of Health, we were too deeply interested for the good of our wearied minds, for our minds would begin to travel, comparing Dr. J's philosophy with facts established in our minds, which had been received from higher and unerring authority. The mind would become excited and weary. Especially was this the case with my husband. And again, when Dr. Jackson and other physicians advanced and sought to sustain ideas that we could not receive from our religious standpoint, especially in regard to amusements and pleasure, dancing, card-playing, **theater-going**, etc., we could not see harmony between his religious teachings, and the teachings of Christ recorded in the New Testament.

We had nothing to do with religious controversy, nor with advancing our views, nor in getting together those of our faith and having meetings. We went to Dansville for rest of body and mind. And although we expected to hear and see that which we could not receive and unite in, yet these things, notwithstanding our efforts to the contrary, would excite the mind more or less; and in the long wakeful nights we were comparing the life of Christ, and his teachings in regard to what constitutes a Christian, with the teaching on this point set forth at that institution, and we could not harmonize them.

As we have taken an active part in the Health Reform, and have twice been at Dansville, once as visitors, and once as patients, and have spoken in high terms of the skill of their physicians in curing disease by the application of water, and other hygienic remedies, many have supposed that we approbated and received all that was taught by the leaders of that institution. The questions have frequently been asked us, not only by our people, but by leading men of other denominations, "Do you sanction the card-playing, dancing, and **attending theaters**? I understand they profess to be religious, and that they mix all these amusements with their religion." It has been necessary for us to speak plainly and say that we have had no part nor lot in these matters, and we do not approve of such amusements being recommended by Christian men and women as

innocent. I heard more than one mother at Dansville remark that she had extolled the physicians at Dansville to her children, yet would not have her sons hear them recommend these amusements for anything; for she had instructed her children that the influence of these amusements was evil; that she had known them to be thus in her observant experience, and had not seen in them redeeming features that would lead her to change her opinion in regard to their pernicious influence, especially on the young. I have been asked, "Could you with safety send your youthful children, away from your influence, to that institution to learn the correct manner of living, and to regain lost health?" I was compelled to say that I could not, unless they were children who had marked independence of mind, and firm religious principles. This alone proves a safeguard against those who would attempt to gloss over these amusements by calling them harmless, and needful for health, and try to persuade them to join in the dance, the card-playing, and theater-going. —*Review*, February 20, 1866. (Emphasis Supplies)

### **1878 - Dangers Lurk in The Pathway of The Young:**

Writing about the festivals and theatrical performances in the fashionable churches, Ellen White penned the following warning:

Death, clad in the livery of Heaven, lurks in the pathway of the young. Sin is gilded over by church sanctity. These various forms of amusement in the churches of our day have ruined thousands who, but for them, might have remained upright and become the followers of Christ. Wrecks of character have been made by these fashionable church festivals and **theatrical performances**, and thousands more will be destroyed; yet people will not be aware of the danger, nor of the fearful influences exerted. Many young men and women have lost their souls through these corrupting influences. — *Review*, November 21, 1878. (Emphasis Supplied)

Keep this statement in mind as you read the results of a young woman who participated in church plays in the Methodist church in the section titled **1881 - Councils on Literary Societies**.

### **1880 - Counsel for Ministers to Preach the Word:**

In *Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 415, an early reference to drama as it relates to our ministers preaching the word was given:

The world is teeming with errors and fables. Novelties in the form of **sensational dramas** are continually arising to engross the mind, and absurd theories abound which are destructive to moral and spiritual advancement. The cause of God needs men of intellect, men of thought, men well versed in the Scriptures, to meet the in flowing tide of opposition. We should give no sanction to arrogance, narrow-mindedness, and inconsistencies, although the garment of professed piety may be thrown over them. Those who have the sanctifying power of the truth upon their hearts will exert a persuasive influence. Knowing that the advocates of error cannot create or destroy truth, they can afford to be calm and considerate. (Emphasis Supplied)

### **1881 Counsel on Literary Societies:**

In an article written by Ellen White entitled "Literary Societies" in the *Review* of January 4, 1881, there is recorded a conversation that took place with a young Methodist woman who wanted to be an actress. The reproduction of this conversation reveals Mrs. White's consistent attitude concerning drama. It is apparent the young woman desired more to be an actress than to give herself over to Christ. It is also interesting to note that her first desire to be an actress was awakened by the plays and skits she took part in at the Methodist Church. The complete article follows:

The purposes and objects which lead to the formation of literary societies may be good; but unless wisdom from God shall control these organizations, they will become a positive evil. Various entertainments are introduced to make the meetings interesting and attractive for worldlings, and thus the exercises of the so-called literary society too often degenerate into demoralizing **theatrical performances**, and cheap nonsense. All these gratify the carnal mind, that is at enmity with God; but they do not strengthen the intellect nor confirm the morals. Little by little, the spiritual element is ruled out by the irreligious, and the effort to harmonize principles which are antagonistic in their nature proves a decided failure. When God's people voluntarily unite with the worldly and unconsecrated, and give them the pre-eminence, they will be led away from him by the unsanctified influence under which they have placed themselves. (Emphasis Supplied)

Many literary societies are in reality **young theaters** on a cheap scale, and they create in the youth a taste for the stage. **While writing upon this point, my eye falls upon the following striking incident from real life:— (Emphasis Supplied)**

"It is of no use, Mrs. W., I have tried again and again, and I *cannot* become a Christian.'

"So you said a year ago, yet you thought there was nothing in the way.'

"I don't think there is now, but I don't feel any different from what I did then, and I don't believe I ever shall be a Christian.'

"The first speaker was a bright girl somewhat over twenty, who, on a previous visit nearly a year before, had confided to her elder friend her earnest desire to become a Christian. Of her evident sincerity there could be no doubt, and the visitor was sorely puzzled to understand why her young friend had not yet found peace. The two were standing by the half-opened door of the Sunday-school room, where a rehearsal for an 'entertainment' was in progress; and the girl, looking in, seemed suddenly to find there a suggestion for further thought.

"I believe,' she said hesitatingly, 'there is one thing I cannot give up.'

"Give it up at once, dear.'

"But I can't.'

“ ‘Come to Jesus first then, and he will give you the power.’

‘I don’t want him to. I believe if I knew I should die and be lost in three weeks from tonight, I would rather be lost than give up my passion.’

“ ‘And what is this dearly loved thing, worth so much more than your salvation?’

“ ‘Oh, it isn’t worth more, only I love it more, and I can’t and won’t give it up. It’s that I— I want to be an actress; I know I have the talent; I’ve always hoped the way would open for me to go upon the stage, and I can’t help hoping so still.’

“ ‘Do you think it would be wrong for you to do so, provided the way did open?’

“ ‘I don’t know that it would be a *sin* ; but I couldn’t do it and be a Christian; the two things don’t go together.’

“ ‘How did you come by such a taste? I am sure you do not belong to a theater-going family?’

“ ‘Oh no! my father and mother are Methodists; they always disapproved of the theater. I’ve been in Sunday-school all my life. They used to make me sing and recite at the entertainments when I was four years old, and I acted the angel and fairy parts in the dialogues; and when I grew older, I always arranged the tableaux, charades, etc. Then I joined a set of sociables got up by our church young people. At first we did “Mrs. Jarley’s Wax-works,” and sung “Pinafore” for the benefit of the church; and then we got more ambitious, studied, and had private theatricals, and last winter we hired Mason’s Hall and gave a series of Shakespearean performances, which cleared off a large part of the church debt. But that’s only second-class work, after all. I want to do the real thing, to go upon the stage as a profession. My father won’t hear of it; but I hope some time the way will be opened that I may realize my heart’s desire.’

“ ‘And meantime, will you not come to Jesus and be saved?’

“ ‘No, I cannot do it and keep to this hope, and I will not give this up.’

“And so the visitor turned sadly away, thinking for what miserable messes of pottage men and women are willing to sell their glorious birthright as children of God; thinking also of the seeds which are being sowed in our Sunday-schools, the tares among the wheat, and the terrible harvest that may yet spring up from this well-meant but injudicious seed-sowing.” —*Review*, January 4, 1881.

**Then, in another article in the same issue of the *Review*, Mrs. White describes what would constitute a viable Adventist literary society:**

It has been our study to devise some plan for the establishment of a literary society which shall prove a benefit to all connected with it, —a society in which all its members shall feel a moral responsibility to make it what it should be, and to avoid the evils that

have made such associations dangerous to religious principle. Persons of discretion and good judgment, who have a living connection with Heaven, who will see the evil tendencies, and, not deceived by Satan, will move straight forward in the path of integrity, continually holding aloft the banner of Christ, —such a class are needed to control in these societies. Such an influence will command respect, and make these gatherings a blessing rather than a curse. If men and women of mature age would unite with young persons to organize and conduct such a literary society, it might become both useful and interesting. But when such gatherings degenerate into occasions for fun and boisterous mirth, they are anything but literary or elevating. They are debasing to both mind and morals. —*Review*, 1/4/81 (See Appendix 4 for the complete article.)

Keep in mind that three years before this counsel was penned, Luther Warren, age 14 and Harry Fenner, age 17 began a youth organization with the primary object, Christian service and the salvation of their back-slidden friends. In tracing the youth organizations starting with Warren and Fenner, Malcolm J. Allen (a youth leader for more than thirty years and Pathfinder and Youth Director of the General Conference at the time of writing, 1995) in his book, *Divine Guidance or Worldly Pressure*, p. 27 & 28 states,

In 1881 the second recorded youth society began in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, with similar aims and objectives. The next twenty-five years saw such groups spring up independently in many parts of the world. There does not appear to have been any formal direction given by the church. A pattern of unity, however, can be clearly seen as God led His church to move forward together. Members who recognized the need of youth responded to the motivation and prompting of the Spirit to work with them. At the same time many articles appeared from the pen of Mrs. E. G. White urging a work for our youth and the acceptance by the church of their responsibility toward them.

Beginning with Luther Warren and Harry Fenner in 1879, these societies naturally began to appear. By the turn of the century, more than 70 youth groups had formed in the church. *Ibid.* p. 47

These youth organizations were not the typical literary society of the prevailing age. Recognizing the need for a special kind of literary society for our youth, Mrs. White penned the following counsel in the *Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1883:

Young men and young women, cannot you form companies, and as soldiers of Christ, enlist in the work, putting all your tact, skill and talent into the Master's Service, that you may save souls for Him? Let there be companies formed in every church to do this work.

Will the young men and young women who really love Jesus organize themselves as workers, not only for those who profess to be Sabbath keepers, but for those who are not of this faith?

These developments will be further explored in the section dated **1900**.

### **1881 - Ellen White's Counsel to Battle Creek College Students Living With Families:**

In the early days of Battle Creek College, there were no dormitories. The students lived in the homes of families residing near the college. The dangers of "theatrical amusements" were clearly delineated by the following statement penned to the students:

Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the **theater**. Instead of being a school of morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hot-bed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes, deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life, than **theatrical amusements**. The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence, as the desire for intoxicating drink strengthens with its use. The only safe course is to shun the theater, the circus, and every other questionable place of amusement. — *Testimonies*, Vol. 4, pp. 652, 653. (Emphasis Supplied)

### **1881 - Battle Creek Sanitarium:**

In the early Battle Creek Sanitarium days, some proposed having small plays and skits at the Sanitarium to entertain and educate the patients. God gave Ellen White the following testimony on the subject in an article entitled "Position and Work of the Sanitarium":

Worldly or **theatrical entertainments** are not essential for the prosperity of the Sanitarium or for the health of the patients. The more they have of this kind of amusements, the less will they be pleased unless something of the kind shall be continually carried on. The mind is in a fever of unrest for something new and exciting, the very thing it ought not to have. And if these amusements are once allowed, they are expected again, and the patients lose their relish for any simple arrangement to occupy the time. — *Testimonies*, Vol 4, p.578 (Emphasis Supplied)

### **1883 - Ellen White's Observation While Traveling:**

In the seat next us in the car was an actress, evidently a woman of ability, and possessed of many good qualities, which, if devoted to the service of God, might win for her the Savior's commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." This woman and myself are both actors on the stage of life, but oh, how vastly different is our work! I felt not the slightest temptation to desire her honors. I thirst not for the applause of the idle and pleasure-loving multitudes that seek the unnatural **excitement of the drama**.



The **theater** is a poor place of resort for the strengthening of virtuous principles. Rather, its influence is highly injurious to both health and morals. The lady's attendant remarked that it was somewhat trying to be deprived of sleep night after night until two and sometimes three o'clock in the morning, and then spend a large portion of the day in bed. The divinely-appointed order of day and night is disregarded, health is sacrificed, for the amusement of those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. The effect is demoralizing to all concerned. Two or three evenings a week spent in attending balls, or theatric or operatic entertainments, will enervate both mind and body, and prevent the development of that strength of character which is essential to usefulness in society. The only safe amusements are such as will not banish serious and religious thoughts; the only safe places of resort are those to which we can take Jesus with us. —*Review*, "Notes of Travel," November 6, 1883. (Emphasis Supplied)

### **1888 - Ellen Whites Granddaughter Participated in Skit Dressed as an Angel:**

On Sabbath morning, December 22, 1888, Ellen White attended a theatrical performance put on by the Battle Creek Sabbath School in which her six-year-old granddaughter, Ella W. White, was dressed as and acted the part of an angel. There were props, actors, music, and poems. Four days later, on Wednesday morning, December 26, 1888 she wrote a letter to Brother Morse. In this letter it becomes obvious that Mrs. White **did** condemn the program. When you finish reading the entire letter to Brother Morse, taken from *2MR*, pages 235-238 (Letter 5, 1888), you will understand why she made the following statement (see **Appendix 5** for the full letter.) The definitions of the word *condemn* is "to declare to be reprehensible, wrong, or evil, usually after weighing evidence and without reservation" —*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.)

I must say I was pained by these things, so out of order with the very work of reformation we were trying to carry forward in the church and with our institutions, that I should have felt better if I had not been present. —*2MR*, p. 236.

This letter will be discussed later in reviewing a paper written by A. L. White in 1963 entitled "Dramatic Productions in SDA Institutions."

### **1890 - Comments on the Apostasy at Jordan:**

It is apparent from the material that made up the chapter entitled "Apostasy at the Jordan," in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, that Christians can be corrupted by exposure to drama as was ancient Israel at Baal-peor. The dramatic temple services of Baal-peor enticed the children of Israel to a deadly compromise. Is it any different today? We are warned:

Many of the amusements popular in the world today, even with those who claim to be Christians, tend to the same end as did those of the heathen. There are indeed few among them that Satan does not turn to account in destroying souls. **Through the drama** he has worked for ages to excite passion and glorify vice. The opera, with its

fascinating display and bewildering music, the masquerade, the dance, the card table, Satan employs to break down the barriers of principle and open the door to sensual indulgence. In every gathering for pleasure where pride is fostered or appetite indulged, where one is led to forget God and lose sight of eternal interests, there Satan is binding his chains about the soul. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 459 (Emphasis Supplied)

### **1893 - Counsel Concerning Sabbath School Programs:**

Children can very quickly become trained in “pride and love of display.” These characteristics can be fostered by Sabbath School programs. Mrs. White sounded the warning in the journal, *Christian Education*, which is compiled in the book *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 253:

In the Sabbath school, men and women have been accepted as officers and teachers, who have not been spiritually minded, and had no live interest in the work committed to their care; but matters can be set in order only through the aid of the Holy Spirit. The same evil has existed for years as now exists in our churches. Formality, pride, and love of display have taken the place of true piety and humble godliness. We might see a different order of things should a number consecrate themselves wholly to God, and then devote their talents to the Sabbath school work, ever advancing in knowledge, and educating themselves so that they would be able to instruct others as to the best methods to employ in the work; **but it rical performances and musical display**, for this benefits It does no good to train the children to makes speeches for special occasions. They should be won to Christ, and instead of expending time, money, and effort to make a display, let the whole effort be made to gather sheaves for the harvest. (Emphasis Supplied)

And the following statement by Mrs. White highlights the previous one and is taken from *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 46:

Pride, self-esteem, and boldnessharacristics of the children of this day, and they are the curse of the age. When I see this un-Christlike, unlovely manifestation on every side, and then see parents and teachers seeking to display the ability and proficiency of their children and scholars, I am pained to the heart; for I know that it is exactly the opposite course from the one that should be pursued.

### **1893 - Senses Are Confused by Theatrical Performances:**

Again, we are counseled to protect our youth from theatrical performances while receiving their education, for it will confuse their senses while truth is being presented to them.

Satan’s work is to lead men to ignore God, to so engross and absorb the mind that God will not be in their thoughts. The education they have received has been of a character to confuse the mind, and eclipse the true light. Satan does not wish the people to have a knowledge of God; and if he can set in operation **games and theatrical**

**performances** that will so confuse the senses of the young that human beings will perish in darkness while light shines all about them, he is well pleased. —*Review*, March 13, 1900. (Emphasis Supplied)

#### **1900 - Counsel on Lyceums and Literary Societies Revisited:**

Nineteen years later, Mrs. White repeated her counsel given in the 1881 *Review* article concerning literary societies and lyceums. Writing to Seventh-day Adventist youth organizations, whose members began using acts and plays in their literary societies and lyceums, she said:

If your lyceums and literary societies would be made an opportunity for searching the Bible, it would be far more an intellectual society than it can ever become through the attention being turned to theatrical performances. What high and noble truths the mind may fasten upon and explore in God's Word!

Those who compose these societies, who profess to love and reverence sacred things, and yet allow the mind to come down to the superficial, to the unreal, to the simple, cheap, **fictitious acting, are doing the devil's work** just as surely as they look upon and unite with these scenes. —*MS 41*, 1900, p.246.1. (Emphasis Supplied)

It would appear, upon reading the complete article, that a gradual compromise and vacillation was taking place in the church concerning drama and fiction. Her counsel was to use the lyceums and literary societies to foster a search of God's word. (See **Appendix 6** for the full article.)

Malcolm J. Allen, General Conference Youth leader writes in his book *Divine Guidance or Worldly Pressure? Youth Ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, describing the state of affairs in the church at the turn of the century.

Flora Plummer, who was actively involved in the work and development of youth ministry in the church at that time, graphically describes the problems the church faced relative to youth in 1901.

It was not until 1901 that any steps were taken by the General Conference toward the development of the young people's work. The situation at that time was not the most encouraging. While the influence that had been done was being felt in a few of the conferences, there was no uniformity of action. The plans of organization were varied according to the ideas of the leaders of the conferences. Societies were formed, then oftentimes discontinued from lack of interest. Some were conducted in a way to work reproach upon the whole movement. Difficulties were encountered. Apparently insurmountable obstacles appeared on the horizon. Conservatism raised the danger cry.

At the same time each church and company of believers was face to face with the fact that the children and youth were losing interest in the message, and were steadily and rapidly drifting away. Sober minds were asking, where are our young people of ten years ago?

What proportion of them are now bearing responsibility in the work of God? Are our churches everywhere materially strengthened and helped by consecrated energy, enthusiasm, and stability of the strong men and women who a few years ago were children in the congregations of our people? The answer which almost every church had to give such questions revealed the universal need of well directed efforts in carrying out the instructions of the Spirit of Prophecy eight years before —Flora Plummer, “Early History of the Seventh-day Adventist Young People’s work” (G.C. Archives, No. LF 3048) p 53, 54.

After the 1901 General Conference Session, the General Conference Committee placed the responsibility of organizing a youth program in the hands of the Sabbath School Department. Mrs. Plummer, General Conference Secretary of the Sabbath School Department, wrote Mrs. White for counsel before outlining a plan for organization.

I wish to counsel with you in regard to the Young People’s Work, believing with your experience will be of real value. Very much to my surprise I find myself in a position where I am expected to plan for that movement, as the General Conference Committee placed it in charge of the Sabbath School Department.

The situation is this: In quite a number of places—but mostly in our large churches—during the last two years, young people’s societies have been formed. These all adopted a longer or shorter ‘constitution and by-laws, and much has been made of the machinery part of the work. In some places the result has been fairly good, while in other places it has been disastrous. The disastrous part came in by the young people electing their own officers, program committees, etc., without the counsel with the church, and the very spirit of the work was lost in the effort to get from the “society” the “entertainment,” the “mutual improvement,” and the social features which are such a snare to our young people. The church could do nothing, for by the very constitution they were shut out. This condition is not true in every instance, but the danger is always there.—*Ibid.*, Allen, p 56,57.

Allen shares with his readers Mrs. White’s reply through her son, W. C. White in a July 15, 1901 letter.

The reply from Elder W. C. White came within a few days

Dear Sister

Your letter of July 11 came to hand several days ago and was read with much interest. I handed it to Sr. Druillard asking her to read it to Mother and to Sr. Peck and to gather all the light she could regarding the questions you have asked. This has been done. Mother says that in that which has been presented to her and that which she has written regarding young people’s work, it has been the spirit and energy, and far-reaching efforts in behalf of all classes

of people and all lines of Christian work as reported through the officers of the Christian Endeavor Societies, that has impressed her as being efforts worthy of imitation and it is the energy, the faithfulness, the alertness and the devotion in these societies which she has been instructed to point to as an example to our people, rather than to the plan of organization, the constitutions and machinery. (Letter from W. C. White to L. Flora Plummer, Written from St. Helen, California, July 25, 1901)

The counsel was clear. We were not to copy the world in structure, organization or the mechanics of operation for our youth societies. Neither were we urged to copy their programs or content. What was held up as being worthy of emulation was the energy, faithfulness, and dedication to the principles of salvation and service evidenced in the Christian Endeavor Society. *Ibid.* Allen, p. 59.

At the 1907 General Conference Counsel in Gland, Switzerland, a Young People's Department of the General Conference was established. The Department was placed in the capable hands of M. E. Kern and soon the Missionary Volunteer Society was developed.

Ellen White's vision of a proper literary society was accomplished through the inception of the Missionary Volunteer Society. Under the direction of experienced men and women with a deep love for youth and the Three Angels' Messages, these societies won thousands to Christ and the Advent message by youth ministering to youth and adults. Many young workers for the church traced their first desires to work for the salvation of souls to the influence of the Junior and Senior Missionary Volunteer Societies and through reading books recommended by the Society that portrayed the lives of great Christian men and women missionaries.

The demise of the MV Societies is a long and sad commentary. For those who would like to study this subject in detail, the writer strongly recommends you read Malcolm J. Allen's book. It is no longer available, but most Adventist college libraries should have a copy.

**1902 in March - Walla Walla College Board's Attitude Toward the Cantata, *Queen Esther*.**

At the time final preparations were being made for a choral presentation of the cantata, *Queen Esther*, on the Walla Walla College campus, board members were present for an upcoming meeting. The presentation practice received considerable attention by the board as noted in the official board action taken on March 31, 1902:

Whereas it seems to the Board of Managers of Walla Walla College that the rendering of the cantata of Esther in costume and on the stage would not be for the best interests of the school, therefore, Resolved, that we request those having this matter in charge confine their efforts to the rendering of it in song without costume, stage, or acting.

The Board of Management calls upon all those connected with Walla Walla College to rally at once to a decided effort to change the present condition of things and raise the tone and spirit of this college in order that the ideals for which it was founded may be met. We further direct that hereafter in the chapel or other rooms of the institution **no staging be erected, costuming done, or curtains drawn, and that no public entertainment be given which shall require such things.** —*Sixty Years of Progress at Walla Walla College*, p. 136. (Emphasis Supplied)

Please keep this incident in mind as you read the material concerning drama in Walla Walla College in the section **2000** and 2001.

### **1902 in October - Cautions Concerning Reading [movie viewing] of Fiction [drama]:**

While this counsel was written to the Seventh-day Adventist Church membership to expose the dangers of fiction, drama and fiction are almost synonymous. (Please refer to **Appendix 7** by Leslie Hardinge.)

In 1902, Ellen White wrote an article in the *Youth Instructor* dated October 9, 1902. In it she detailed the dangers to youth **and adults** in reading fiction. Wherever she used the word “read,” “readers,” and “reading”; the words “view a movie,” “movie viewers,” and “movie viewing” has been added in highlighted brackets; to “books,” “tales,” “story,” “stories,” “story-tales,” and “literature” has been added “movie” and “movies”; to “fiction,” “drama”; to “published,” “produced”; and to “author,” “producer.” While this may sound confusing, after reading the complete article in **Appendix 8**, the reader will understand. Only two paragraphs will be quoted here.

Satan knows that to a great degree the mind is affected by that upon which it feeds. He is seeking to lead both the youth **and those of mature age** to read **[view]** story-books, tales, and other literature **[movies, movies, movies]**. The readers **[viewers]** of such literature **[drama]** become unfitted for the duties lying before them. They live an unreal life, and have no desire to search the Scriptures, to feed upon the heavenly manna. The mind that needs strengthening is enfeebled, and loses its power to study the great truths that relate to the mission and work of Christ, —truths that would fortify the mind, awaken the imagination, and kindle a strong, earnest desire to overcome as Christ overcame.

Could a large share of the books **[drama]** published **[produced]** be consumed, a plague would be stayed that is doing a fearful work upon mind and heart. Love stories, frivolous and exciting tales **[movies, movies]**, and even that class of books **[movies]** called religious novels **[movies]**, —books **[movies]** in which the author **[producer]** attaches to his story **[movie]** a moral lesson, —are a curse to the readers **[movie viewers]**. Religious sentiments may be woven all through a storybook **[movie]**, but, in most cases, Satan is but clothed in angel-ropes, the more effectively to deceive and allure. None are so confirmed in right principles, none so secure from

temptation, that they are safe in reading **[viewing]** these stories **[movies]**.  
(Emphasis supplied)

The writer of this paper has reviewed every "hit" (the number of "hits" on each word is in parenthesis) in the 1999 *Legacy of Light* Spirit of Prophecy research CD on the words drama (42), dramas (4), actor (47), actors (69), actresses (6), fiction (86), theater (139), theaters (43), and theatrical (121). **All** of these words, in context with the dramatic arts were found to be in complete accordance with the material presented in the section above. Anyone who has the E. G. White writings on CD, and will take the time to review the statements as associated with these words will be convicted that Ellen White's counsel **does not fail to reveal an across-the-board condemnation of enacted programs.**

### **From Ellen White's Time Until the Late 1940's**

After the death of Mrs. White, and until the mid to late forties, the church leadership contended for the Biblical standards received from the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. From their published writings, it is clear that they were deeply convicted and opposed to any kind of drama used in the Sabbath School, divine service, or our educational institutions. The counsel on drama before and shortly after the death of Ellen White centered about the live theater, later called the legitimate theater to differentiate it from the moving-picture.

Prior to 1903, when Edwin Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* revolutionized the motion picture industry, early films were made in theater settings, many being a record of a stage drama. This production was probably the beginning of the art of editing, or changing scenes around, in a motion picture. In 1915, D. W. Griffith released *The Birth of a Nation*. It was almost three hours long and had fully orchestrated background music, which was played by the theater orchestra. As the industry grew, movie houses proliferated. The projector could be run every two to three hours, required no cast or props at the movie house, and this type of "entertainment" became easily accessible and affordable to the general public. Adventists were not immune to watching the "silent drama." Nevertheless, the leadership of the church continued to sound warnings concerning the live theater and the "silver screen."

Parenthetically, those who were youths or adults in the forties through the early eighties, well remember the musical team that provided the music for the Voice of Prophecy. Brad Braley played the organ, Olive Braley played the piano, and Del Delker and the Kings Heralds sang. The quality and character of the music was above reproach.

Brad was a silent movie organ "entertainer," as well as an organ repairman. He was called to install an organ at Southern Missionary College (now called Southern Adventist University). There he met Olive Rogers, a music teacher at the college. A romance developed from that meeting and in time Brad chose to become a Seventh-day Adventist Christian and married Olive. Many readers will remember the beautiful music Olive and Brad played as they accompanied Elder H.M.S. Richards, Del Delker, and the King's Heralds on the summer camp meeting circuit, General Conference Sessions, as well as from their musical recordings.

After Brad became a Christian, he gave up playing for the “silver screen” because he realized the movie industry creations were not compatible with a Christian’s profession. Brad and Olive shared with me that after H. M. S. Richards death, the new Voice of Prophecy team wanted them to put more “beat” in the music. They both refused to comply with this request, sensing the direction worldly music could take our church.

While this is not an exhaustive study of the leadership’s warnings during these years, sent to the Seventh-day Adventist membership by way of the *Review*, these messages were consistent and forthright.

### **1926 - A Warning Against Moving-Pictures and Other Theaters:**

Some eleven years after the death of Ellen White, the *Review* sounded a clear warning to the church membership concerning the “silver screen.” The Autumn Council, held in Des Moines, Iowa, passed a resolution. In the February 11, 1926 issue, Elder Wilcox shared the Autumn Council resolution and gave the following counsel:

By every means in his power, Satan is endeavoring to turn the inhabitants of earth away from God. His wiles are varied, his snares are manifold. He cares not what means he employs so long as it accomplishes his deadly purpose. The strife for supremacy, the love of social life and position, the lure of gold, the struggle for competence, the ambition for education, the appeal of pleasure, —these and many other means are employed by the great deceiver to lead men to forget God, and permit their time and energy to become so engrossed and enthralled as to lead to their final destruction at last.

Against some of these great evils the Autumn Council, held recently in Des Moines, Iowa, sounded definite warning to our brethren and sisters. The following resolution was passed regarding moving pictures and commercialized amusements:

**Recognizing** the need of lifting up a standard against every influence that threatens the life and well-being of the church; and,

**WHEREAS**, The moving-picture or other theaters are becoming more and more a menace to morality and destructive of spirituality, in many cases leading to a false and lowered standard of life; therefore,

**Resolved**, That this Council declares its emphatic disapproval of attending moving-picture theaters and other questionable places of amusement, and calls upon our workers, church officers, and lay members, young and old, to refrain from this evil practice.

**Realizing** that we are living in the last days, when men are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,”

**Resolved**, That we warn our people against the spirit of this pleasure-loving age, and the commercialized amusements so prevalent.

We call the attention of our readers to the report of a sermon by Elder M. E. Kern in this number of the *REVIEW* (February 11, 1926). This sermon was delivered before the students



of the Washington Missionary College and the nurses of the Washington Sanitarium at a recent Sabbath morning service.

Brother Kern deals specifically with the character of the moving-picture theater, and the great influence which this form of amusement exerts in the world. It is not necessary to reiterate his statements in this article. We are in hearty accord with his conclusions, and we commend the reading of his sermon to old and young.

Sad it is that there needs to be sounded in the columns of our church paper a warning against these great evils. And yet we must believe, from the letters which come to us from different parts of the field, that there are a number of our dear brethren and sisters who are succumbing to these unholy influences. Unfortunately, those thus affected do not belong alone to the younger class of our church membership. Some of our older brethren and sisters have so lost out of their hearts the true spirit of this message, have so lost out of their lives the consciousness of Christ's presence, that they have become frequenters of these questionable places of amusement. And still more sad is it to learn that occasionally there is found a Seventh-day Adventist preacher who belongs to the class who frequent the movies.

For the full text of the Wilcox article see **Appendix 9**

**1926 - M. E. Kern's Sermon to Students at Washington Missionary College and the Nurses of Washington Sanitarium:**

In a sermon to the school and sanitarium, just referred to by Elder Wilcox, Elder M. E. Kern clearly outlined the dangers of the legitimate theater and the secular movie industry. This was a well reasoned and informative discourse. The following are portions of M. E. Kern's discourse, "The Theater," printed in the *Review* of February 11, 1926. For the full article, see **Appendix 10.**

One of the most prevalent forms of commercialized amusements today is the theater. Through the invention of the moving-picture projector, theatrical performances have been made available to all the little towns as well as the large cities...

What of the theater? For over twenty-four centuries it has been in existence. What is its record? The testimony of history is that the theater has always been a menace to morals. "The great classic writers, Plato, and Aristotle, and Avid and Juvenal, and Tacitus, and others wrote strongly against it, —not merely against its incidental evils and abuses, but against its influence and tendency as an institution." Solon, the great lawmaker of Greece, denounced the profession as "tending by its simulation of false character, and by its expression of sentiment not genuine or sincere, to corrupt the integrity of human dealings." The historian Schaff says that the Roman theater became the "nursery of vice," and Macaulay tells us that from the time the theaters were opened in England they became "seminaries of vice."

The movie is the modern theater for the masses, and it has all the faults of its predecessors, and more. A writer quoted in the *Literary Digest* of May 14, 1921, in an article on the "The Nation-Wide Battle Over Movie Purification," said:

We do not know that the morals of the movies are any worse than the morals of the stage. But mischievous movies do more harm, for they reach more people, and especially more children who are impressionable and imitative...

Mrs. Ellen O'Grady, formerly New York City deputy police commissioner, told the New York Legislature in a hearing on a proposed motion-picture regulation law:

I know from my own experience that the greater part of juvenile delinquency is due to the evil influence of motion pictures. I would cite you case after case of boys and girls gone wrong because of films...

It seems to me, dear friends, that our only safe course is to "enter not into the path of the wicked, and walk not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass on." Prov. 4:14, 15. And we should pray, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." Ps. 119:37.

Last of all, allow me to call your attention to the fact that the actor's profession is unnatural and radically wrong. It is an unworthy profession. Solomon's condemnation was right:

The very terms 'hypocrisy' and 'playing a part on the stage' are identical in their earlier significance. 'Hypocrite' is, in both its Greek and Latin forms, a designation of an actor in the theater...

There was a theater in Jerusalem in the days of Jesus. Do you think Jesus or His disciples attended it? When Herod introduced this theater, it was denounced by Josephus, a Jewish writer, as a corrupter of morals. You cannot imagine Jesus patronizing it, can you? Can you imagine Him attending movies if He were on earth today? —pp. 1-4.

**1928 - J. E. Fulton in the *Review*:**

J. E. Fulton, a pioneer missionary to Fiji and president of the Pacific Union Conference at the time, vocalized his concerns in an article entitled "The Dangers of the Religious Drama" in the *Review* on December 6, 1928. The complete article will be found in

**Appendix 11.** The principle outlined in this article is as follows:

...have not our children and some of our older folk been prepared for attendance at the theatrical plays by the introduction into our churches and Sabbath schools of plays that are dramatic in character? Let us keep all semblance of this out of our assemblies. All exhibitions of display of a worldly nature, such as drama or theatrical performances, should be kept out of our religious exercises. —p. 2.

**1928 - J. A Stevens Shares Quotes From an Article in the *Sunday School Times*:**

Stevens quotes from this article and shares the concepts outlined by the writer with the *Review* readers. For a complete reading of this informative article, please turn to **Appendix 12.**

It is heartening in this day of lowering standards to find the editorial backbone necessary for giving an unequivocal answer to the above question that heads a fine article in the *Sunday School Times*. So many churches have tried to compete with the theaters by staging spectacular attractions, that it is not altogether surprising to find the theaters simulating the church by an endeavor to put on semisacred plays. A letter to the editor of the *Times* called forth the comment that may be read with profit by every Seventh-day Adventist. —p. 1.

### **1933 - The Battle Creek Tabernacle Church:**

While pastor of the Battle Creek Tabernacle Church, Elder Carlyle B. Haynes noted that theatrics, make-believe, and acting were making inroads into the Tabernacle Church. He was deeply concerned by these events. In a sermon delivered the later part of 1933 and reproduced in the *Review* on March 1, 1934, he stated:

For myself I have come to the place where I can be silent no longer. I want it known by every one that I deplore the laxity that leads to this abandonment of our church standards .... I propose to introduce into the next meeting of the executive board of the Tabernacle the following resolution, and press its adoption. —p. 2. (For the full resolution unanimously adopted by the Tabernacle Executive Board on January 8, 1934, see **Appendix 13.**)

### **1934 - Francis Wilcox, Editor of the Review, Shares Leadership Concerns About Drama in Three Editorials:**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church and institution leadership and conscientious members were alert to the fact that dramatic theatrical productions were being conducted, and movies shown in some of our churches and schools. The issue was addressed to the church through Elder Francis Wilcox, editor of the *Review*, through three very informative appeals published in the January 25, February 1, and February 8, 1934 issues entitled “The Religious Drama.” (For the full articles, see **Appendices 14-16.**) There is no doubt as to the stand our Seventh-day Adventist leadership and the majority of the membership took toward drama. To them it was not a preference, but a conviction, an unchangeable standard. Elder Wilcox was receiving letters from the field from concerned members. Following are a few selected quotations from these articles:

Some of our brethren and sisters are becoming ensnared with the spirit of worldly pleasure, and it is of this danger that I wish to sound a warning in this article. Of the evils attending the theater and the moving picture show, perhaps I need say little, although some of our membership are attending such gatherings. But there are others, while they would not attend some of these more objectionable forms of pleasure, felt free to attend gatherings of

the same sort in character, if not of the same degree of harmfulness. Some who would refuse to go to the drama as enacted in a theater, feel free to go to a drama enacted in some church or hall. If the drama has a historical background or a religious setting, this affords ample excuse for attendance at such an entertainment. And when plays of this character are patronized in outside churches, the logical step is to seek to bring them into our own churches and into our own institutions. This is done on the plea that such historical pageants or religious dramas are educational or teach good moral lessons.

If I were the only one concerned over such entertainments which are urging their way into some of our schools and churches, I would feel to question my own judgment, but I am glad from my correspondence to learn that there are others who sense deeply the influence of these entertainments which are finding place in some of the gatherings of our people....

I believe that serious consideration should be given to this question, particularly by our church officers and by our conference and institutional leaders. The introduction into our schools and churches of pageants and plays and the dramatization of various incidents, even though they may be historical and educational, has a tendency to break down in the minds of many the objections to theater going.... —*Review*, January 25, 1934.

In sounding this warning, I have in mind no church or institution. We have been warned against worldly entertainments in the quotation I have given in this article, and the warnings would not have been sounded had the danger not existed. You who read these words know to what extent this danger confronts your own church, your own institution. —*Review*, February 1, 1934.

It is unfortunate indeed for us to bring into our own churches and institution plays or dramas of any character which would simulate in any degree agencies or methods that have been used through the centuries by the enemy of all righteousness for the promotion of his evil work. I recognize that some of the religious plays today have little if any suggestion of evil, and these forms of entertainment employed in our own churches or institutions may of themselves alone be comparatively harmless: but the danger is that they constitute the first step in a path which ultimately leads downward toward the world and away from God. They constitute a departure from the spirit of simplicity which has characterized this movement through the years...

We can never save our youth and children by arranging programs in our institutions or churches which make constant appeal to their love of

entertainment. Indeed, where this appeal is continually made to their natures, they will lose interest in the solemn, sober realities of Christian service. They will tire of the meeting for prayer, of the preaching of the gospel, of the study of the Sabbath school lesson.

We do well to consider this principle in the commendable efforts we put forth for the salvations of our youth and children in every department of the church. We must recognize that character transformation can be wrought only by the Lord Jesus Christ, the preaching of the gospel of salvation, the study of the word of God, prayer and consecrated effort. It is perfectly proper to give an interesting and attractive setting to every service of the church, but the Seventh-day Adventist Church can never be saved by ritualism or literary programs. These under some circumstances may be helps, but they are lame helps at best. —*Review*, February 8, 1934. (Emphasis supplied)

**1935 - The Autumn Council Recommends Disfellowshipping Movie and Theater goers:**

We appeal to our ministers, our workers, our people everywhere, to keep their feet in the “old paths,” and not to remove the “ancient landmarks” of this message.

In cases where members of the churches hold bridge or similar card parties in their homes, or frequent such gatherings in other places; or have dances in their homes or attend them elsewhere; or frequent shows in theaters or movie houses, we recommend that faithful labor be put forth to reclaim such individuals from the errors of their way; but if this proves unsuccessful, that they be dismissed from church membership. —*Review*, December 5, 1935.

If this recommendation were followed today, many members of the Seventh-day Adventist church who persist in attending motion picture theaters or purchase and rent videos to play dramatic productions on their VCR's, would no longer be members in the Adventist church.

**1937 - Committee on Visual Education's Report to the General Conference on March 10, 1937:**

It is apparent that 1937 was a pivotal year for the church to reiterate its stand on drama. Some time before the 1937 editorials of March 18, March 25, April 1, April 8, and April 15 that appeared in the *Review*, the church had appointed a visual education committee to study visual education. These five articulate and convincing articles are found in **Appendices 17-21.** Following are a few quotations from these articles:

The plea is sometimes made that we must provide for our young people entertainment of this character or they will go to the world to secure it. This argument, in my estimation, falls of its own weight. Instead of holding our youth back from the world by dramatic plays, we are creating in them an

appetite for these things, which they will seek elsewhere. —*Review*, March 18, 1937.

From one of our readers who is anxious to know the right comes this inquiry.

“There are a few questions I should like to ask you. I am asking them in a humble attempt to get right and to do what is right in the sight of God. First, just what is right in regard to Seventh-day Adventists’ attending pictures? I am sixty years old, and have been brought up in this message. I have always been told it was wrong to attend theaters, moving pictures, and other worldly amusements. But now I am told that while it may not be best, it is not a sin, so one can attend if he desires. I cannot understand that sort of reasoning. Will you make this plain to me?

“Another question: If I know men and women who are attending the movies, can I conscientiously vote them into office in the church? I am a Sabbath school superintendent here, and there are some who might be good teachers, but every member knows that they attend the movies, and I have not felt free to put them in the position of teachers. Am I too old-fashioned, and should I let down on the beliefs that I have been holding for a long time? I do not want to be fanatical, but I do want to do what is right.”

What answer would you give to these inquiries? Do you think that in standing against our people’s attending theaters and the movies, this reader is too old-fashioned? Do you think that times have changed, and that what was sinful twenty years ago is right today?

The apostle John gave this instruction to the church in his day:

‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.’ 1 John 2:15-17.

Do you think this instruction was applicable to the apostolic church, but is not applicable to the remnant church? I cannot so regard it. The eternal truth of God remains unchanged, and what was written aforetime was written for our instruction today. I believe that the old-time standard of the Seventh-day Adventist Church should be upheld, even though some in the church have lowered that standard into the dust.

And what would you reply in answer to the question as to whether men and women who attend theaters and the movies should occupy official positions

in the church? Should they be appointed as Sabbath school teachers? In my judgment this would be most inconsistent. The men and women who occupy positions of leadership in the church of Christ should represent in their lives the principles of the gospel message. Standing as the representatives of the church, they should represent the principles of the church.

Indeed, rather than being made leaders, such church members should rather become subjects of missionary labor on the part of those who recognize the influence for evil which these misguided ones are exerting. This was the recommendation of the Autumn Council of 1935 at Louisville, Kentucky... — *Review*, March 25, 1937.

These are quotations from only two of the articles. The reader would do well to review each of these articles before reading further.

The General Conference Committee of March 10, 1937, approved the visual education committee's findings and they were published in *The General Conference Bulletin on Movies*. See **Appendix 19** for the complete adoption report. Following are the recommendations for acceptable and unacceptable films:

### **1. Acceptable Films**

- a. *Industrial Pictures*.—Pictures showing processes of manufacture, lumbering, mining, oil production, public utilities, transportation, commerce, transmission of news and information, etc.
- b. *Scenic*.—Pictures of national or other parks, natural scenery, mountain climbing, exploration, and the like.
- c. *Travelogues*.—Pictures of other countries, their national habits, customs, and life (excluding scenes that may have a corrupting influence).
- d. *Nature and Wild Life*.—Pictures of the Forest Service, and animal life in various States and nations. The life development of insects, plants, fishes, birds, and animals (excluding those which emphasize cruelty).
- e. *Art and Archeology*.—(Excluding films that portray indecent and corrupt art.)
- f. *Newsreels and Current History*.—(Excluding films which are contrary to our recognized standards.)
- g. *Educational Films*.—Films which impart information and teach truth in any branch of learning.
- h. *Pictures of Places*.—Those associated with historical incidents.
- i. *Our denominational work and activities*.

### **2. Unacceptable Films**

- a. Films portraying Christ and inspired men.
- b. Pictures portraying romantic love-making.
- c. Films portraying scenes which are contrary to Seventh-day Adventist standards and ideals, such as popularized dancing, card playing, gambling, drinking, etc.
- d. Films portraying crime or glorifying criminals.
- e. Films portraying scenes of violence or cruelty, such as prize fighting.
- f. Films which lower esteem for the sanctity of marriage by portraying family disruptions, or ridiculing home life and home relationships.
- g. Films portraying scenes of night life, drinking, carousing, gaiety, revelry, rowdiness.
- h. Films portraying scenes of smoking as a social activity. (Pictures portraying processes of manufacture, for example, in which the operator might happen to be smoking, might not be included in this category because the attention of the observer is centered upon the process rather than upon the smoking as a desirable activity.)
- i. Films which by ridicule, suggestive insinuation, or crude comedy, lower in the estimation of the observer, religion or the ministry, or the dignity of human personality, or law-enforcing agencies.
- j. Films of a scientific or historical character which blend misrepresentation of facts with the actual.
- k. Popularized historical films which distort facts of history and pervert truth, or which present scenes of cruelty and bloodshed. —*Review*, April 18, 1940.

Please refer again to these guidelines as you read the 1950 revision, the 1963 White paper (**Appendix 22**) and the 1974 Guidelines for the Use of Dramatization Among Seventh-day Adventists (**Appendix 29**).

Along with council given to the Seventh-day Adventist church membership by its leaders and stated in *The General Conference Bulletin on Movies*, leaders of other denominations were voicing their concerns on how the movie industry was making inroads into the Christian church. One such leader was A. W. Tozer in his book, *The Menace of the Religious Movie*. For selections from this book, please turn to **Appendix 3** (The complete book has been reprinted by the Mennonite Rod and Staff Publishing House and is still in print).

Everything written about the religious movie can be applied to dramatic religious television and video programming. In reality, while the theme may be based on a Biblical truth or an actual event, the final product is often pretense and hypocrisy. When any portion of a dramatic production is fictitious, the viewer may not be able to discern truth from fiction. Again, let us be reminded of the Apostle Paul's counsel, "Finally, brethren,



**whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” —Phil. 4:8.(Emphasis supplied.)**

#### **1940 - The Review Reiterates the Warning Against Theater going:**

We live in a sensational age. Love of the theatrical and the dramatic has increased with the years. Playhouses exist on every side, and the throngs of theater goers and those attending them. Movies are being constantly augmented. Naturally, these attractions make an appeal to the young.

We can never furnish in our institutions substitutes of the same character, hoping to be able to hold our own young people. Indeed, we must be very careful lest the substitutes we provide create a love for the very things we are seeking to guard against. Years ago the messenger of the Lord recognized this danger, and gave the following very definite counsel: (Quotation is three paragraphs from *Testimonies*, Vol. IV, pp. 577, 578.) —*Review*, April 4, 1940.

#### **1945 - Elder F. M. Wilcox Continues to Hold up the Standards:**

As our churches and educational institutions continued to let down the barriers to theatrical productions, Elder Wilcox again shared with the members of the church the Seventh-day Adventist’s historic view concerning drama. —*Review*, October 18, 1945:

Worldly methods, such as dramatic exhibitions, and religious plays and pageants, are being employed in some of our churches and institutions. All this is wrong.

#### **From the Mid-40's Until Now**

Until the advent of the “silver screen,” theater attendance by Seventh-day Adventists was infrequent. Most Adventists in the 20's and 30's shunned movie houses. By the late 30's and early 40's, the demand for “acceptable” films for church socials and school functions increased. Some of these films had been shown in local movie houses some years previously.

But when theatrical performances became accessible through television in the late 40's and early fifties, the theater was brought into the parlors of Adventist homes. Concerned and awake Adventist parents viewed Hollywood productions with suspicion. They saw what dramatic television productions really were—mediocrity at best, and sex, violence, and an attack on Christian values at its worst. Most of the beneficial values of television, as with the rented movies used by our churches and educational institutions, were outweighed by their dangers. The risk/benefit ratio was too costly and those concerned parents chose not to have a television in their homes.

At first, many sincere Seventh-day Adventist Christians abhorred Hollywood productions and later television programming, but gradually they beheld, and finely embraced. As early as the mid 30's, some leadership in our academies, colleges, and some churches either forgot or ignored the counsel concerning drama given by our prophet and church leadership. But by the late 40's and 50's feature films became the drawing power for certain student events in our schools and at church socials.

Some parents, who had carefully protected their children at home from fiction and drama, saw their children's minds corrupted by Hollywood productions in our own churches and schools. With the introduction of VCR's and videos, video games, and now the world wide web, Seventh-day Adventist youth have become inundated with drama and the entertainment world.

The careful observer who watched the movie industry grow and observed the introduction of television and videos into our American culture, can trace the Adventist Church's gradual acceptance of drama into the infrastructure of its homes, churches and schools from the mid-forties onward.

#### **1946 - Southeastern California Conference Struggles to Hold the Line:**

Many leaders attempted to hold to the counsel established by our pioneers and reiterated by the Spring and Autumn Counsels of 1934, 1937 and 1938, but it became exceedingly more difficult. John Hancock was appointed the youth director of the Southeastern California Conference in 1946. In his paper entitled "Is Dramatization Wrong?" (see **Appendix 25**) presented to the Committee on Guidelines for Sports and Drama on January 28-31, 1974, he said:

I was a freshman in college when the Autumn Council of 1934 took an action that recommended that in Sabbath school programs "no attempt be made to present plays or pageants. That representations that require elaborate costuming, or the dramatizing of the lives of Bible characters or religious incidents, be avoided." The action further recommended that "the utmost simplicity distinguish the representation of an exercise or a dialogue, or the taking of character parts in mission incidents or scenes."

Again in 1935 and 1938 Autumn Council actions were taken appealing "to our ministers, our workers, our people everywhere, to keep their feet in the 'old paths' and not to remove the 'ancient landmarks' of this message." Included in this appeal was a call to labor faithfully for members who were holding bridge parties and similar card parties in their homes and who were frequenting theaters or movie houses, recommending that if such persons did not turn from the error of their ways, they be dismissed from church membership...

I can well remember the difficulties we faced as leaders interpreting some of these things. In 1946 I became a youth director in Southeastern

California Conference. There was a continual hassle over Saturday night films churches and schools were getting from motion picture rental agencies. The Pacific Union Conference set up a film-review commission, trying to make up a list of “approved” films for the Adventist’s own legion of decency, but there was disagreement even among the appointed reviewers as to what was right and what was wrong. John Hancock, “Is Dramatization Wrong.” —pp. 2-4.

### **1947 - The 1934 Autumn Council Guidelines Are Reiterated:**

The 1934 Autumn Council recommendations concerning plays and pageants was republished in a Sabbath School Department pamphlet in 1947.

We recommend:

1. That superintendents and leaders of divisions plan their programs and all their work in such a way as to instill into our Sabbath schools everywhere a deeper spirit of reverence for the house of God and His holy Word.
2. That in Programs no attempt be made to present plays or pageants. That representations that require elaborate costuming, or the dramatizing of the lives of Bible characters or religious incidents, be avoided.
3. That the utmost simplicity distinguish the representation of an exercise or a dialogue, ...in mission incidents or scenes. —*Sabbath School Department [pamphlet], 1947* [Quoted in “Drama? Truthful? or Pretentious?” David J. Lee, p. 12.]

### **1950 - Faith for Today:**

The entry of the Seventh-day Adventist church into television began on “ --- a drizzly day in early April, 1950. I was the pastor of a thriving church in downtown Brooklyn, New York, and had been away from my church making hospital calls,” writes Elder William Fagal, Sr. and Mrs. Virginia Fagal in their book *This Is Our Story*, p. 5. He continues:

Returning early in the afternoon, I was greeted by my secretary with the news that I was wanted immediately at the Hotel Victoria in the Times Square area of New York. Some of the leading officials from our Washington, D.C., church headquarters were there, and they had been calling about every ten minutes (or so she said) wondering why she had not succeeded in getting the message to me.

---Surveying the faces before me I noticed that the president of the General Conference, the highest official of the church, was present, together with the secretary and the treasure. Besides these, the group included the head of the Radio Department and two or three others.

---The church, they informed me, would like to “experiment” with television. A committee had been appointed to investigate the possibilities, and the group of men before me had come from Washington to New York to finalize on arrangements.

That morning they had been at the American Broadcasting Company network offices and had signed a contract to begin a half-hour weekly telecast on Sunday night, May 21. All they now lacked was a program and an individual upon whom to place responsibility for it. They told me I was the man they wanted to create the program and put it on the air. I would have about six weeks to prepare before the zero hour on the evening of May 21. Ibid., p. 5 & 6.

The rest is history. Elder Fagal met with the ABC officials. “--- I listened carefully to some concrete suggestions they made. The directors assigned to our program summed up their counsel very simply in the words ‘Don’t preach.’ “---**Use the techniques of drama** to tell a true-to-life story,” they told him. Ibid. p. 19 & 20. And thus the basis was established for the first Faith for Today programs. “And so we decided to try a 12- to 15-minute story approach, followed with a five-minute sermonette to reinforce certain points.” Ibid., p. 20 (emphasis supplied)

Elder Fagal’s use of drama by Faith for Today was an “outrage” to some Adventist. He describes it as follows:

Faith For Today’s story format — originally chosen as a means of reaching the unchurched as well as the youth audience — was at first a real bone of contention. The fact that in our early days the 15-minute sketch was followed by a five-minute sermonette — with music and a commercial for the Bible correspondence course — did little to assuage the sense of outrage of some. Ibid., p. 46.

In 1955, it was decided to film the programs instead of having live presentations. Elder Fagal writes, “We immediately faced the fact that our dedicated amateurs would not be adequate in a professional film situation. In fact, it would be impossible for most of them to take time from their daytime jobs for all-day filming sessions. So we faced the necessity of hiring professionals who were accustomed to performing in front of the camera to illustrate the stories effectively.” Ibid., p. 98.

In 1972, the fully-developed drama series Westbook Hospital was established, to be followed in 1975 by the first one-hour dramatic film on the life and martyrdom of John Huss, and shortly after that the television special “The Harvest”.

In a personal communication on April 4, 1999, with Dan Matthews, then director of Faith for Today, it was learned that near the end of the “Westbrook Hospital” series (in the early eighties), each program was costing Faith for Today around \$80,000 to produce.

The cost became prohibitive and the dramatic series was ended. The “Life Style Magazine” replaced the dramatic productions. During our conversation, Elder Matthews made a significant statement. He said, “I believe if Christ were living now, he would use drama.” After researching this material, this writer strongly disagrees.

As you read sections **1961** and **1974**, keep in mind the expanding use of drama used by Faith for Today from 1950 thru 1975. Unfortunately, Elder Fagal’s book contains no information to enlighten the reader on the reasons used to justify the use of dramatic productions in light of the church’s previous stand on drama.

#### **1951 - MV Leaflets # 47:**

In “Is Dramatization Wrong?” Elder Hancock continues to describe the gradual erosion of the previous church stand on theatrical productions and the movie industry:

Then came television and the church’s own entry into the field of drama. It was about this time that our own version of Daniel 2 was produced as a full-length feature film. The pressures were on and I watched as at the 1951 Autumn Council words were deleted to bring what was being practiced into line with official church policy. The words “inspired men” were deleted from the forbidden portrayal list, for new series of religious motion pictures being produced by private film producers on the life of Paul and other Bible characters were eagerly used by both church and school groups in religious meetings and for classroom instruction.

As television and the abundance of available motion pictures from rental agencies began to cloud the scene, it became evident that existing church actions had to be restudied. It was thus in 1951 that the last important action relative to our subject today was taken at an Autumn Council. It was a revision of the 1937 statement, and again disapproved of all feature motion pictures or telecasts that portray fictional, dramatized theatrical plays and stated that the history of theatrical drama and its present character show it to be generally opposed to the highest ideals of morality, and alien to spiritual life. It called upon church membership, young and old, to take their stand against such motion pictures and telecasts that dramatize scenes opposed to the high ideals of morality that have been enunciated in our church standards.

Then, however, a modification was made in our previous position to include dramatization of both historical and Biblical characters: “We recognize that there are acceptable motion pictures and telecasts depicting real life, and historical or even Biblical scenes that have been dramatized. The legitimate use of motion pictures or television for the presentation of the message or for education and also recreational purposes is not to be condemned. No doubt there are wonderful opportunities for proclaiming the gospel and reaching millions through these means; but like so many things in life,

motion pictures and television are dangerous blends of good and evil. They have been largely appropriated by the evil one with the result that the popular movie and television tend to break down standards of Christian character. Clear discernment of right and wrong is needed, therefore, that we may guard well the avenues of the soul.”

Then there followed a list of guidelines for those selecting films, bringing the 1937 list into harmony with the modified position. The Youth Department was asked to prepare an MV Leaflet giving these guidelines for young and old. On pages 6-8 of MV Leaflet #47 these were listed:

### **I. Acceptable Presentations**

- a. Industrial Pictures—Pictures showing processes of manufacture, lumbering, mining, oil production, public utilities, transportation, commerce, and transmission of news and information.
- b. Scientific Processes and Food Research.
- c. Travelogs—Pictures of other countries, their national habits, customs, and life (excluding scenes that may have an unwholesome influence).
- d. Nature and Wildlife—Pictures of national or other parks, natural scenery, mountain climbing, exploration, the Forest Service, animal life in various States and nations, the life development of insects, plants, fish, birds, and animals (excluding those which emphasize cruelty).
- e. Archaeology and Wholesome Art—Pictures that conform to our recognized standards of Christian modesty.
- f. Newsreels and Current History —(Excluding pictures that are contrary to our recognized standards).
- g. Educational Pictures—Pictures that impart information and teach truth in any branch of learning.
- h. Historical—Pictures of authentic events accurately portrayed, and otherwise meeting the standards set forth in this statement.
- i. Our Denominational Work and Activities.
- j. Biographical—Pictures of honorable characters, worthy of emulation and accurately portrayed, and otherwise meeting the standards set forth in this statement.

### **II. Unacceptable Presentation**

- a. Motion pictures impersonating Christ.
- b. All feature motion-picture films or telecasts that portray fictional dramatized theatrical plays.
- c. Pictures portraying scenes of intimate lovemaking.

- d. Pictures which lower esteem for the sanctity of marriage by portraying family disruptions or ridiculing home life and home relationships.
- e. Pictures portraying scenes which are contrary to Seventh-day Adventist standards and ideals, such as dancing, card playing, gambling, drinking, night life, carousing, gaiety, revelry, or rowdiness.
- f. Pictures portraying crime or glorifying criminals.
- g. Pictures portraying scenes of violence, cruelty, or brutality, such as prize fighting or professional wrestling.
- h. Pictures portraying scenes of smoking or drinking as a desirable social activity.
- i. Pictures which by ridicule or insinuation or crude comedy could lower, in the estimation of the observer, regard for the law of God, religion, or the ministry, or the dignity of human personality or law enforcing agencies.
  - j. Pictures of a scientific or historical character which distort the facts or pervert the truth.
  - k. Pictures in which coarse, profane, or vulgar language is used.
  - l. Animated cartoons which violate the standards of propriety in this section.

The Youth Department circulated MV Leaflet #47 like the leaves of autumn, but parts of the recommendations soon became obsolete through apparent acceptable practice. A new religious film on the life of Christ was produced entitled, "I Beheld His Glory," and our evangelists suddenly found this to be a great opening night feature to get a crowd overseas and later in North America. Cecil B. DeMille's "Ten Commandments" muddled the thinking of a lot of Adventists even though *Time* magazine in its November 12, 1956, issue called the film ludicrous and stated that "there are moments, in fact, when it seems that the Seventh Commandment is the only one DeMille is really interested in; to the point where the Exodus itself seems almost a sort of Sexodus—the result of Moses' unhappy (and purely fictional) love life." *Time* further stated, "It is impossible to avoid the impression that the movie maker...has taken the name of the Lord in vain."

When I was a lad growing up, the first major film on the life of Christ entitled, "King of Kings," made the rounds in the theaters, and our church took a stand against this portrayal of Christ. I have witnessed the gradual change in our position as a church on this matter take place, to where we now bring full-length feature films on the life of Christ into our churches, and the response is so great among our people we have to have repeat showings the second week to get the crowds inside of the sanctuary. The Youth Department fought a losing battle in trying to uphold the 1951 Autumn Council

recommendation which listed as unacceptable, “motion pictures impersonating Christ.” MV Leaflet #47 was withdrawn from circulation in the Adventist Book Center, and to my knowledge there are now **no** leaflets available published by any department or office of the church which lists acceptable and unacceptable films. If a person would stand up today and try to defend some of the unacceptable presentations listed on page 7 of that old leaflet, he would find himself facing a storm of criticism and controversy, perhaps even ridicule. —*Is Dramatization Wrong?* pp. 4-6.

#### **1954 - Shakespeare at Southern Missionary College:**

In the early fifties, Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University) started teaching Shakespeare. Commenting on the appearance of an article in the *Signs of the Times* concerning Shakespeare, we have the following inspired counsel:

Brethren, let us come to our senses. In more ways than one are we departing from God. Oh how ashamed I was of a recent number of the “Signs of the Times!” On the first page is an article on Shakespeare, a man who died a few days after a drunken carousal, losing his life through indulgence of perverted appetite. In this article it is stated that he did many good works. Man is extolled. The good and the evil are placed on the same level, and published in a paper that our people use to give the third angel’s message to many of those who cannot be reached by the preached Word.

When we give the message in its purity, we shall have no use for pictures illustrating the birthplace of Shakespeare, or for pictures similar to the illustration of heathen goddesses that was used to fill the space on the first page of a recent number of the “Review and Herald.” We are not to educate others along these lines. God pronounces against such articles and illustrations. I have a straightforward testimony to bear in regard to them. We are to extol neither idolatry nor men who did not choose to serve God. Years ago, reproof was given our editors in regard to advocating the reading of even such books as “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” “Aesop’s Fables,” and “Robinson Crusoe.” Those who begin to read such works usually desire to continue to read novels. Through the reading of enticing stories they rapidly lose their spirituality. This is one of the principal causes of the weak, uncertain spirituality of many of our youth. (MS 169, 1902, pp. 6, 7, “The Work of the St. Helena Sanitarium: Our Institutional



Work to be Denominational,” July 14, 1902.) —MR 6, pp 279, 280.

Keep this statement in mind as you read of the dramatic presentation of Shakespeare by Walla Walla College in the section **2001**.

By the 50's it was common knowledge that our senior college English and literature classes were requiring the study of fictitious works in open rebellion to the Lord's counsel in the Spirit of Prophecy. And simultaneously with the launching of the Faith for Today "Westbrook Hospital" series, the door was open to influence the development of drama departments in our senior colleges. While it is not the purpose to explore the entrance of fiction into our senior colleges, fiction and drama are almost synonymous. (See **Appendices 6 & 7.**)

#### **1961 - Walla Walla College Launches Drama Department On April 1961**

“Donnie Rigby, professor emeritus who taught communications classes at WWC for more than 35 years, directed the first theatrical production on campus in April 1961. The musical play “Heidi” - based on the famous book by Johanna Spyri - incorporated music performed by a German band, the Walla Walla Symphony, and an all-girl chorus, as well as several solo numbers by cast members. The production launched WWC's drama program.” *Valley Times*, Friday, November 23, 2001, p. B-5

59 years earlier the college board had voted the following: “Whereas it seems to the Board of Managers of Walla Walla College that the rendering of the cantata of Esther in costume and on the stage would not be for the best interests of the school, therefore, Resolved, that we request those having this matter in charge confine their efforts to the rendering of it in song without costume, stage, or acting.” (See **1902 - March** above)

Was this recommendation just a whim of an overly conservative Board of Managers, or was it based on the enduring principles established by the pioneers of our church and espoused by the Board? Could it be that the 1961 Board of Walla Walla College, many having grown up with TV's in their homes and Hollywood-produced entertainment in their schools and churches, had lost sight of the guiding principles concerning drama? Could it be that the General Conference's encouragement of Faith For Today's dramatic productions had a major influence on WWC to start its own drama department? More on the types of drama that are now emanating from the WWC drama department later.

#### **1963 - A. L. White's Paper "Dramatic Productions in SDA Institutions":**

In February 1963, Arthur White, secretary of Ellen G. White Publications and great grandson of Ellen G. White, circulated a paper entitled “Dramatic Productions in SDA Institutions.” His reason for writing this paper was, “Request has been received at the White Estate for the materials from the pen of Ellen G. White which may have a bearing on the

question of the production of dramatic programs in SDA institutions.” p.1. (See Appendix 22 for the complete paper.)

And why wouldn't there have been questions? A television was in most North American Adventist homes by then, Hollywood feature films were the drawing power to church and institutional functions, and many in leadership were sympathetic with the dramatic arts. For example, Faith for Today was making drama fashionable in the Adventist church by using it to bundle the Gospel.

This was a time for the White Estates to reestablish our early pioneers old landmarks against an ever increasing church constituency and leadership who wanted drama. Or was it a time to find a way of compromise? Remember, the Missionary Volunteer Society would soon be gone; the free speech, flower power, and rock music movements were on the ascendancy; and the “generation gap” had been proclaimed.

Yet there were many leaders, students, and parents throughout the North American Division who were deeply concerned because the senior colleges were cranking up their drama departments and the English and literature departments were adding more fiction to their required reading lists.

Especially note the thesis of White's paper as contained in the second paragraph of the first page:

A survey of these counsels fails to reveal an across-the-board condemnation of all enacted programs. In other words, Ellen White does not condemn a program just because it may be dramatized. In this respect the counsels touching dramatic productions are much like the counsels relating to sports, and interestingly, the two are treated together in two of the statements of caution. Mrs. White did not condemn the “simple exercise of playing ball,” (AH 499) but as she enumerated the principles involved, she pointed out the grave perils which usually accompanied sports activities. Mrs. White did not condemn the simple enacted program put on by the Battle Creek Sabbath School in 1888, but in many statements she clearly points out the many and almost sure perils which accompany “plays” and “theatrical programs.” —A. L. White, *Dramatic Productions in SDA Institutions*, February 1963.

A. L. White continues his thesis that Mrs. White was not condemning the Sabbath School drama she attended, but wrote Brother Morris a kind and thoughtful critique.

It is significant that the counsel given to the man who organized the program relates to how the features of the program could have been made more effective, but there was

no condemnation of the program because of the enacted scenes. —A. L. White, p. 5.

On Sabbath morning, December 22, 1888, Ellen White attended a theatrical performance put on by the Battle Creek Sabbath School in which her six-year-old granddaughter, Ella W. White, was dressed as and acted the part of an angel. There were props, actors, music, and poems. Four days later, on Wednesday morning, December 26, 1888 she wrote a letter to Brother Morse. In this letter it becomes obvious that Mrs. White **did** condemn the program. ( The definitions of the word *condemn* is “to declare to be reprehensible, wrong, or evil, usually after weighing evidence and without reservation” — *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.) Please refer to the full letter reproduced in **Appendix 5.**

The letter begins with, “I have risen at three o’clock this morning to write you a few lines.” When you read the entire article, you will understand why she made the following statement:

I must say I was pained by these things, so out of order with the very work of reformation we were trying to carry forward in the church and with our institutions, that **I should have felt better if I had not been present.** —*2MR*, p. 236. (Emphasis supplied)

In fact, she made only three accepting remarks and twenty-two disapproving remarks. Does that sound like a kind critique giving suggestions on how to make the play better, or like a strong rebuke?

Two lists are made below, her remarks that show acceptance as a thoughtful critique of the program and her remarks that show disapproval and outright condemnation.

### ***Acceptance Remarks***

Page

1. Lines 1-2: “I was pleased with the lighthouse, and the scene...”
2. Lines 4-5: “The part acted by the children was good.”
3. Lines 4-5: “The reading was appropriate.”

### ***Disapproval Remarks***

1. Line 1: “I have risen at three o’clock this morning to write you a few lines.”
2. Lines 2-4: “...the scene which had required so much painstaking effort was one which could have been made most impressive, but failed to be made as forcible and striking as it might have been when it cost so much time and labor in preparing it.”

3. Lines 5-10: "Then if there had been good solid talk on that occasion in regard to the children and teachers in the Sabbath schools laboring earnestly for the salvation of the souls of the children under your charge, presenting the most acceptable offering to Jesus, the gift of their own hearts, and impressive remarks, short and right to the point [on] how they could do this, would it not have been in keeping with the work we have been trying to do in the church?"
4. Lines 11-14: "Every stroke now should be in harmony for the one great purpose, preparing of the hearts, that individually pupils and teachers should be as a light set on a candlestick that it may give light to all that are in the house, which would be carrying out the idea strikingly of a lighthouse guiding souls that they may not make shipwreck of faith."
5. Lines 14-16: "Can you tell me what marked impression the two poems rehearsed by the two ladies on the stand would have to do with this work?"
6. Lines 17-18: "The singing was after the order we would expect it to be in any theatrical performance, but not one word to be distinguished."
7. Lines 18-19: "Certainly the tempest-tossed ship would be wrecked upon the rocks, if there were no more light coming from the lighthouse than was seen in the exercises."
8. Lines 19-22: "**I must say I was pained at these things, so out of order with the very work of reformation we were trying to carry forward in the church and with our institutions, that I should have felt better if I had not been present.**" (Emphasis supplied.)
9. Lines 22-25: "This was an occasion that should have been gotten up not only for the Sabbath school children, but words should have been spoken that would have deepened the impression of a necessity of seeking for the favor of that Savior who loved them and gave Himself for them."
10. Lines 25-29: "If [only] the precious hymns had been sung, 'Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee,' and 'Jesus lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly, while the billows near me roll, while the tempest still is high.' Whose souls were inspired with new and fresh zeal for the Master in those songs sung whose virtue was in the different performances of the singer?"
11. Lines 30-34: "While these painstaking efforts were being made to get up the performances, meetings were being held of the deepest interest which should have engaged the attention, and which called for the presence of every soul lest they should lose something of the message the Master had sent to them."

Now this Christmas has passed into eternity with its burden of record, and we are anxious to see the result of it.”

12. Lines 34-35: “Will it make those who acted their part in it more spiritual-minded?”
13. Line 35-36: “Will it increase their sense of obligation to our heavenly Father who sent His Son into the world at such an infinite sacrifice to save fallen man from utter ruin?”
14. Lines 36-37: “Was the mind awakened to grasp God because of His great love wherewith He has loved us?”
15. Lines 38-42: “We hope, now that the Christmas is in the past, that those who have put forth so much painstaking effort will now manifest a decided zeal, and earnest, disinterested effort for the salvation of the souls of the teachers in the Sabbath school, that in their turn they may each labor for the salvation of the souls in their classes, to give them personal instruction as to what they must do to be saved.”
16. Lines 42-47: “We hope that they will find time to labor in simplicity and in sincerity for the souls of those under their care, and that they will pray with them, and for them, that they may give to Jesus the precious offering of their own souls, that they may make literally true the symbol of the lighthouse in the beams of light shining forth from their own strong efforts in the name of Jesus, which should be put forth in love, they themselves grasping the rays of light to diffuse this light to others, and that there shall be no settling down to a surface work.”
17. Lines 47-54: “Show just as great skill and aptitude in winning souls to Jesus as you have shown in painstaking effort for this occasion just past. Point them in your efforts, with heart and soul enlisted, to the Star that shines out to the morally-darkened heaven at this time, even the Light of the world. Let your light shine that the tempest-tossed souls may set their eyes upon it and escape the rocks that are concealed beneath the surface of the water. Temptations are lying in wait to deceive them, souls are oppressed with guilt, ready to sink into despair. Labor to save them; point them to Jesus who so loved them that He gave His life for them....”
18. Lines 55-59: “The Light of the world is shining upon us that we might absorb the divine rays and let this light shine upon others in good works that many souls shall be led to glorify our Father which is in heaven. He is long suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and it grieves the heart of Jesus that so many refuse the offers of His mercy and matchless love.”

19. Lines 60-62: "Will all who acted an interested part in the program of last evening work as zealously and interestedly to show themselves approved unto God in doing their work for the Master that they may show themselves intelligent workmen that need not to be ashamed?"
20. Lines 62-64: "Oh, let the teachers in the Sabbath school be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the message for this time, carrying that message into all their labor."
21. Lines 64-67: "There are souls to be saved, and while in the Sabbath school work there has been much form and a great amount of precious time occupied in reading of reports and records, there has been but little time to really let light shine forth in clear, steady rays in the very instruction needed to save the souls of the children and youth."
22. Lines 67-71: "Less elaborate speeches, less lengthy remarks, and plain, pointed truth presented, not one word uttered to exhibit profound knowledge, not, one word in any speech, but the greatest evidence of real knowledge is the great simplicity. All who have taken knowledge of Jesus Christ will imitate Him in their manner of instruction."

To conclude from the statement in AH 499 concerning the "the simple exercise of playing ball," and from the Christmas play Letter 5, 1888, that Mrs. White did not "reveal an across-the-board condemnation of all enacted programs," does not speak to the facts. One must ask, "Are the statements of counsel and disapproval made by a person who enjoyed the drama and was just providing a critique on how to make it better?" In reality, the weight of evidence from Letter 5, 1888, is not an acceptance of the Christmas play, but a kind and firm condemnation.

If this paragraph, the one which follows it, and Arthur White's interpretation of Ellen White's attitude toward the play she attended as described above in *2MR*, pages 235-238 (Letter 5, 1888) were left out of his paper, anyone reading it would conclude that Ellen White had nothing but condemnation for the use of drama. These two paragraphs and the interpretation actually contradict the balance of his paper. For example, the two concluding statements he quotes on page 8 clearly define Mrs. White's attitude toward drama.

Jesus Christ is the example for the Christian in all things. Of Him she wrote:

I have not been able to find one instance where He educated His disciples to engage in amusement of football or pugilistic games, to obtain physical exercise, or in theatrical performances, and yet Christ was our pattern in all things. —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 229.

A sound guiding principle to keep ever in mind in dealing with questions of the kind we have been studying is stated in *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 360:

Our example and influence must be a power on the side of reform. We must abstain from any practice which will blunt the conscience or encourage temptation. We must open no door that will give Satan access to the mind of one human being formed in the image of God.

While it is most unfortunate that Hancock subscribed to A. L. White's thesis as noted in his paper "Is Dramatization Wrong?", page 13; yet the general tenor of Hancock's paper can be summarized in his last paragraph:

Is it not time for us to direct the energies of our youth away from the theatrical world of sham to the stark reality of a life and death message for a society fast headed for curtain-fall? Have we been drifting, perhaps almost imperceptibly away from the old paths and need to heed the warnings of our pioneer leaders who recognized that, "Satan's ruling passion is to pervert the intellect and cause men to long for shows and theatrical performances." (*Evangelism*, p. 266.) Is it time for the voice of another Autumn Council to affirm the church's historic position in this problem area as it appeals for revival and reformation? —Hancock, p 14.

#### **1974 - The Committee on Guidelines for Competitive Activities and Drama:**

On January 28-31, 1974, the General Conference convened a committee of 37 select individuals, some of whom read papers on the subject of competitive sports and some on drama (see **Appendix 23**). In communication with the General Conference to prepare this paper, the GC archive workers were able to find only three papers that were scheduled to be presented, those of Josephine Benton, J. H. Hancock, and Frank Knittel. Two other papers were written for the committee. They were by Phyllis Paytee and Leslie Hardinge. Either the rest of the paper read have been lost or they did not present or turn in papers.

Each paper will be briefly commented upon. The reader can find the complete text of the papers in the Appendices.

Josephine Benton's paper was a compilation of informal interviews of producers, participants, and viewers of dramatic productions. It was subjective in content, "without a pretense at supplying answers." Page 8. (For the full text, see **Appendix 24**)

J. H. Hancock's presentation was comprehensive, documented and objective. It has been quoted extensively in this paper. For the full text see **Appendix 25**.

Frank Knittel's paper begins with, "I have assumed that some general enactments of scenes by players is an acceptable Seventh-day Adventist activity." Frank Knittel, "Shall We Use Commercial Drama In Seventh-day Adventist Schools," p. 1. He continues on page 4: "During my lifetime I have seen only about 150 stage productions—about 75 of these at one university—and I have yet to see one in a public arena that I would personally judge suitable as presented to be staged on a Seventh-day Adventist campus." (See Appendix 26.)

Knittel presented this paper during the time he was president (Knittel was Administrative Dean from 1968-1971 and President from 1971-1982) of Southern College of SDA. Perhaps his assumption "that some general enactments of scenes by players is an acceptable Seventh-day Adventist activity" can explain the college's leadership attitude toward the enactment of *Dido and Aeneas* eight years later at 8:00 p.m. on March 18, 1990, at the Ackerman Auditorium of Southern College of SDA.

Appendix 27 entitled "The Witches' Den Opera at Southern College of SDA" describes the opera and circumstances of its production. (The writer has in his possession a video of that enactment. You are welcome to request a copy to view.)

Phyllis Bryan Paytee submitted to the committee a paper entitled "Drama in the Elementary Classroom." Note her primary thesis in the first paragraph of her paper (see Appendix 28):

The moment the word "drama" is uttered, we find ourselves upon debatable ground. Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy urge that caution and restraint be exercised by the Christian who is tempted to participate in any activities of a sensational, theatrical nature, whether presented in the theater or in our own institutions. At the same time, however, neither the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy offer direct condemnation of drama as a learning tool.

Undoubtedly she had read White's paper, for her conclusions on page 5, demonstrate her mind set:

The elementary teacher who used informal classroom drama as a vehicle for bringing to the instructional program new appreciations, insights, and understandings would select only those dramatic episodes which will meet a particular learning need. He would select materials having basic elements that are easy to outline and easy for boys and girls to transfer into simple action and dialogue. The teacher should also know the children and materials particularly well and try to put them together in the best possible way.

By March 3, 1975, a summary of the January 28-31, 1974 committee was written entitled "Guidelines for the Use of Dramatization Among SDAs," and was approved by the



General Conference special committee. The underlying theme of this paper was to encourage drama with certain cautions. The flood gate of drama was opened and soon our homes, churches, and institutions were inundated. (See Appendix 29.)

Coupled with Arthur White's 1963 paper and the March 3, 1975, summary of the January 28-31, 1974, committee entitled "Guidelines for the Use of Dramatization Among SDAs" and along with the baby boomer mentality, our college drama departments grew in direct opposition to the recommendations given by the Spirit of Prophecy and church leadership for more than eighty years. How could this be?

**1995 - Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, revised 1995, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition:**

On page 151, under the heading "**Radio and Television**" are the following statements:

Radio and television have changed the whole atmosphere of our modern world and have brought us within easy contact with the life, thought, and activities of the entire globe. Radio and television are great educational agencies. By these means we can greatly enlarge our knowledge of world events, and enjoy important discussions and the best in music.

Unfortunately, however, radio and television also bring to their audiences almost continuous theatrical performances and many influences that are neither wholesome nor uplifting. If we are not discriminating and decisive, radio and television will turn our homes into theaters and minstrel shows of a cheap and sordid kind.

Safety for ourselves and our children is found in a determination, by God's help, to follow the admonition of the apostle Paul: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).

If parents, pastors, and institutional leaders were to follow this simple admonition, almost every channel on the television (with the exception of **some** programming on education channels) would be eliminated, along with all dramatic video productions.

**1996 - Seventh-day Encyclopedia, Second Revised Edition, M-Z:**

On pages 424 and 425, under the title "**Visual Entertainment,**" the following advice is given concerning dramatic productions:

This includes such forms of entertainment as *serial cartoons, motion pictures, television, videos*, attendance at the *theater* and *commercialized sports*. Seventh-day Adventists have been governed in their choices in these types of entertainment by certain general principles that are applicable in varying degrees.

Pictures are known to be one of the most effective means for influencing behavior that humans know. This being true, it is evident that there are great possibilities for good or evil in pictures, depending on the character of what they portray. Because of this, one of the basic criteria Seventh-day Adventists have used in determining what is proper or improper for a Christian to see is the character of the things portrayed.

*Serial Cartoons.* These are usually a series of drawings in narrative sequence. They may, for example, depict Bible stories; portray wildlife, historical events, or scientific processes; or picture scenes of crime, violence, and immorality. The character of the activity portrayed is what should determine whether the cartoons are proper for a Christian to look at.

Seventh-day Adventists make use of serial cartoons for teaching Bible stories and imparting scientific and historical information to children, but regard the “comics” generally as being detrimental to the formation of a wholesome character.

*Motion Pictures and Videos.* The development of the moving picture, especially with sound, made possible astonishingly realistic portrayals of dramatic productions. Conservative Christians who had previously recognized the evil influences of the theater saw the same effects in the mass-produced movie. It is well known that the influence of the scenes portrayed, especially on children and young people, is powerful, and that the content of most of the dramatic shows is not in the direction of high ideals. These shows often glamorize the banal and tawdry, if not the violent and criminal aspects of life, and glorify unworthy characters and actions.

Seventh-day Adventists have been warned (in the *Church Manual* [1990], p. 145) “against the subtle and sinister influence of the moving-picture theater,” which is a training school in what to the Christian are false values—worldliness, laxity, and love of pleasure—and at times exposes the young people who attend to harmful associations.

While condemning the motion picture theater, Seventh-day Adventists are not opposed to the viewing of non-theatrical moving pictures, if the character of the activities portrayed is wholesome and instructive and if temperance is exercised in the amount of time spent. Church-sponsored institutions show, for their own groups, selected films.

*Television.* Through television the decision as to what to see has become a daily problem in the home. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not condemned TV, but advises members to apply to all programs the same principles as for moving pictures, and further, to avoid spending too much

time watching even good programs. The following is part of a statement prepared under the direction of the General Conference Committee and published in 1956 ("What About Television?" p. 4): "Unless viewers are constantly on guard, TV consumes an excessive amount of their time. Christians are stewards of the talent of time, being accountable to God for every moment to improve it to His glory. Time has been given to mankind for self-improvement, for work and physical exercise, for communion with God, for service to God and man, for recreation and enjoyment, and should therefore be employed in a balanced program that would bring honor to God and would fulfill all of life's needs and duties."

The *Church Manual* (1990, p. 145) gives the following counsel on television: "Safety for ourselves and our children is found in a determination, by God's help, to follow the admonition of the apostle Paul: 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things' (Phil. 4:8)."

*Attendance at the Theater and Commercialized Sports.* Unlike the other forms of visual entertainment that have been discussed in this article, the stage (including drama and opera) and commercialized sports (including commercialized entertainment) employ living performers or contestants, but many of the principles that apply to serial cartoons, motion pictures, and television also apply to them. Ellen White writes concerning the stage: "Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school for morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life, than theatrical amusements.

"The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence... The only safe course is to shun the theater" (MYP 380).

The patronizing of commercialized sports such as baseball, football, and basketball games is discouraged by the church. Thus the *Church Manual* (p. 146) urges: "Let us not patronize commercialized amusements, joining with the worldly, careless, pleasure-loving multitudes who are 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.'

**1999 - Editorial by Royson James, Columnist for the Toronto Star:**

Commenting on the tragic loss of youth from his church, Mr. James, a Seventh-day Adventist, made these observations printed in the May 1999, World Edition of the *Review*:

The church in North America is facing a massive crisis. Our youth are questioning the very pillars of our faith. They are demanding answers, real anchors to cling to, and modern solutions to new-millennium problems. More than ever, they are seeking role models to lead them in a twenty-first century revival...

Many youth are searching for a purpose in life. They yearn to grasp the relevance of Adventism in the next millennium. They are part of the computer generation, a new breed that requires new approaches and new methods. Many have told us they want to put their faith in action, but they don't know how. They don't know the reasons behind many church doctrines. They know little about Adventist Church history. They say they want to be challenged when they come to church, not hear the same old ideas all the time...

This is the tragedy of our church in North America. There seems to be no corporate mission to engage our youth. And if there is, it has failed to find prominence in the courses in the seminary or capture the attention of our pastors and, ultimately, penetrate the programs of the local church.

Is it any wonder that these observations are so accurate? How can youth be excited about a church if they don't know its history or have not been grounded in its message? In the Fall of 1999, a friend of mine who teaches the sanctuary message to children (who grasp the deep meanings quickly and love it) and adults, asked two senior college students, who had been at her home for dinner, if they would like to hear a presentation on the sanctuary. They accepted the invitation. After the presentation, they both admitted they had very little knowledge of the subject and her presentation had been "very deep."

**1999 - Walla Walla College Drama Department in the News.**

On May 28, 1999, the local newspaper for the Walla Walla area, the *Union Bulletin* printed the following article:

**One-woman play banned at WWC moves to Whitman's Cordiner Hall Wednesday**

By LISA L. DIAZ

**SUMMARY:** A one-woman play that was banished from the Walla Walla College stage after its debut will be performed again — at Whitman College.

Kimberly Howard believes people can rise above influences that might corrupt them by rediscovering their internal clown.

That is the theme of her play, "Floating Redundant," and currently what she is trying to do in her own life in seeing that her work lives on.

The Walla Walla College administration canceled her one-woman play after opening night. Two weeks later on May 6, Howard, the college's drama professor, resigned.

Lower the curtains? Not on Howard.

Her play will next be performed Wednesday at Whitman College. She will take the show to New York City's Gene Frankel Theater in mid-June.

WWC's official reason for canceling the play was its content. "I guess there was enough concern expressed by the campus community to hold off until we could address those concerns," said W.G. Nelson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist college.

Jason Chamberlin, the play's director, said the unofficial reason was that a percentage of the college was uncomfortable with the material.

The one-woman play, performed by Howard, challenged social conventions as the woman searched for her identity. Institutions, such as churches and schools, are considered by many to be society's cornerstones. But Howard twists that perception, depicting them instead as corrupting influences.

The play initially reveals the woman as a clown. But in time she loses her clownish characteristics, becoming first a buffoon, then a bore. Ultimately, she emerges as an adult woman.

But rather than being in a state of refinement and maturity, the woman is corrupt and devoid of creativity.

For Howard, the play's cancellation and her resignation are all for the best.

She is considering taking "Floating Redundant" on a regional tour and starting her own theater company with former students.

She said after she resigned that she went through "the phases of grief," but believed leaving was best in the long run.

"I wasn't forced to resign. It was sort of a joint decision," she said. "The official statement is that there was some difference between the administration and me over interpreting the Adventist lifestyle.

"I would like the students to know that I'm not angry or hold any animosity," she said.

Sadly, Walla Walla College, one of our North American Senior educational institutions of the church, has reaped what it has sowed since its inception on April, 1961.

### **1999 - Amazing Facts Newsletter, October 1999:**

In this newsletter, Elder Doug Batchelor addressed the issue of music and drama that has been troubling him for some time:

Dear Friend,

For some time now I have heard that “still small voice” impressing me to talk to you about a serious issue that is steadily consuming our churches like cancer. I have avoided addressing this swelling problem for fear of being misunderstood, but I can’t be silent any longer.

Let me explain. Because of the whirlwind of speaking appointments in preparation for the *Millennium of Prophecy* seminar in New York beginning on the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month, I have had many opportunities to visit with hundreds of our friends and supporters around the country and to observe dozens of different worship services. My concern in this: **I am alarmed at the pagan worship styles that are creeping into many of our churches.**

### **Musical Madness**

One of the most powerful elements of worship that has become extremely divisive is music. From the ancient Roman orgies and primitive tribal war dances, to the insane behavior at modern concerts and sporting events, pagan music with its heavy, syncopated rhythms has been used to excite carnal passions and wild behavior. Many Christian churches have now embraced this same music. And it’s not just the loud “Christian rock.” I have seen whole congregations that look like they have been mesmerized through the New Age music with shallow, repetitive lyrics sung over and over. If Jesus tells us not to pray in vain repetition, then it is likely He does not want us singing that way either (see Matthew 6:7).

### **Theatrical Theology**

Another element invading modern Christian worship is drama. I have no moral problem with using some visual aids to help people better understand Bible truth. God asked prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah to do this (see Jeremiah 32:14 and Ezekiel 5:1-4). But some argue that this justifies the dramatic stage productions with raucous applause that are making their way into our churches.

The problem is that many professed Christian have become so over-stimulated from a steady diet of movies, TV, and videos that simple, reverent worship service without drama, drums, and dancing deacons seems boring by comparison. Many now come to church to be entertained rather than to give their worship, praise, songs, and offerings.

The reader will find a copy of Elder Batchelor’s October 2000 newsletter in **Appendix 30.** (Permission for reproduction was given by Amazing Facts to this writer on 11-22-99.)

### **2000 - Walla Walla College to Present Festival Of One Acts**

In the Thursday, March 2, 2000, *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*, the area’s daily newspaper, printed in its “Local/Entertainment” section the following:

Student directors will present nine one-act plays for Walla Walla College's fourth annual Festival of One Acts.

Each play or play segment lasts about 20 minutes, and the material ranges from **Shakespeare** to "A Few Good Men."

Performances will be at 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and March 11-12. Because nine plays will be performed, one complete performance will span both Saturday and Sunday nights.

The plays will be at WWC's Village Hall

The cost is \$7 for general admission, \$5 for students and \$4 for WWC students. One ticket provides admission to both halves of a weekend. Tickets can be purchased at the college bookstore or at the door. (Emphasis supplied. Please refer to the inspired statement concerning Shakespeare on page 32 of this paper)

### **2000 - May The Walla Walla College Collegian Advocates Attending A Play and Engage in Their Own "Back Seat Show"**

The Walla Walla School paper, the "*Collegian*," in its May 4, 2000, edition, carried the following calendar of events. The Harper Joy Theater is located on the Whitman College campus, which is a secular senior college in Walla Walla, Washington. This play is the product of mostly Whitman College students. .

Arrrgggh

It is Gilbert and Sullivan's classic "The Pirates of Penzance." (Pronounced "pen" "ants") For the men, we have pirates and beautiful maidens. For the ladies, we have love and other relational things that you tend to dwell on. It opens today at the Harper Joy Theater at 8:00 p.m. It is only \$5. Do we have to map this out for you? C-H-E-A-P D-A-T-E. This package has everything you need and all the action you'd every want in an outing. But, we guess that depends on your back seat after the show.

### **2000 - May Walla Walla College Drama Department Enacts "Resurrexio Domini Nostri" (The Resurrection of Christ.**

On May 27, 2000, at the Village Hall and on May 28, 2000, **Sabbath afternoon** at 3 p.m. the Resurrexio Domini Nostri" was enacted by a cast and crew of Walla Walla College students under the direction of Marilyn Loveless, Walla Walla College drama artistic director, and co-artistic director LuAnn Venden Herrell. Ms. Herrell's e-mail invitation read:

The cast and crew of "Resurrexio Domini Nostri" (The Resurrection of Christ) invites you to join us for the closing run of the spring play.

Come support this large group of talented and hard-working students as they present this medieval piece enacting the resurrection of Christ. **You're encouraged to boo the bad characters, cheer for the good ones,** and use the drama to help reflect on the relevance and immediacy of this

historical religious event. Enjoy comedy, drama, spectacle, and glorious music supplied by the I Contori and The Messengers. (Emphasis supplied)

This play created a flurry of email among some of the Walla Walla College faculty. Excerpts from some of these e-mail exchanges follow without identifying the names of the respondents. For ease in following the emails, the respondents will be identified by number. All emphasis in the emails has been supplied.

Respondent #1.

While I enjoyed some of the presentation last week, I was concerned about the content and language used during the play. It seemed that the content was catholic and also, in portions, unbiblical. For example: Mary going to heaven after dying, swearing, as in "Oh God!" and the backwards storytelling of Jesus when and how he went to heaven, and when he could be touched, and the soldiers sleeping at the grave. These concerns were also shared to me by other in attendance. It appears that the story presented ideas that are very much opposed to the mission statement of WWC. I think these concerns were shared by several older members of our community who left just after the play started. I know the play was "adapted", but did we do all we could to make this play suitable for an Adventist campus? I had higher expectations for a biblical based play, presented on Sabbath, at an Adventist college.

Respondent #2

I did not attend the play, fearing to see the very sorts of things you described in your message. Needless to say, I am embroiled in enough battles on the campus that I am unwilling to put myself in a sphere where I know I will have to speak out in an unpopular fashion.

I doubt that your message will "resonate" with many on campus, but I do want to let you know that I am one who agrees with it. I am really weary of the endless jokes, tales, and anecdotes that pass for "presenting Christ to people in their own language". We as a denomination have largely lost our sense of awe and solemnity about our message. Indeed, I think that we have largely lost our message. In that context, I felt that your points were extremely well-taken. Thank you for taking a stand.

Respondent # 3's email to Respondent #1

Your response to the play startled me a bit. ---

For reasons which I cannot fully explain, I was deeply moved by the play and what it symbolized. Our WWC drama group and I Cantori gave us the opportunity to reflect on the passion of our Lord, his death and resurrection and what that might mean for us now and in the future. I am troubled by the increasing secularization and privatization of our common life. When do we



come together to share a common experience? On Sabbath we are scattered among some 13 churches in the valley while some participate in lay activities and others flee to the rocks and the mountains. How many of us attend chapel? Faculty meetings? Tuesday Brown Bags? When was the last time we had an inter-disciplinary colloquium? Even this form of communication is a far cry from the ideal for a community which worships the Incarnate God who has called us to break bread together. The Word has become an electronic signal and dwells among us.

Respondent #4

I am responding to the criticism of the play by (Respondent # 1). As I see it, the point of the play has been missed. The point of this play is not either evangelism per se nor amusement, though both of those are not necessarily excludable. Definitely, I am sorry for the way (Respondent # 1) chose to try and embarrass you publicly. This is never in the spirit of Christ as I understand him. You are a great asset to us here! Please don't get discouraged over this. I hope that (Respondent #1) can reassess tactics and enlarge (Respondent # 1) scope of understanding of your work.

Respondent # 1's Reply to Respondent #4's above email.

While I understand what you have said below, I am left with this conclusion:  
1) I did not understand the point of the play  
2) You told me what the point of the play was not.  
Would you be willing to explain to me what you thought the point of the play was?  
Would you be willing to comment on the statements of principle I included on the bottom of my email? Things like "I have not been able to find one instance where He educated His disciples .... in theatrical performances." or "Truth is to be presented in the utmost simplicity, even as Christ presented it, so that people can understand what is truth. Truth will dispel the clouds of error."  
I just to (do) not see the point of a play that clearly presents error for the sake of theatrical performances.

Respondent # 4's reply to Respondent #1's above email.

The point of the play is basically Art with all the attendant complexities and questions as well as the joys that we associate with that very human experience. This extends to an understanding of various cultures as reflected in their arts, complete with fact and error. Ours is to learn from their perspectives and to participate with them in their human joys and to learn from all that we can, as in any historical/ sociological study, and to appreciate the total esthetic that was so characteristic of the time. To avoid hearing or seeing about other religions is not the purpose, in my

understanding, of the prophetess' warnings, nor is the viewing of dramatic art forms or presentation of them.

**At one time I would have "heard" her in that way as you seem to. However, with the help of serious students of her work and times, (people such as Geo. Knight (sic) in his various book), I can ask whether or not what I am asked to participate, in literature or any are, is pretention (pretension) and dishonesty the base? Is what I am asked to experience a true election of another perspective of humanity? Do the merits of the work rest only on prideful display and lack completely in redemptive directions? Is what I bring affecting my perceptions to a degree where improper distortions appear exclusively?**

These issues are always points of critique and judgement in works of art for the Christian. Critical Thinking is required as is reflection my own inferences and preferences and perceptions. that help to contribute to my experience. Many good apologies are written in defence (defense) of art for the Christian reader. **In particular, the issue of the Authentic or Truthful as different from the Factual has been carefully discussed by Geo. Knight in Myths About Adventism and I refer you to this treatise. His books on Ellen White also have been very helpful to me.** (Emphasis Supplied)

Is Ellen White still the prophetess of God to the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Since when did we need theologians to explain away or interpret the Spirit of Prophecy for us? She wrote in English, not Greek or Hebrew. The fact that dramas continue to be performed at Walla Walla College demonstrates the mind set of people like respondent #4. Unfortunately, a considerable number of the faculty think both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy do not mean what they say. Why? because the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy have been "culturally influenced." Therefore they must be re-interpreted to be relevant. Relativism has infiltrated the Walla Walla College campus and flourishes.

### **2000 - September Gleaner Editorial Supports Drama**

In the September issue of the Northern Pacific Union paper, the *Gleaner*, an editorial entitled "Surprising Facts About Drama and the Church" was penned. The author extolled the use of drama and even went so far as to states that the Sanctuary service of the Old Testament and the Jewish spring and fall festivals were "dramatic-style memorialization of Hebrew history mandated by Scripture."

Several people wrote letters to the editor in the next two issues sharing their concern with this editorial conclusions. The September 2000 *Gleaner* editorial, "letter to the editor," two Letter to Editors and this author's letter together with his reply can be read in **Appendix 31.**

### **2000 - November The Walla Walla College Drama Season 2000 Begins With The Play "The Crucible."**

The Walla Walla College student paper, *The Collegian*, Volume 85, Issue 9, for November 30, 2000, ran the following front page lead article. All emphasis supplied.

**If you're in the mood for love, hate and betrayal, come to the WWC**

Drama Club presentation of "The Crucible" in Village Hall beginning Saturday, Dec. 2, at 8 p.m.

The play is co-directed by Marilyn Loveless, instructor in communications, and Jim Bock, a local radio announcer and professional actor who has performed in such productions as "The Grapes of Wrath" in London. Peter Schmidt, senior speech communications, is the assistant student director.

Students compose the cast, with Stephanie Binns, senior English, and Adam Lombard, junior communications, in lead roles of Abigail Williams and John Proctor.

Students have devoted many hours to this production since the beginning of October when roles were decided; up to 11 or 12 hours a week, said Erica Sharp, freshman communications media, who plays Mercy Lewis.

**The play has everything, including romance, seduction, lust, murder and revenge, beginning with the first scene,** said Dana Melashenko, sophomore humanities, who plays Betty Parris. **There is even a bit of violence** when Abigail pulls Betty's hair and slaps her.\* "The play is filled with feisty PMS women," said Melashenko

One of Arthur Miller's two most famous plays, "The Crucible" is the story of a witch-hunt based on those that took place in the late 1600s in New England. Miller wrote the play in the 1950s during the height of McCarthyism, drawing a parallel between the witch-hunts and the communist accusations thrown on Miller and his contemporaries.

Performances are December 2, 3, 9 and 10 at 8 p.m. each night. A performance on Dec. 7, which will be followed by a question and answer session with actors and directors, begins at 7 p.m. Tickets to this production are available at the College Store or at the box office on performance night. Tickets cost \$7 for general admission, \$5 for students and seniors, and \$4 for students with WWC ID.

For more information call 527-2158 or log on the WWC Drama department Website at <http://drama.wwc.edu>. (Emphasis Supplied)

\*This scene was enacted for Walla Walla College chapel on Tuesday, the early part of November 2000, in the College Church. The chapel was devoted to justifying and explaining the use of drama on the college campus. The drama group was specifically ask by the chapel coordinator to present a "Christian" theme for the chapel. On a poster advertising the play, the following sentence is prominently displayed on the bottom. (See a copy of the poster in **Appendix 32**) "This play contains some subject matter which may not be suitable for young children." The local December 8, 2000, *Valley Times* weekly newspaper placed the following lead article on its front page: "WWC performance of 'The

Crucible' a worthy rendition of Miller's masterpiece." Paragraph seven states "One thing is certain. As the disclaimer on the play announcement noted, this play is not suitable for small children." The real question to ask is, "Is this play suitable for your and my youth who attend Walla Walla College?"

**2001 - March *Adventist Review* on the Effects of Popular Culture Through the Media of Drama.**

Describing the "devastating influence of popular culture," author Jennifer Schwirzer, wife, mother and published author writes from Putnam, Connecticut.

The mass media gives the young three messages—drink, spend money and be sexually active. These three obsessions bear fruit in three illnesses—substance abuse, materialism, and immorality. A young person's world is wired in to the sources of these death-wish messages through videos, television, movies and MTV.

As parents, we must realize that the media is at total cross-purposes with us. We want our kids to be happy and well-adjusted: the mass media wants to make money from them. There is no way to harmonize your intentions and those of the money-hunger merchants behind the camera.

The average teen watches 21 hours of TV each week, while that same teen engages each week in a paltry 49 minutes of conversation with mother and 35 minutes with dad. That means that teens have about 14 times more input from the mass media than they have from their parents.

We are reaping the results of the spiritual devastation of our youth. This devastation mocks our attempts to provide legal refuge for the young members of our world. We may protect them all we wish, but they will not be saved while they are unprotected from their own media-induced self-destruction. *Adventist Review*, March 15, 2001.

**2001 - May *WWC Enacts C.S. Lewis's Book *The Great Divorce*.***

"Shimmering spirits and translucent ghosts debate the merits of their earthly life and the fundamentals of heaven and hell." Thus starts the article in the Walla Walla Union Bulletin of Wednesday, May 9, 2001, p 9, describing the last play of the school year. "A multimedia tour through heaven and hell, the Walla Walla College Play 'The Great Divorce' uses white screens and projects images. Keri Donaldson, left, plays a Spirit who tries to convince a young girl, played by Kristin Taylor, to allow her to destroy the Demon attached to her back, played by Kristin Smith, far right." reads the caption under the U-B photo by Greg Lehman. (See **Appendix 33** for the complete article)

**2001 - October WWC Student Enacts "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)"**

WHAT: "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)"

DATE: October 13, 14, 18,20 at 8 p.m.

PLACE: The Donnie Rigby Stage on the ground floor of the Canaday Technology Center

TICKETS: \$5 for WWC students/staff/faculty with ill card.

INFORMATION & RESERVATIONS: 527-2158

If you tried to buy tickets for the sold-out Saturday night (Oct. 13) performance we've added additional seats. More tickets are now available in the College Store and at the door. Reservations are highly recommended.

DINNER THEATRE: Sunday night, October 21 at 7 p.m.

TICKETS: \$20 (dorm students will be able to charge \$11 to their ARAMARK account).

We hope you will be able to join Don & Donnie Rigby, to toast their achievements on this special evening. A delicious dinner will be served (summer vegetable stir-fry ravioli, linguini with sun-dried tomato pesto, Caesar salad, garlic bread sticks and ' double chocolate fudge cake with raspberry melba sauce) at 7 p.m., followed by the talented and outrageously funny trio of Adam Lombard, Erich Dorzab and Rudy Scott performing "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)."

Please note that this is a pre-season show. Season tickets for WWC DRAMA will be available in the College Store on November 1.

**So read the announcement for the opening play for the school year presented by the WWC Drama Department. Two critics penned the following articles in The Collegian, dated October 4, 2001 describes the enactment as follows**

"If you want to laugh loudly and often, don't miss "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)." Billed in the prologue as a feat "unprecedented in the history of theater," it delivers. In less than two hours, three men display all 37 of the Bard's great plays; and they do so with uproarious lunacy. The play culminates 20 years of improvisational skits by four Brits of The Reduced Shakespeare Company. Over the years they reduced all the Bard's plays into their fundamental elements, which apparently includes a cooking show, football and rap.

For the College Place premiere, all parts (male AND female) are performed by Adam Lombard, Rudy Scott and Erich Dorzab. Lombard prancing in a wig and skirt is alone worth the price of admission.

One important note: Even if you hate Shakespeare, you'll still enjoy this play. Its comedic power lies in its mocking tone and a merciless skewering of the Bard's clichés.

More than likely, you'll laugh at jokes on stage that occurred to you while you read Shakespeare's more absurd writings. And, if you actually stayed awake during high school English, you'll enjoy the lunacy all the more.

The success of "The Complete Works. . ." lies in several things. Because the script was based on improvisation, it is both freely imaginative and gloriously ridiculous. I had no idea that "Romeo and Juliet" could involve Darth Maul, Nirvana and a rubber knife. Utilizing this freedom, our actors rewrote portions of the original script based on their own improvisation. I found out later that some of my favorite parts were rehearsal mistakes they incorporated into their show.

All three actors have a great sense of timing, and their choreography is dead on. This play involves a lot of physical, slapstick comedy, which is easy to do poorly. These men have it down, especially the sword fights and the football game.

The play is very accessible for today's audience because it integrates current comedic styles, plus 20th century props and dialogue. Furthering the audience's involvement, the players often venture into the crowd, so for the most fun, make sure to get a front row seat. Buy your tickets quickly too, because seating will be limited.

In short, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)" is a play like none other you have ever seen.

Entering a theater with expectations is always dangerous, but I can safely say that you'll want to enter Erich, Rudy and Adam's theater, so long as you expect the unexpected." Brian Bell, Features writer, The Collegian.

"I'm sure that whoever came up with the idea of compiling Shakespeare's complete works into a play was met with many emphatic 'No!'s by theatre companies across the western world. Imagine each two and a half hour performance, multiplied by 37 plays, all at once. Oh my. That's not even counting Shakespeare's prolific piles of poetry.

"Perhaps in a fit of desperation-or cynicism-at not being able to find a producer for a serious Complete Works, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)" was born, all hour and 45 minutes of hand-hidden giggles and outright guffaws. Adam Long, Daniel Singer and Jess Winfield wrote this brilliant comedy, and this production is directed by WWC student Dan Lounsbury. On stage are three men in tights "spread[ing] the holy word of the Bard to the masses." Erich Dorzab, Adam Lombard, and Rudy Scott are fluid in their improvisations—a very necessary talent due to the extensive amount of audience interaction—and in their ability to duck backstage and reemerge seconds later as a very different, but very funny character. The three men have even managed to master Scottish accents in their rendition of MacBeth (oh see the spit fly!).

Most critics feel they haven't done their job properly if they fail to mention one iota gone wrong in a production they thoroughly enjoyed. I am not one of those critics. I sat for two hours through a play I've seen twice before—professionally performed at Piccadilly Circus

by the Reduced Shakespeare Company-and laughed every bit as hard as I laughed in London. Perhaps, as the actors apologized before and after, it was a rusty dress rehearsal on a new stage. I never noticed. Instead, I sat in my . seat and wiped away the tears of laughter streaming down my cheeks." Chelsey Ham, Features Writer, The Collegian.

This enactment elicited concern on the part of a faculty member of Walla Walla College. Following are e-mails related to this enactment. For ease in following the e-mails, the respondents will be identified by number.

Respondent # 1 to Respondent # 2

I was thinking of responding to this with a general reply to the same distribution list (campus) but thought I would send a copy direct to you first with some thoughts (and a cc to a few others). I guess my main question has to do with the criteria that wwc drama uses for establishing content for wwc drama. While there are several examples of content I could comment on from previous years (like that chapel last-year), I will here just focus on the new play you are doing. In summary, the concern is content criteria.

Here is what troubles me - The college came under review a few years ago on how we do things here. The board asked WWC to specifically. reply to some of those concerns. WWC answered with the Commission Response Committee report, which states on page 18:

"For this reason, we are truly sorry for not having always succeeded in the spiritual education of our students. We want to assure the board of our commitment to and love for the Bible, the writings of Ellen White, the beliefs of our church"

I and most faculty at WWC agreed that the content of the commission report would help improve both the image and the internal workings of WWC. Some comments, like the one quoted above, were particularly of interest to me, because they are strong statements. But do we mean it? Do we really "love the writings of Ellen White" while we ignore them?

There are specific guidelines in inspired writings that enable us to answer the question concerning content criteria. Many many statements on the positive things we could be doing, and a few statements on the things that we should specifically not be doing. The particular announcement you sent out deals with a specific content that has been discussed before. While I would prefer to discuss positive affirming content criteria issues, this particular announcement forces me to think about why are we doing that which we have counsel not to be doing? Here are just two of several examples of such counsel:.

Concerning illustrating our literature, she wrote: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He graciously condescends to dwell among them. Let those who are representing the truth for this time pray earnestly for clear spiritual discernment. Let

them be sincerely jealous for the honor of the Lord God of hosts. Let them see the sinfulness of exalting such men as Shakespeare, calling the attention of people to those who did not in their lives honor God or represent Christ"

Concerning the publishing of an article about Shakespeare: "Brethren, let us come to our senses. In more ways than one are we departing from God. Oh how ashamed I was of a recent number of the "Signs of the Times!" On the first page is an article on Shakespeare, a man who died a few days after a drunken carousal, losing his life through indulgence of perverted appetite. In this article it is stated that he did many good works. Man is extolled. The good and the evil are placed on the same level, and published in a paper that our people use to give the third angel's message to. many of those who cannot be reached by the preached Word. The publication of this article robbed me of my rest last night. I was thrown into an agony of distress. If our brethren have not discernment enough to see the evil of these things, when will they have? Why can they not understand the tenor of such things? We are to stand on the elevated platform of eternal truth. The edge of the sword of truth is not to be dulled.

We must take a straightforward course, using the truth, as a mighty cleaver, to separate from the world men and women who will stand as God's peculiar people."

If Mrs. White wrote such things about illustrating his birthplace and the publishing of general articles about him, what do you think she would say about the. play? Would she ask WWC to "come to our senses?" Would she comment as above? Or would she write like the reviewers: "Lombard prancing in a wig and skirt is alone worth the price of admission." or "freely imaginative and gloriously ridiculous. I had no idea that "Romeo and Juliet" could involve Darth Maul, Nirvana and a rubber knife"

I am asking for your thoughts on the subject of content criteria. And if somehow I am missing something here, or I am somehow not even in the right field about all this, please respond soon, before I send something like this to the general campus.

Thanks, Respondent # 1 10/11/01, 05:46PM

Respondent # 2 to Respondent #1

In the 1950s, when Washington Missionary College was still in The District of Columbia, a young seminary student and his wife attended, "An Evening with William Shakespeare." The program featured Basil Rathbone and Fay Emmerson reading selections from the works of the bard. There were no costumes or sets — only two stools, some lights and an electrifying performance. .

The experience proved to be a turning point in the life of this young pastor. He decided right there and then that he did not want to preach AT people, he wanted to communicate God's love and saving grace TO people. He immediately dispensed with the pulpit, seeing it as a barrier between himself and his congregation — a daring and innovative move at the time which so upset the head elder that he refused to move the



pulpit. Today this is a common practice.

The young seminary student went on to pastor two of the largest SDA churches in the world - Sligo with 3,000 members in the 1950s and 1960s, and Loma Linda University Church with more than 7,000 members. He served as a conference president and as the president of Columbia Union College for eight years. In all, he devoted the next 50 years of his life to working for the church, before he retired last year. This man was my father.

I would like to see every theology major enroll in my acting class and appear in at least one play during their time at this college. I believe that they especially need to understand what Christ understood so well— how to reach people, draw them into his message of salvation with entertaining stories and parables. Stepping into a role is also an invaluable way to understand another person's point of view. It doesn't mean we necessarily adopt that person's point of view, but hopefully we can at least begin to understand them. That is one of the beauties of the Old Testament. God reached out to his people and met them where they were — flawed, selfish and sinful. Since September 11 it has become even more urgent that we learn how to understand people who don't think they way we do — not because we wish to become like them, but how else will we ever reach them with the news of God's saving grace?

In reading your message ---, I wondered how it might be possible for us to find a common ground that would enable us to communicate with each other. I fear that we will forever approach this topic from polar opposites. While I may disagree with you, please know that I will always vigorously defend your right to express your beliefs. We are, after-all, not the Taliban!

I have a copy of the July 9, 1902 editorial by Milton C. Wilcox that appeared in Signs of the Times, and I also have a copy of White's response from Counsels to Writers and Editors, pp. 172-176 (required reading for my script-writing class and History of Theatre class). To me, it's similar to having an editorial appear in The Gleaner, about William Shakespeare. An official church publication is not the right forum for this kind of article and I would concur with White that, "May the Lord pity our discernment if we have no better food than this to give the flock of God." But she does not suggest that no one should study Shakespeare's writing, particularly in an academic setting.

You may be interested to know that there is a growing controversy over who actually wrote "Shakespeare's" complete works. In 1992 a Geneva Bible, belonging to the 17th Earl of Oxford, was discovered at the Folger Shakespeare library. Many of the underlined passages were traced to direct quotes in "Shakespeare's" work. I have a copy of Roger Stritmatter's February 2001 dissertation, "The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning and Historical Consequence," in which he discusses the significance of this find to the authorship controversy and a growing body of evidence to suggest that whoever wrote the plays, was indeed concerned with spiritual matters. .

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond specifically to your question about the criteria we use in planning our wwcDrama season.

Careful thought goes into selecting our programs to enable the drama program to integrate into both the academic and the sacred mission of this college. All of the plays performed on this campus are examined and edited for content that may not be appropriate. The department of communications and the English department work together to ensure that we balance the need to provide a liberal arts education that, at the same time, remains consistent with the mission statement of the college.

And as I said last year in chapel, the tension that exists between a "system" like the church and the human imagination that fosters new forms of life and growth, is nothing new. I see the drama program fulfilling an important role in providing a catalyst for growth and renewal on this campus.

Writing on behalf of Ellen G. White Publications in 1971, W. P. Bradley points out,

"As for the study of literature Ellen G. White plainly states that the pursuit of knowledge in literature should not be discouraged. (CT 19, 136) We want our youth to be sufficiently cultured in the various disciplines and in the social graces so that they will not go out from our schools as ignorant or boorish people."

Again, thank you for taking the time to contact me directly about your concerns. I don't suppose you'd be interested in collaborating with me in developing an engineering course in set-construction? I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards, Respondent #2

10/11/01, 07:10PM

Least it appear that this writer is singling out Walla Walla College, the fact is, he lives five blocks from the school and cannot help but know about some of things taking place there. Without doubt, those living near any of our North American Division senior colleges (in fact many of our North American schools and churches) could reveal the same plethora of drama. But, there is hope for our schools. In the year 2000, 102 Walla Walla College students took their places throughout the world as student missionaries. Could it be that these return students missionaries will soon replace drama with "primitive Godliness"?

#### **IV - CONCLUSIONS:**

This paper has traced briefly the development of drama from its beginning in Eden until now, with major emphasis on the entrance of drama into the infrastructure of our Seventh-day Adventist homes, schools, and churches over the past eighty-four years. This conclusion will contain two divisions. First, a list of "some" obvious reasons for this trend and, second, some suggestions for reversing the trend.

#### **Reasons for Drama Entering the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

1. Fagal's Faith for Today series of TV theatrical performances, Westbrook Hospital, that was aired from May 1950, through 1988, swayed many in the North American Division to accept drama as a legitimate method of "bundling the Gospel." In addition, many church members chose to ignore as old-fashioned, ("That was for their time."—ever heard that before?) the counsel given by Ellen White and the church leadership for over one hundred years, or they never knew it existed.

2. Many parents of the baby boomers allowed their offspring to cut their teeth, so to speak, on television. There was confusion in the ranks of Adventist parents. "Don't oppose your child's will, he will be damaged for life," was the cry of the Dr. Spock generation. While some parent questioned the decision of some leadership in the churches, schools, and evangelistic thrusts to use drama, they soon earned the reputation of being divisive, critical, and troublemakers.

3. Invariably, history repeats itself. The nominal churches have demonstrated an uncanny tendency to follow one or two steps behind the lead of the world's methodology, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been exempted. First, the gospel movie with its fictitious acting entered the church, followed in quick succession by Hollywood feature films, organized sports, and television aided by VCRs/videos. Soon there followed the church growth movement, women's ordination, and the celebration movement (orchestrated by Vatican II) with its combination of contemporary music, drama, and Pentecostalism. Unfortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist Church seems to follow one or two steps behind the nominal churches. Not long after the celebration movement, centered in the Oregon Conference in the late eighties and early nineties, drama seemed to spring up everywhere.

A review of the Union papers will show, even to the casual reader, a plethora of acting groups in our churches and schools. Today, to oppose drama is almost like opposing motherhood and apple pie. Anyone who is willing to read Joe Crew's books, *Creeping Compromise* and *Reap the Whirlwind*, from Amazing Facts, will have a better understanding of the compromises that have taken place in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

4. Some claim that the old methods of Sabbath morning special features and a class study of the Sabbath School lessons no longer works. The youth do not study their lessons and are not interested in studying the Scriptures using the Sabbath School lessons. When the "traditional" approaches to the Sabbath morning sessions are used, the youth do not come back. Therefore, new approaches are needed. These methods include the use of drama to entertain, and refreshments to entice them to come on Sabbath morning.

5. Sabbath School teachers are finding that few parents have family worship and fewer still neither encourage their children to have or nor have for themselves a vital and regular daily, personal, private devotion. Recent surveys in the lower division show that even fewer parents study the Sabbath School lessons with their children even one time during the week.

6. Our elementary schools, academies, and colleges are graduating students who seem to know less and less about the historical development of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. They are either not taught about or are not listening to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church's unique "present truth" message in their homes, the church pulpits, or schools. This is evident from the lack of knowledge exhibited by our academy and senior college graduates. Consequently, some parents and many youth see little difference between our institutions of learning and the secular schools of the world.

In 1986, the Seltzer Dailey Companies were asked to do a study of the attitudes of the Seventh-day Adventist members concerning our educational institutions. Surveys were sent to members in general, educators, students, and ministers. A sober finding was the attitude of Adventists under 25 years of age.

Less convinced of the importance of Adventist education.

Lower opinion of the academic quality of our Adventist schools/colleges.

Higher opinion of the quality of public schools/colleges.

Have a strong say on what school/colleges they attend. —*Seventh-day Adventist Education, Planning Research: Preliminary Findings*, p. 50.

7. Many young people are so saturated with the entertainment industry, that Bible study and church seem dull and boring. Thus, the clamor for celebration-style worship with its music and drama.

8. Today, youth are surrounded and consumed by the materialism that permeates our Western culture and the relativism that has infiltrated many avenues of their lives. With these "isms" have come a blurring of Biblical absolutes.

9. Higher criticism pervades every secular educational institution and most of our North American senior college theology departments (This statement is validated in the book *Receiving the Word* by Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, (Berrien Books, PO Box 195, Berrien Springs, MI, 1966). Students graduating from institutions that teach the "higher critical" method of interpreting the Scriptures soon accept and then expound these concepts. They are taught that the Seventh-day Adventist Church's inspired documents—the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, were culturally influenced. (The reader will more fully understand what is being taught our college age youth after they read Alden Thompson's (a teacher in the theology department of Walla Walla College) book *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* Hagerstown, MD, Review and Herald. Please compare Thompson's book with the book *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, edited by Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson (Berrien Springs, MI, Adventist Theological Society Publishing). It is not long before many students taught the concepts elucidated in Thompson's book, have little or no confidence in landmarks of truth delivered by divine inspiration to our pioneers. The usual cliché is, "The concepts and principles developed by the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers were 'culturally influenced' by the Victorian Age, established for their time, but not today." In effect, they have self-fulfilled a prophetic insight given us by Ellen White more than one

hundred years ago. And let there be no doubt but that this is happening today. In a paper submitted to this writer, the evidence is clear. This paper is reproduced in **Appendix 34**

10. With A. L. White's paper circulating after 1963 and the liberal stand taken by the 1975 committee on Guidelines for Competitive Activities and Drama, the Seventh-day Adventist leadership capitulated to its constituency.

11. Some say that drama in Ellen White's day was more vulgar, obscene, and crude than it is today. But John H. Hancock puts that argument to rest when he states:

It was evil enough then, but what would the servant of God say of today's motion pictures and New York stage productions? Obscenity, vulgarity, sodomy, illicit sex, and violence are portrayed with abandonment far beyond the plays on stage in Sister White's day. — Hancock, p. 8.

12. While somewhat repetitive, "What's Right About Drama?" disproves several other reasons for drama entering our homes, schools, and churches. It is found in **Appendix 35**.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR ENDING DRAMA IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

### **How Can "GenXers" Become Involved in the Mission of the Church?**

#### **Positive Action on a Negative Note:**

They are part of the computer generation, a new breed that requires new approaches and new methods. Many have told us that they wanted to put their faith into action, but they don't know how. They don't know the reasons behind many church doctrines. They know little about Adventist Church history. They say they want to be challenged when they come to church, not hear the same old ideas all the time," says Royson James in "Cityscapes," entitled "Dear Pastor ..." in the May, 1999, World Edition *Review*.

But how do you devise new approaches and methods for "computer age GenXers" if they "know little about Adventist Church history" and don't want to "hear the same old ideas" that were delivered to our pioneers?

They are like the story of Ahimaaz, son of a preacher (a distant relative of Aaron, the first high priest), friend of King David, and later son-in-law to King Solomon. The story is recorded in 2 Samuel 18:19-33. When Absalom was killed, Ahimaaz asked Joab if he could run with a message to King David. Joab said no, and sent Cushie who knew the facts. Ahimaaz asked again, and Joab let him run. Ahimaaz outran Cushie, but when he arrived he had no message.

What difference does it make if a thousand approaches and methods are devised for GenXers to be involved in the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church if they don't have a message?

### **1. Teach GenXers Our Adventist History and Present Truths:**

In order for GenXers to serve the church, they need to know the message they want to share. Many of this generation of young men and women—some to be our future leaders, are without a clear knowledge of Adventist history and the mission of our church. Almost eighty percent of our youth have left the church. Is it too late for most of them? Is it too late to supply this lack of knowledge?

A few years back I attended the funeral of a former member of the youth Sabbath school class I taught. He was shot and killed under cloudy circumstances after losing his way in a dense forest of popular music and drugs. I expected to be weighted down with sadness and guilt at the loss of this young life. But I was not prepared for the throng of former youth class members who packed the church to pay their last respects—scores of GenXers, most of whom had not set foot in our church for years.

We hugged, we consoled each other, we buried our young friend, and then we went our separate ways, having little in common after sharing so much for so long...

Is this a job you want, Pastor [parent, teacher, institutional leader]? Is it the true desire of your heart to get young people excited about Christ and His church? If it is, glorious results await you. —Royson James, *Review*.

### **2. Discontinue the Celebration Worship Style and Willow Creek Support:**

While the leadership of the North American Division has recognized that the vast majority of our GenXers are deserting the church through the back door, what have they done to reclaim them? They have incorporated into our church the Willow Creek (an apostate Protestant movement) church growth methods which include celebration-style worship with its contemporary Christian rock music, drama, and Dispensationalism (the Moral law was nailed to the cross). And what are the results? More than seven Seventh-day Adventist celebration-style churches have broken ranks with our denomination, and certainly more will follow. Some leave over theological concerns (such as the Sabbath, the authenticity of the Spirit of Prophecy, church authority, etc.), and others over the use of tithe. You will quickly understand where this church growth movement has taken us when you read Samuele Bacchiocchi's book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*.

Men like Dale Ratzlaff, a third generation Seventh-day Adventist educator, pastor, and Sabbatarian, in his book *Sabbath in Crisis*, attacks the seventh-day Sabbath by joining the Dispensational and New Covenant theologies. And a former Seventh-day Adventist celebration church pastor, Clay Peck, who is now serving as senior pastor of the Grace Place Congregation in Berthoud, Colorado, has joined Ratzlaff. Peck's book is entitled *New Covenant Christians*. Perhaps this recent development is a fulfillment of a statement from *The Great Controversy*, p.608:

As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position, and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbath-keepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations stir up the rulers against them.

### **3. Initiate an Investigation Why GenXers Have Left the Adventist Church:**

Since, apparently, the vast majority of GenXers were not taught a knowledge of Adventist History or our present truth message in their homes, churches, and schools, what can be done? Are we prepared to lose a major portion of another generation? God forbid! A complete, in-depth investigation must be undertaken to determine why "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6).

This is not a witch hunt, but it portends the survival of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This investigation should not be done by leadership alone. The ground swell must come from the priesthood of believers, the members in the pews, who should initiate a study on how to save our youth. In a world of E-mail and fax machines, it can be accomplished rapidly and successfully. God help us!!

#### **Positive Action on a Positive Note:**

Without doubt, the generation raised with computers is very knowledgeable concerning hardware and software. My son was ten when we got our first computer, and in days he had figured out what took me months to absorb. Now children are punching the keyboard before preschool. Computers have become indispensable in many fields of endeavor. If you think not, just ponder on the preparation it took to prevent the Y2K crisis.

And many people are utilizing computers and the Internet to give to the world the end-time message given by God to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One such organization is *TAGnet.org* located in Mountain View, California. The masthead of their July-August, 1999, newsletter states:

"TAGnet stands for Three Angels Global Networking and is an organization operated by a group of Seventh-day Adventists wanting to use computer technology to benefit humanity. TAGnet is a member of ASI. Our purpose is not to be a publishing body but rather to enable and empower organizations attempting to minister in some way to humanity."

## **1. Encourage Programs to Harness the Talent of Our Youth:**

It is time to encourage and demonstrate to our youth how to use their God-given talents in computer technology to spread the good news of Christ's soon return. How much more fulfilling to receive e-mails from men and women describing their conversions to their Lord and Master than practicing lines for a theatrical play.

In the March 19, 1999, issue of the *Gleaner*, Jere Patzer, the North Pacific Union president, shared just such a happening in an editorial entitled "Thank-you Heidi... You're an Inspiration." Here is a portion of this most encouraging editorial:

A few weeks ago, an attractive, professional, articulate, and obviously committed GenXer came to see me in my office. Her name is Heidi Halvorson.

She shared with me her vision of reaching the world for Jesus through the Internet. And she isn't just talking about it! She's gearing up to launch a dynamic, interactive, web-based gospel presentation that's scheduled to launch May 3rd with full support of her local church and people God has impressed to contact her.

She's on a faith venture, and to date, God has provided and enabled her to use her talents full-time to "passionately connect the Internet world with the power and person of Jesus Christ through on-line Bible evangelism."

As she shared more of her fascinating testimony, I learned that Heidi had spent a year as a student missionary. During that time, she began seriously studying her Bible, reading it through six times that year, in various versions. One doesn't have to talk to her long to realize that she is in love with Jesus, with His Church, and with His mission. Her devotional life is obviously making a difference.

I'm not ashamed to tell you that Heidi inspired me. What a thrill to see someone at the beginning of her professional adult life so unequivocally committed. It started by spending time in the Word.

Yes, she made an impact on me. I doubt I'll get through my Bible six times this year, but I am committed to reading it more than I ever have before ...and to date I'm on track to reach that objective.

## **2. Develop a Gigantic Student Missionary Program:**

Heidi's experience as a student missionary points up another significant way to teach youth how to "bundle the gospel." The Mormon Church was founded about the same time as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It would seem we have let the Mormons put us to shame. Who hasn't seen two nicely dressed young men visiting door-to-door, giving out their literature, and establishing studies on their religion? These college students are sent throughout the world. As a result, according to a November 2000, *US New and World Report*, the Mormon Church is the fast growing denomination in the world. No need of Willow Creek church growth celebration tactics here. Yet we could double this practice because we encourage women as well as men to do this work. Just imagine! Thousands of



college students from every Adventist college in the world going out as student missionaries.

College students could be encouraged to participate—or perhaps (forbid the thought) be required to serve as student missionaries, according to their capabilities. They could be given abundant opportunity to fill the vast needs throughout the world teaching in our English language schools, home-schooling missionary children, participating in front-line evangelism, assisting elementary and secondary teachers, helping build needed facilities, serving in hospitals and clinic, or assisting missionary families in such organizations as Adventist Frontier Missions, which sends its missionaries into previously unentered areas. Again, as Dr. Jere Patzer described Heidi:

As she shared more of her fascinating testimony, I learned that Heidi had spent a year as a student missionary. During that time, she began seriously studying her Bible, reading it through six times that year, in various versions. One doesn't have to talk to her long to realize that she is in love with Jesus, with His Church and with His mission. Her devotional life is obviously making a difference. — *Ibid. Gleaner*, March 1999.

As this small army of students return to their respective colleges, imagine the spiritual influence, the role models, the changed attitudes and goals of these young men and women, perhaps as much as one fourth of the student body yearly returning as another fourth sets out. Just think what might happen to the college campuses by the end of four years, almost everyone a returned student missionary, except for the freshman class. If the Mormons do it, we ought to do it better! After all, don't we believe we have the last message for the end time? Or do we ...?

### **3. Reestablish an Organization Similar to the Past Very Successful Missionary Volunteer Society:**

The writer has had the opportunity to attend Bill Gothard's Basic and Advanced Youth Seminars, as well as his conference for physicians. Mr. Gothard has, with the blessing of God, developed an army of youth rightly trained. In addition to his seminars, he has established a home school program that is producing radiant, dedicated young people who are going into cities and nations with a new way of life. The curriculum is designed so that the entire family can be learners along with their sons and daughters. The goal of the program is to train entire families how to be mighty in spirit by becoming wise through understanding universal principles of life, mature by developing Godly character, knowledgeable by learning proper and relevant academic content, and successful by acquiring practical skills.

The Institute offers a distance-learning law school as well as a program called ALERT, which teaches young men emergency medicine, building trades, and a host of other practical skills including apprenticeship courses.

The opportunities that these young people have opened up around the world are beyond anything ever imagined possible. They have created a new paradigm in education.

Instead of going to college to study for an education, they are showing educators how to teach character. Rather than being limited by secular presuppositions, they are learning to be wise, creative problem-solvers.

Through a series of events, shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Mr. Gothard took 300 young people from his home school program to Russia. While visiting the government officials in Moscow, they ask to see the Russian Director of Education.

They were told, later, that she was not interested in seeing any more American young people. She had not been impressed with the behavior or appearance of the previous American young people. The employee giving her the message told her that these young people were different and she must come and meet them.

The results of that meeting was beyond all expectations. Not only was she impressed with the young people, but when she understood that they wanted to help teach character principles to the children in the schools and help rebuild Russian families, a written agreement was later signed to open all 2,000 schools to the Basic Seminar Youth Ministry.

In addition to teaching in the schools, the students met in the homes with the parents, and conducted meetings with families in major auditoriums throughout the city.

The Russian officials were so impressed with the brightness and dedication of the students that they granted the organization the use of a five-acre campus and buildings to start an orphanage. Officials also entrusted to them orphans, abandoned children, and juvenile offenders and asked if they would train up thousands of street children.

When Indianapolis, Indiana, Mayor Stephen Goldsmith heard reports of events in Russia, he asked the organization to start a similar program in his city. A 300-room hotel was provided for a training center. Official invitations have followed from other U.S. cities.

The first International Conference for Mayors and Government Leaders was held in 1996. In this three-day conference, they caught the vision of Character Cities and took the concepts back to their jurisdictions. The growth of this conference and Character Cities is a direct result of the influence of the students and their families.

The door continued to open in other countries such as Taiwan, Singapore, and even China. A delegation of seventeen government officials from the capital of China, Beijing, received training at the Institute Headquarters in Illinois, on Biblical principles and character and were thrilled with what they learned and with the vibrant young people whom they met. Their leader stated, "This training is vital for our people. We would like to invite you to come to China with your Seminar."

These young people are making an impact because they are different, different in their dress, their choice of music and recreation, behavior, maturity, and a demonstration of concern for others. For example, a fourteen-year-old being home schooled under the Institute's educational program had a lawn-mowing business. He told a widow, "I would like

to do this work for you without charge because this is my way of repaying the Lord for all He has given to me.”

Why share this information with you, reader? Because we have become the tail instead of the head. In 1908, we were given the following promise:

All who engage in ministry are God’s helping hand. There is no line of work in which it is possible for the youth to receive greater benefit. They are co-workers with the angels; rather, they are human agencies through whom the angels accomplish their mission. Angels speak through their voices, and work by their hands. And the human workers, cooperating with heavenly agencies, have the benefit of their education and experience. As a means of education, what “university course” can equal this? With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the world! —*Youth Instructor*, March 3, 1908.

A modern-day Missionary Volunteer Society is crucial—NOW. There is not one GenXer who ever attended a live Missionary Volunteer Society meeting. Why? Because the Societies were allowed to die. Please read Malcolm J. Allen’s book.

Can you imagine the spiritual tone and influence upon a college campus student body when Friday and Sabbath evening vespers would be conducted by return student missionaries? In just four years almost three fourths of the student body could be students who saw the world and our church mission from actual experience. This could resurrect an organization similar to the old Missionary Volunteer Society. Call the organization whatever you like, but organize it on the same concepts as the original. The back door of the Church would almost stop swinging out from our youth leaving the church.

Perhaps a genuine interest in the salvation of fellow students, relatives, and their respective communities would supplant the need for organized sports on our school campuses. Perhaps students would look to the missionaries they served with and to each other as role models instead of the latest Hollywood or sports personality. Perhaps drama departments would be replaced with classes that would prepare an army of youth, “rightly trained,” to receive the Latter Rain and give the Loud Cry.

#### **4. Organized a Worldwide Summer Student Literature Evangelism Program:**

While attending college and graduate school, the writer spent six summers as a literature evangelist. The Lord was good and each year a scholarship was earned that covered the cost of schooling. Only eternity will tell of the silent witnesses that were left in thousands of homes. It was a challenge to knock on endless doors day after day, especially when returning to work on Monday morning after spending a quiet weekend with friends on the beach. Ask anyone who has spent a long summer canvassing for hours on hot, humid days if it was easy. While the need for a scholarship was ever present on our minds, the fact that we were leaving a message of hope was the source of our persistence. The only way literature evangelists survive is to keep a close connection with their Heavenly Father.

Every summer throughout the world, hundreds of student literature evangelists place thousands upon thousands of truth-filled literature in homes and businesses. This army of young men and women, sustained with the promise of angels accompanying them, leave books and journals that carry the Three Angels' Messages to a dying world. Let's increase this number by hundreds of more student literature evangelists!

In Charlotte, North Carolina, the summer of 1999, Cheryl Martin, a student literature evangelist received some free advertisement. In the September issue of the Southern Union paper, *Southern Tidings*, page six, the following story appeared:

### **Newspaper Features Student LEs (Literature Evangelists)**

When the city editor of *The Charlotte Observer* bought a set of Bible books from a student literature evangelist, it got the newspaperman to thinking. Who are these young people and why are they doing this kind of work? The editor assigned a reporter and photographer to follow up on the story. As a result, the students were featured in the state's largest newspaper, *The Charlotte Observer*.

Over the course of the summer the student literature evangelists fanned out across the city and surrounding areas of Charlotte. When the reporter and photographer met with the students to do the story, these 16 students had just completed their biggest week. In only one week these students sold more than \$18,000 of truth-filled literature. Each week the students average 40 Bible enrollments that they pass along to the Bible worker.

### **The Girl in Her Dream**

Angel Chambers was shocked when she opened the door. There stood the girl she'd seen in her dream. Not just one dream, but three. The girl who'd knocked on her door was Cheryl Martin, a graduate of Southern Adventist University, who is working as a Bible worker in the Charlotte area. Cheryl's visit was in response to a Bible interest that a student literature evangelist, Michele Goodwin, developed. As a result of the visit, Angel invited two other friends to join them and now all three are well along on their study of the Bible.

## **V - CONCLUDING**

The development of drama on planet Earth and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been briefly reviewed. The writer's observations for the gradual drift to the present "love affair" with drama in the Adventist Church has been described. And finally, suggestions have been outlined on how GenXers, or any generation can become appropriately involved in the mission of the Adventist Church.

If you feel that this paper has demonstrated the need to eliminate theatrical performances in our churches and institutions, persuaded you to eliminate your own viewing of TV and video dramas, and convicted you to implement a reformation in your own home, church, and conference, than share this paper and appendices with other parents, your pastor, and institutional and conference leadership. Then, with the help of the Holy Spirit, work with your fellow parents and local school and church leadership to devise

methods to establish the solutions suggested in this paper, and any additional ideas that God will lead you and others to develop. Let's all work and pray for reformation and revival in our beloved church.

Maranatha,

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