

# EXCERPTS FROM

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# THE LINK

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

## Internet Edition

AFTER THIS MANNER ... PRAY YE

(A study of the Lord's Prayer)  
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Part 3

The two previous articles have been concerned with the first section of the preface to the prayer - "OUR FATHER." We now come to the second part - "WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

The question may be asked; Why, when giving us an example of prayer did Christ include these words? It would have been perfectly intelligible if He had said: "Our Father hallowed be Thy name." Was it necessary to give location? Is it not taken for granted that the Almighty is in heaven?

These four words, "WHICH ART IN HEAVEN," not only pose many questions, but if the Scriptures are searched, convey much PRACTICAL TRUTH as well as HIGH DOCTRINE.

We are told: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," (Ps.2:4): "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." (Ps.115:3). From such Scriptures we learn that God is high above all, and that ALL things are subject to His dominion; His power is everywhere exerted. God has created ALL things, He upholds ALL things, controls ALL things and He governs ALL things, at ALL times and in ALL places, He sits upon the throne of the Universe, eternally supreme. "HE IS IN HEAVEN" says Christ.

This should not convey to us the thought of a God who is static' and located only in one fixed position somewhere in the Universe, for the Holy Spirit informs us that "The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. (cf. 2 Chrcn.2:6). Such Scriptures immediately point to a realm totally beyond us, for they have reference to A BEING and A REALM which finite minds cannot comprehend.

This is the BALANCE which Christ gives in this pattern prayer. The preface is first; "OUR FATHER" signifying

relationship, intimacy, nearness; and second: "WHICH ART IN HEAVEN" - infinity! Separated from the rank of any creature; an Eternal Being; a Holy Being; described as "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." (Isa.57:15).

Whilst the Bible does not go into fine detail regarding Heaven, and Eternity, the reason being that we, in our mortal state could not comprehend it; nevertheless it does say a little. There is revealed, three heavens.

### 1. THE ATMOSPHERIC HEAVENS.

"The clouds of Heaven." (Dan.7:13).

"Look into the Heavens, and see; and behold the clouds." (Job 35:5).

"By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation." (Ps.104:12).

When the Bible speaks of the Heavens in this way it has reference to the atmosphere which surrounds our planet, the air in which we are enveloped, the space in which the birds fly and through which the clouds drift. These are the lower heavens.

### 2. THE STELLAR SPACES.

Genesis chapter 1 verses 14-18 give an account of the creation of the hosts of the planets; the lights of the firmament referred to in some parts of Scripture as the "HOSTS OF HEAVEN." "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Ps.33:6).

This is the second heaven, or that which man might call, outer space.

### 3. THE THIRD HEAVEN.

Into this realm the apostle Paul was once caught up, but he was forbidden to disclose what he saw and heard. (cf. 2 Cor.12;2-4). The Third Heaven is supremely the dwelling place of God. THIS REALM lies at the heart of ALL things; Eternity revolves around this hub. This is the abode of THE TRINITY. No telescope, however

powerful, will ever locate it. No satellite communication of man will ever pick up a message from it, no space shuttle or rocket will ever make contact; for nothing that defileth can approach or enter into THIS AREA. The Third Heaven is impenetrable, except through grace. It is "THE HEAVEN OF HEAVENS."

This is not mystical, neither is it "a state" or some kind of "condition" as some erroneously teach. No! This is the REAL HEAVEN of which the Bible speaks. It is where God IS: It is "A PLACE:" Christ said so as stated in John chapter 14. It is called "GLORY" to which God's many sons are to be brought, (cf. Heb.2:10). Those who are privileged to enter at the last are said to be, "perfected forever." (cf. Heb. 10:1^+) for they have partaken of Christ's fulness, (cf. John 1;16) a fulness which is ALL FULNESS (cf. Col.1:19) that which is "ABSOLUTE." We are one day to be made like unto Him, and said Christ, "WHERE I am, there, ye may be also." (John 14:3). It is not only WHAT Christ is, it is also WHERE Christ is; THERE we shall be also. Where exactly is this? we ask. It is where Christ is; and where is that? "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb.9:24), "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered." (Heb.6:19-20). This is where Christ is, "HEAVEN ITSELF" - "-WITHIN THE VEIL." This is Heaven as we are to understand it. It is a place; it is HOLY. Yes! But more, it is the DWELLING PLACE OF GOD.

Dr. John Gill states: "Heaven is the residence of God, not that He is confined here, rather is the Heaven of Heavens the place where His glory and majesty is pre-eminently displayed."

Is it not already possible to see just a little of that which is involved in all this? Our Lord is teaching us that when we pray, we not only turn to One who is our FATHER but we are directing our thoughts into ANOTHER REALM. It is the sphere of THE MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY: it is the realm of LIMITLESS ETERNAL POWER AND GLORY.

We are penetrating by faith that which is infinitely above us, yet, we know it to be a REALITY. The Psalmist said: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Ps.121:1-2). This is figurative language of the same truth. He was lifting his eyes and thoughts above the earthly level and directing them to the Maker of all things, the MIGHTY GOD who dwelleth in light UNAPPROACHABLE, yet, the ~ everlasting FATHER of all His people.

This balance of intimacy and power must be held when we pray, for this is the MANNER laid down for us in the example given. Not only have we this pattern, but Christ also sets the precedent as He personally prays: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father." (John 17:1). He lifted up His eyes; He turned from earth to heaven, the residence of God, the throne of the Universe, the seat of eternal authority, God's sanctuary, and the firmament of His power. (cf. Ps.150:1). As He thus directs His thoughts and attention to this realm, He says: "Father."

As one contemplates all this, it is quite obvious that prayer is altogether a spiritual exercise. Whilst the lips have their place and function in it, yet, primarily it is a matter of the heart. It is the performance, or the practice of faith. No physical voice on earth, however powerfully amplified, could ever waft through the lower heaven and on into outer space, and go on and on, and ultimately, somewhere, sometime, somehow, penetrate the Heaven of Heavens. Of course not! Such a thought would be ludicrous. Prayer is essentially spiritual, and an exercise of faith.

In true prayer we become DE-tached from earth and vitally and in deep reality A-ttached to Heaven. "We have access BY FAITH into this grace." (Rom.5:2). "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph.2:18). We have boldness and access with confidence BY FAITH. (cf. Eph.3:12).

It is because FAITH is such a vital element in prayer that Christ directs our attention to the fact that OUR

FATHER is IN HEAVEN. The One to whom we pray is not a man; He is not a creature; He is not of times HE IS ETERNAL. "The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens." (Ps.113:4). Heaven is His throne (cf. Acts 7:49).

"When ye pray," said Christ, say: "Our Father which art in Heaven." Never forget His eternal power and Godhead.

It is the greatness of the Person which stimulates faith and gives confidence.

Thomas Watson, the Puritan, has this to say concerning prayer: "Without faith it is but speaking, not praying. Faith is the breath of prayer, prayer is dead unless faith breathes in it, faith is a necessary requisite to prayer." Is not Watson absolutely Biblical? In the epistle of James chapter 5 verse 15 we read of THE PRAYER OF FAITH. Again, in chapter 1 verse 6, "LET HIM ASK IN FAITH." Our Lord said: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, BELIEVING, ye shall receive." (Matt.21:22).

Praying in FAITH, of course, can only be a reality if we are the children of God through faith; that is we have this PRINCIPLE OF FAITH implanted by God's Holy Spirit, but even so, that faith must be active. To pray in faith and to ask believing can only be true of the person who is really living by faith, which is the Biblical norm for a just person, (cf. Rom.1:17). That is, those who REALLY trust God implicitly for ALL things, who live in the constant assurance that HE is their FATHER and their GOD, ordering and controlling every detail of their lives; those who rest assuredly in His Providence as well as in His Grace. To such, FAITH is the very habit of life.

Watson has more to say on the matter of faith and prayer. "Prayer is the key to heaven, faith is the hand that turns the key. Faith must take prayer by the hand or there is no coming to God. Prayer without faith is unsuccessful. As Joseph said: 'Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you' (Gen.43:3). So says Watson: "Prayer cannot see God's face unless it is

accompanied by brother faith." It; is said of Israel that they could not enter into the promised land because of unbelief. (cf. Heb.3:19). There is a sense in which this is true of prayer. How possible it is to SAY prayers, yet, not to really ENTER in the spirit into the presence of God. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb.11:6). Another old writer said: "Prayer often suffers shipwreck because it dashes upon the rocks of unbelief; we must mingle faith with prayer."

To quietly meditate upon the fact that our Heavenly Father is the Sovereign Omnipotent One who inhabiteth eternity, before we commence to pray, is of tremendous value in strengthening faith. Then it is, that we shall come confidently, resting in His promises, trusting His faithfulness, and relying on His almighty power, not approaching in any presumptuous manner, but in all humility, for true faith and genuine humility are always seen together in Holy Writ. This does not mean that the believer is to be shy or reticent in prayer; on the contrary, he is to be persistent. In no way does this militate against humility. The prayer of faith will not give up, it will continue steadfastly. The Christian who knows he is required to pray for a certain thing or person, and who is aware of the promise of God concerning the matter before him, will resolve in his heart to persist. He will, "pray without ceasing." (1 Thess.5:17). Just as Peter who came to the house of Mary the mother of John, and knocked; although there was no reply, he continued knocking, and eventually the door WAS opened, (cf. Acts 12:11-14-).

We are to be engaged in the ministry of prayer and intercession, ever knocking at Heaven's door. It may be for the salvation of a loved one, or that others may be brought into a deeper alignment with God's will and purpose. Yes.' It may be that we have been praying for years, but we are to keep knocking. "Thou wilt answer me," said David. (Ps.86:7). This is what constitutes the "Prayer of faith." "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke 18:1). It is never right to give up the exercise. FAITH CONTINUES.

To encourage us, God. has given us many precious assurances. "He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry, when He shall hear it, He will answer thee." (Isa.30:19). "The Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him." (Rom.10:12). "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them." (Ps.145:19). "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (Jer.29:13).

Persistence in prayer is one of the great EXERCISES in faith which God has set for us. Let none imagine that because He has not answered immediately, that He has not heard, for one of the names by which Jehovah is known is, "Thou that hearest prayer." (Ps.65:2). If we are praying in faith according to His will and word, then never let us doubt that God has heard, although He has not answered. To this should be added that even though we have not received that for which we have prayed as yet, the very exercise of prayer is of tremendous spiritual strength and benefit to us. David said: "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." (Ps.138:3)- The inward strength alone which David derived as the result of praying was of itself an answer; he had been strengthened.

Perhaps this is what we all need - STRENGTH IN PRAYER. We feel so weak and inadequate; "We know not what to pray for as we ought." We have sinned, things have been said and done which never should have been, and we feel that we have failed. David was like this on times; at one point he said: "In my trembling I am cut off:" but he wasn't, and although he fainted and trembled, God heard.

James in his epistle tells us something of the PASSIONS of men. He cites Elijah as an example: no different to any one of us, yet, see how he prayed. He prayed earnestly, yea, he agonized. For a long time, God did not answer, but the prophet was not deterred; he persisted. At length a small sign of a break-through was evident, followed by a full answer, (cf. 1 Kings 18:42-45 and James 5:17-18).



One other matter which should greatly encourage us is, that we do not come into the presence of the High and Lofty One, alone. The child of God enters into the Holy Place in company with Christ, his Great High Priest and Advocate.

We utter our prayers and our praises, hut at best they are poor and feeble, and so inadequately expressed, but our High Priest - our representative in heaven - takes our faltering sentences and, to use the words of Thomas Watsons "PRAYS OUR PRAYERS OVER AGAIN," or, as Mary Peters puts it in her hymns:

"TO ALL OUR PRAYERS AND PRAISES  
CHRIST ADDS HIS SWEET PERFUME."

In other words, Christ perfects our feeble breathings and presents them at the throne of Eternal Power and Majesty in an acceptable manner. He removes all the dross so that they come before God as fine gold.

Is not this the greatest stimulus of all to prayer? Does not this strengthen faith? However inadequate we might feel, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ THE RIGHTEOUS." (1 John 2:1). He is our representative in those thrice holy courts above. Our prayers are put into His hands; he deals with our case in HEAVEN, and says the Holy Scriptures? "HE CANNOT FAIL." To put it in the words of William Gadsby:

Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head,  
My God my portion and my living bread;  
In Him I live, upon Him cast my care;  
He saves from. death destruction and despair.

He is my refuge in each deep distress,  
My Lord my strength and glorious righteousness;  
Through floods and flames He leads me safely on,  
And daily makes His sovereign goodness known.

My every need He richly will supply,  
Nor will His mercy ever let me die;  
In Him there dwells a treasure all divine,  
And matchless grace has made that treasure mine.

O that my soul could love and praise Him more,  
His beauties trace, His majesty adore,  
Live near His heart, upon His bosom lean,  
Obey His voice and all His will esteem.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest ... let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." (Heb.4:14-16). Ever praying AFTER THE MANNER set for us by Christ.

W. H. Molland

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### EVANGELISM AND GOD'S GLORY

By Steven Houck

We live in a very man centred age. Many speak of God, Jesus Christ, grace, and salvation. But they do not exalt and honour the God of the Bible. They exalt and honour man instead. This can be seen especially in much of today's "evangelism." Radio and television "preachers" seem to be more interested in their own glory than the glory of God. They do not preach the God-honouring gospel of sovereign grace but the man-honouring "gospel" of free-willism. They focus attention upon themselves and their own charisma rather than the radiant glory of God.

We do not have to go to the radio and television, however, to witness this emphasis upon man. It infests just about all of today's "evangelism." The "saving of the soul" has become an end in itself. Nothing else matter«. The church must be busy reaching the lost because thousands are perishing. The Biblical doctrines of God, of Christ, and of true salvation are tossed aside. The God-centred creeds of many churches are unknown and unused by their members. Doctrine is no longer important. It does not matter what you believe as long as you love your neighbour and witness to him. Above all else Christians must be "soul-winners." Man and his salvation are the most important.

This is not the emphasis of Holy Scripture. Man and his salvation are not the most important. The emphasis of the Bible is upon God and His glory. This is why the

true church throughout the ages has always emphasized the doctrines of God, of Jesus Christ, and of sovereign grace, Through the knowledge of these doctrines we see the wondrous, shining glory of God. Even man's salvation, as wonderful as it is, is not an end in itself. It is subservient to God's glory. God does not serve the salvation of man. The salvation of man serves the glory of God. Thus we read in Isaiah 43:7, "Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." God is not talking about physical creation, but spiritual re-creation. Those whom He called by His name are created spiritually for only one purpose - the glory of God. We have the same thing in Isaiah 44:23, "...the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." The redemption of God's people serves the glory of God.

This ought to be emphasized in the evangelism of the preacher and the witnessing of the believer. Our primary goal must be to show forth the glory of God. We must not give a man-centred message, but one that is God-centred. We must present God in all of His glorious attributes and works, Jesus Christ as the Revelation of the God of all glory, and salvation as the work of sovereign grace alone. The beauty and power of God's grace must be emphasized above the salvation of man. Salvation is always "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph.1:6). When God saves His people through Biblical evangelism, we are able to say with the Psalmist, "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake that he might make his mighty power to be known" (Ps.106:8). We rejoice not so much in the souls that are saved as in the power of God's grace and the glory of God's name which are displayed in that salvation.

If we are to keep man's salvation in its proper perspective, we must realize that even if man is not saved, God is still glorified. God's glory is not dependent upon the salvation of any individual or of man in general. God is glorified even when the person to whom we witness is not saved. He is glorified in the rebellion and damnation of the wicked. In fact, God hardens the heart of the wicked that He might be glorified in their rebellion and damnation. We see this in the example of Pharaoh. The apostle Paul says, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." (Rom.9:17-18). The very purpose of Pharaoh's rebellion and damnation was the manifestation of the power of God and the glory of His great name. This is confirmed by Proverbs 16»4, "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

The primary concern of God's people, therefore, must not be the salvation of the world or of any one individual. Then we glory in man rather than in God. Our concern must be to exalt and honour the glorious God Who "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." God is glorified. He is glorified in and through all things. He is glorified regardless of man and his emphasis. "...His glory (is) above the heavens" (Ps.113:4). Let us declare that glory. If you would be a true witness of the God of the Bible, make God and His sovereign grace the heart of your message. Don't talk about man, but speak of God and His wondrous attributes and great works. Pray with the Psalmist, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen" (Ps.72:18-19).

The above is taken from "THE REFORMED WITNESS" by kind permission of The Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

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"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish\* To the one we are a savour of death unto death; and to the other a savour of life unto life." (2 Cor.2:15-16).

The minister is not responsible for his success. He is responsible for WHAT HE PREACHES; he is accountable for his life and actions; but is not responsible for other people. If I do but preach GOD'S WORD, if there be never a soul saved, the King would say: 'Well done good and faithful servant.'" If I do but tell my message, if none should listen to it, He would say: "Thou hast fought a good fight, receive thy crown."

C. H. Spurgeon

## DRAMA AND THE CHRISTIAN

A few generations ago the entertainment stage would have been foreign territory to the Christian, indeed it was anathema. Theatres, Cinemas and Music Halls were looked upon as places of the world, and the people of God would not be seen there. Today things are different, and the Christian who speaks of separation from such places and activities is looked upon as a crank, or at best, extremely narrow minded. Now however, it is not necessary to even frequent these establishments in person, for their programs are relayed into almost every home, and sad to say, there are many who, twenty five to thirty years ago, would have taken a stand upon such issues as the theatre and stage, yet, now have little qualms of conscience at quietly watching a play in their living rooms. Children of Christian parents are brought up in this situation, and in consequence drama has become common place, not only for entertainment, but it is frequently used as a means of communication.

By dramatization, history, theories, religion, and dogmas can be acted out on the stage, and any particular slant, emphasis, or bias put over unsuspectingly by this means in such an impressive manner that it becomes engraved upon the minds of the viewers. The power and effectiveness of this medium must not be underestimated, for it has a mighty influence. For example, the stage and screen has given great prominence to alcohol. The glass is nearly always in evidence so that liquor is now looked upon as the norm for life in most homes. Crime, violence, gangsterism, murder are acted out in vivid life style for hours on end every day, with what result? Today's crime statistics supply the answer.

The glamorizing of sex, nudity, lust, rape, sexual perversion, the undermining of the sanctity of marriage, and divorce, is all part of the stock-in-trade of the world of drama and show business. A powerful medium indeed} and does not the state of modern society eloquently provide the evidence?

Because of its EFFECTIVENESS, the Church has now "latched on." "The world has proved the point," we are

told. "This is the modern way of communicating. Lecturing in the schools, or preaching in the churches, is outdated; people must SEE; it is much more impressionable." So, in many churches, chapels and halls, the pulpit gives way to the stage. Films take the place of Bible study, and Drama, Mime, and Musicals replace the sober preaching of Divine Truth. To dramatize and act out a Bible story will not only attract people, it will also be a more powerful means of getting over the Truth - this is the reasoning. It is because of such propaganda that this article is being written.

Forget impressions being made upon the mind, or attractiveness to the masses, when it comes to the work of God, this is SPIRITUAL, and spiritual activity must only be conducted in a God appointed manner. Let the following questions be asked:

1. Do the Scriptures sanction drama?
2. Is drama in the Church legitimate?
3. Is drama of itself wrong?

The answer to the first question is NO! This, therefore, settles the second, for if the Scriptures give no warrant for a thing, then, it must find no place in the Church. What of the third question: Is drama wrong of itself? The answer is yes - DRAMA IS SIN. "This is ridiculous, the height of ignorance and bigotry," some will say. But wait! By definition drama is the acting out, or the presentation of the life of another. That other person may be fictitious or genuine: that is irrelevant. Acting is the assuming of a personality other than one's own. In other words, it is a farce - it is counterfeit - it is deceit - it is false.

The Bible has much to say about FALSEHOOD, DECEIT, and ARTIFICIALITY. The author of these is the Devil. He is the master dramatist. By his curious arts he can transform himself in an instant from the extremes of an angel of light to a roaring lion. (cf. 2 Cor.11:14, 1 Pet.5:8). It is HIS spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience, (cf. Eph.2:2). In consequence of this, many evils proceed from the heart of the natural man, and one of them is DECEIT. (cf. Mark 7:21-23). Make-

believe, play-acting, artificiality, and deceitful working is a part of man's fallen nature.

The Ninth Commandment forbids the bearing of false witness. Whilst primarily this has to do with slander and evil reporting with regard to one's neighbour, yet, by comparing other Scriptures, one soon discovers a much broader aspect concerning the matter of bearing an untrue, farcical witness. The apostle Paul speaks of, and warns against those who, by play-acting bear such a witness. "False apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." (2 Cor.11:13). All God's works are done in truth, (cf. Ps.33:4). "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house." (Ps.101:7).

Drama is a world of "make-believe" - it is "artificial," and though it be made to APPEAR real, it is not. The persons purporting to portray the true are play-acting. Drama is in conflict with the Word of God. "Whoso boasteth himself in a gift of falsehood is like clouds and wind without rain." (Prov.25:14 (Marg.)).

In Jeremiah's day there were prophets who prophesied a FALSE vision - a thing of nought - the deceit of their heart, (cf. Jer.14:14). When the apostle Paul was at Ephesus the Holy Spirit worked mightily, and one of the things that happened was, many believed and confessed, and showed their deeds, and quitted their curious ARTS, burning their books. (cf. Acts 19:18-19).

In any instance where truth is to be attested, a message put over, or witness given, there must be nothing farcical, nothing counterfeit, false or deceitful. No man must bear witness in this way, let alone the Church which is to witness to DIVINE TRUTH.

An actor, whether professional or amateur, has one task, that is to abandon his own personality and assume the personality of another. This is contrary to the creation pattern. In creation there is no duplicating. No two blades of grass have ever been found the same, no two trees identical. Every animal, though it be of the same breed is different; no two snowflakes have ever been

found to match. When it comes to the human race, of all the countless millions ever born, no two have ever been absolutely the same. Every man and woman who has ever lived has been unique - unmatched. Why? Because such is the design of the Creator, for reasons known only to Him. Everyone must have his or her INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY. Is mortal man to intrude upon this Divine pattern of uniqueness, overthrowing an infinite design by suppressing the personality with which he was created, and assuming that of another unique person? For this reason, if for no other, a Christian should not use heavy make-up or way-out hair styles. Anything which is ARTIFICIAL is not pleasing to God and it should have NO PLACE in the life of a Christian.

Regarding that which is artificial, reference should be made to other antics which, sadly, are found in the Church, such as putting on a weird voice and intoning in public prayer. Let us not think that this is confined to Romish Monks and High Anglicans, for there can be found in Non-conformist circles men who put on a totally different voice in prayer to that which is theirs in normal conversation. What is this if it is not artificial?

Further, are there not those who foolishly try and imitate and mould their pulpit behaviour after certain men with whom they have become infatuated? God's servants are to be natural. How many puppet Billy Grahams and Lloyd-Joneses there are, as men try and imitate both voice and mannerism. Why do men do this? Let the question be asked, is this of God, or is it of the flesh? To try and sink one's own personality (that with which one is created) and endeavour to assume another, is artificial. It is an upsurge of the deceit of our fallen nature, and it is dishonouring to God who fashioned us. It is play-acting and but a form (albeit mild) of drama.

But to come more objectively to our subject. In acting, a man or woman has to be, not only "made-up" and dressed to resemble another, but they have to enter right into the one they are representing, assuming their thoughts, their desires, their feelings and their emotions. Drama is the REPRODUCTION OF THE LIFE OF ANOTHER, and the



person who thus engages denies their own God-given personality. Men are not to do this - it is sin.

However, let us go deeper still into the matter to see what is involved in this sensual profession. In drama SIN HAS TO BE ENACTED, and often sin of the basest nature; nudity, lustful embracing and kissing, profanity, envy, hatred, violence, and murder. The actors have to give themselves over to this. Seldom is it the true husband and wife who play the parts in matrimonial scenes. Often is the man married to another and vice versa, yet, with passion and reality do they throw themselves together. In order to portray the lustful practices of another, the actors have themselves to become lustful. To set forth the villain the actor must become a villain; to play the part of a murderer he must assume such a personality, and to the minutest detail manifest ALL the necessary traits. He must take to himself the vilest of sins and make them his own in an intense and realistic manner.

This is a damnable thing. Drama is a SORE EVIL, yet, it is common-place in society, not only in the world, but watched by thousands of professing Christians and counted as part of the home life of their children. "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only DO THE SAME but HAVE PLEASURE in them that do them." (Rom.1:32). To find pleasure in such evil must surely denote that spirituality (if existent) is at an exceedingly low ebb.

No doubt some will think the writer is majoring on the low and debased, and that there is another side, that Drama has possibilities for good, that it is an effective means of conveying the gospel. The Word of God forbids that we do evil that good may come. (cf. Rom.3:8). As has been pointed out earlier, impersonation of another is of itself wrong, whoever that person may be.

To dramatize the gospel, the SINNER must be portrayed, for this is the cardinal point of the message, but to act out sin, though the motive be good, is in itself sinful. To go through the motions of a sinner, is to make oneself guilty of those self-same sins. Then,

somewhere along the line, in a gospel message, Christ has to be presented and the Holy Spirit brought in. "Ah! These are parts which can only be played by a true Christian," many tell us. REALM! The writer is of the firm conviction that no Christian would ever dare take upon himself such a role.

At the Incarnation the co-eternal co-glorious Son of God, mighty Creator and Sustainer of the universe, was "wrapped in human clay, contracted to a span, incomprehensively made man." What created mortal can portray this? He lived as a man amongst men, but He was HOLY, HARMLESS, UNDEFINED. SEPARATE FROM SINNERS. (Heb.7:26). Can any member of Adam's fallen race enact this part? This would be deception and falsehood of the greatest magnitude. Could false witness be borne in a more blasphemous or diabolical way?

Then, there is the mighty work of the Redeemer on the cross - Atonement and Propitiation. This was an area into which the Incarnate Son of God went ALONE. Jehovah enshrouded that scene in darkness, so that no eye could penetrate. No mind can imagine, no heart conceive of the agony of body, soul, and spirit through which He passed in that dread hour. Yet, not only professional actors, but professing Christians, will recklessly attempt to play the part of the "Sin Bearer" in passion plays; enacting also, the Resurrection and the Ascension. This is blasphemy of the grossest and vilest kind, and most surely will incur the judgment of Almighty God. The Holy Spirit is treated in the same manner despite the clear warning that, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." (Mark 3:29).

Some will concede that to impersonate Deity going too far; nevertheless it is possible, through the medium of drama to depict the struggles of a sinner, and how through the gospel they are brought to Christ. Many films of this nature have been produced. Dramatized productions of conversions - some factual, some fictitious. The writer has seen a few of these in years past. One stands out, and that was on the life of Martin Luther. One section of the film depicted the monk under

deep conviction of sin. The actor playing the part, portrayed Luther distressed, distraught, and in soul anguish, as God the Holy Spirit was dealing with him. Some of the sentiments conveyed may have had the right slant, but was this real, was it genuine? Can this, indeed, should this be done? When the co-eternal, co-equal, and co-glorious sovereign Holy Spirit deals in grace to bring a sinner to Christ, and reconcile that sinner to God, dare an actor presume upon such holy ground? This is a matter so sacred, so profound, so intensely personal, that even sinless angels would not intrude. For men and women to engage in the dramatizing of sinners being brought to salvation by the mighty power of God the Holy Spirit through sovereign grace, is a parody of that which is holy, and of all experiences, the most sacred.

Those who profess to be Christians, yet will stoop to this level, should carefully consider Paul's words: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor.13:5). If such be truly born again, then certainly, they have not as yet learned their spiritual alphabet. The Christian life is not a playground, rather is it a battlefield.

Drama is NOT OF GOD; it is of the Devil. The STAGE (be it so-called Christian), gives an uncertain sound, for by its very nature it is farcical and deceptive, whereas, the God ordained PULPIT, with the FAITHFUL preacher, "speaks the TRUTH and lies not." THIS IS THE MEANS APPOINTED OF GOD TO COMMUNICATE HIS MESSAGE, BE IT TO SAINT OR SINNER AND LET NOT PUNY MAN PRESUME TO IMPROVE UPON IT. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed." (1 Cor.1:21). "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27). PREACH and DECLARE - not ACT - is the DIVINE MANDATE. The Christian must reject drama in ANY FORM: it is artificial; it is not genuine; it is deception and it is sin. Our concern is TRUTH in absolute VERITY - FACTUAL.

W. H. Molland

## DRAMA IS NO NEW THING

The ancient church father, Cyprian (200-258 A.D.) wrote:  
"We come to the shameful corruption of the stage. I am ashamed to tell what things are said; I am even ashamed to denounce the things that are done - the tricks of arguments, the cheatings of adulterers, the immodesties of women, the scurrile jokes, the sordid parasites, even the toga'd fathers of families themselves, sometime stupid, sometimes obscene, but in all cases immodest. And though no individual, or family, or profession, is spared by the discourse of these reprobates, yet everyone flocks to the play." Going on to the matter as to whether those taking part in drama should be permitted membership in the church, Cyprian says: "This I think, neither befits the Divine majesty nor the discipline of the Gospel, that the modesty and credit of the Church should be polluted by so disgraceful and infamous contagion."

Chrysostom (307-407 AD) and Augustine (354-430 AD) were equally vehement in their denunciation of drama.

The late A. J. Gordon wrote:

"To dissuade Christians from going to the theatre would be very tame advice in these days, when the theatre with rapid strides is pushing its way into the church. To tell the disciple of Jesus to : "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," would seem very mild dissuasion, and almost unkind when the world has come to such friendly terms with the church that it willingly lends all its machinery of entertainment, art and amusement to make the Gospel more attractive. Our power is in our separateness from the world, not in our affiliation with it."

Thousands of Christians down through history have taken such a stand against drama, but today alas, scarce a voice is heard.

We rejoice however, at the faithful witness which comes in our day from our friends the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Professor Hanko, in a pamphlet

entitled "The Christian and the Film Arts," states: "Of dramatic presentations we must include that which appears on the Television screens of our living rooms, the dramatic presentations offered on Broadway, and the platform of the local High Schools and Colleges, dramatic presentations in whatever form they come.

Is it possible to take the position that drama is wrong per se?

It is my conviction that it is. This is not a conviction to which I have come in the course of preparing this pamphlet. It is a conviction which I have held already when a youth, when we used to argue these questions with all the fervency of youthful interest. It is a conviction that had to stand the battering of long hours of disputation and debate; and it is a conviction which has grown stronger over the years. DRAMA IS SIN!"

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"Let every man called of God to preach the Word, be as his Maker has fashioned him. Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas is to be imitated by John; nor are John's ways, habits, and modes of utterance to be the basis for a condemnation of any of the other three. As God gives to every seed its own body as it rises from the soil, so to each man will He grant his own appropriate development, if he will but be content to let his inner self reveal itself in its true form. The good and the evil in men of eminence are both of them mischievous when they become objects of servile imitation; the good when slavishly copied is exaggerated into formality, and the evil becomes wholly intolerable. If each teacher of others went himself to the school of our one and only Master, a thousand errors might be avoided."

C. H. Spurgeon

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"... I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." (Ps.119:128)

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## EDITORIAL

It is the object of this magazine, not only to soberly set forth Divine Truth, but also to examine current issues both in the World and in the Church. It is incumbent upon a minister both by tongue and pen to critically consider all modern trends in the light of Holy Scripture, and upon the authority of the Inspired Volume to dogmatically assert that which is contained therein. Only by this means will the "old paths" be maintained and the "way of holiness" clearly defined.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS and INFORMATION

On Lord's Day 27th September last a Baptismal service was held, when Mr. W. Gliddon (North Road Chapel) and Mrs. E. England (Lime Grove Mission) were baptized. Our friends at Lime Grove closed down their evening service to join with us, Pastor J. Evans sharing in the Service. This was a very happy and blessed occasion. We rejoice at the obedience and testimony of these two souls, and magnify the grace of God which has brought them into "So great salvation,"

Mr. Gliddon, and Mrs. Gliddon (already baptized) were received into the membership of the church on Lord's Day, October 4th. We thank God for their presence amongst us, and for the way in which they have been guided.

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The illustrated lecture on "THE HUGUENOTS" given by Mr. G. Ashdown on October 22nd was well attended and most instructive.