

## Drama and the SDA Church:

### Appendix 36

#### What's Right About Drama?

(David J. Lee, *Drama? Truth-full? or Pretentious?*, pp. 8-11.)

**1. Assertion:** Times have changed!

**Answer:** Indeed times have changed. But has God changed His laws? Have the laws of physics, chemistry, biology, etc., been changed? Have the laws changed which govern the needs and functions of our bodies and minds?

“True knowledge has decreased with every successive generation.... Those who are...flattered on in the delusion that the present is an age of real progress, and that the human race has been in ages past progressing in true knowledge, are under the influence of the father of lies, whose work has ever been to turn the truth of God into a lie (4aSG 154, 156). “Evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13, NIV).

**2. Assertion:** SDA youth want drama!

**Answer:** Who says so? Who taught them so? Hollywood? Paris? Indeed many do desire entertainment and many do want to be entertainers. But where is there any inspired evidence that the +youth of today can be satisfied spiritually with religious drama, puppetry, clowning, etc.? “Games, theaters,... will not satisfy the soul. Human beings were not created to be satisfied in this way” (Ev. 267).

Is it possible that a few sincere but confused shepherds are in fact projecting their own perverted appetites upon many innocent children and youth who would rather have the truth? Are a few in the preaching “ministry” abdicating their sacred pulpit and debauching their churches by allowing pretentious drama?

**3. Assertion:** Ellen White’s six-year-old granddaughter participated in a skit, dressed to typify an angel, and the Lord’s messenger did not stop the skit or denounce it.

**Answer:** That assertion ignores the fact that Sr. White was stirred to arise “at three o’clock” the next “morning [Dec. 26, 1888] to write...a few lines” to a Bro. Morse regarding the program. She concluded: “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” (2MR 236).

Equally, that “**argument of silence**” assumes that God is a policeman and that Ellen White was His watchdog. O shameful, illogical assumption! But in truth, “When men begin to weave in the human threads to compose the pattern of the web, the Lord is in no hurry. He waits until men shall lay down their own human inventions and will accept the Lord’s way and the Lord’s will” (Ev 215).

**4. Assertion:** The Bible has drama in it!

**Answer:** Indeed! Beginning with Satan’s deceptive use of the serpent, and Jacob’s impersonation of Esau, etc., pretentious drama has been in vogue.

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 toe 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!

**5. Assertion:** Drama is a powerful method of communication, and Ellen White, the General Conference Committee, F. M. Wilcox, C. B. Haynes, J. E. Fulton, etc., were wrong to forbid its use by SDAs for over a century.

**Answer:** Indeed, drama is an entertaining way to communicate. And, indeed, the “ten spies” and “mixed multitude” and “hireling shepherds” have for over a century been as “dry as the hills of Gilboa.” But if drama is a virtuous method of proclaiming the Gospel, then let every preacher and teacher and leader become an actor, and let every school and pulpit be remodeled into a stage and theater.

History has repeatedly demonstrated that “as soon as these entertainments are introduced, the objections to theater-going are removed from many minds, and the plea that moral and high-toned scenes are to be acted at the theater breaks down the last barrier. Those who would permit this class of amusements at the sanitarium [and church socials] would better be seeking wisdom from God to lead these poor, hungry, thirsting souls to the Fountain of joy, and peace, and happiness” (4T 478).

History has incessantly demonstrated that drama quenches God’s blessing, and the churches eventually are debauched into theaters. God forbid! “Thus saith the Lord, Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” (Jer. 6:16, RSV).

**6. Assertion:** Adventism’s youth need opportunities to perform in church, and drama (and waltz music), etc., are their ways to participate.

**Answer:** Indeed, Adventism’s youth need opportunities to share Christ! However, “there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 16:25). “Evil results have been seen, both in the Sabbath school work and in the missionary society, because of making much of machinery while vital experience was lost sight of. In many of the **imagined improvements** that have been brought in, the mold of man has been placed upon the work. In the Sabbath school...formality, pride, and love of display have taken the place of true piety and humble godliness.... It is not for the workers to seek for methods by which they can make a show, consuming time in theatrical performances and musical display, for this benefits no one. It does no good to train the children to make 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” (FE 253)