

PLAYS AND SKETCHES AS CHRISTIAN PROPAGANDA

THE Christian Church made extensive use of drama in its early stages, and almost every part of scripture that could be used was dramatised. Of the early plays some were well done but many were exceedingly crude and boring and certainly would not be appreciated by a modern audience.

Drama is not very popular today in the Churches, in comparison with those early days, but one feels in its neglect of it the Church is losing a most effective means of propaganda especially to the outsider.

The M.R.A. movement make great use of both stage and screen, and have a fine

theatre at Westminster, London where Plays are presented, setting forth the Christian principles in modern fashion. These Plays are taken to many parts of the world and the movement claims to be making a tremendous impact upon the people of the Cities where they are presenting them, especially to the outsider who is critical of religion.

This leads us to ask, 'Why doesn't the Church do something like this?' It is true that in many Churches, plays, sketches and other representations are part of its programme and the impact of Fact and Faith films is very great, likewise Religious Films. But every Church however small could use this method of propaganda, and through its use, a company of people would find a new way of serving God and the Church.

There are many difficulties of course, one being getting the cast together, especially in a small town and small Church. Not too many people are keen on taking part in a 'religious' Play and the "fag of learning" the part and attending rehearsals night after night is an impossible obstacle for most people, unless they regard it as a call.

We may again draw some inspiration from the M.R.A. movement in this respect. They claim to have hundreds of people, young and old, who give time and service sacrificially to this work, using their abilities, gifts and talents for the service of God.

We train young men and women in the task of preaching. They experience a call from God to engage in this work and after suitable training are dedicated to that sphere of service. But why not in the same way encourage young and old to use their abilities and talents for the service of God in drama; Plays, Sketches and other representations? What difference is there between a dedicated preacher who on his own preaches the word, and one who in company with others preaches the gospel through his acting on the stage? Our young, yes and old people too, should be encouraged to regard drama not as a means of entertainment or raising money only but as a splendid service for God in proclaiming the message.

Drama is like heavy bombardment. In the military sphere an objective is first heavily shelled or bombed, then the infantry go in to do the mopping up. A Play well produced by dedicated people is like heavy bombardment. Its objective is to make the outsider think and when a man starts thinking something can be done to take him a step further along the way until final decisions are made. — **Almus Pater.**