

1/12/54

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On the other hand, we must not feel that every simple dialogue or the taking of character parts in mission incidents or scenes is wrong. It is very difficult to draw the line, and a good deal of understanding and consecrated judgment must be used. However, I feel all workers should be careful to follow the brief line of thought laid down in the Autumn Council action of 1934.

Q. & A. File No. 10-1

*Drama & Theatrical Performances*

January 12, 1954

You ask also whether presentations should be brought onto the sacred rostrum of the sanctuary. If the presentations are proper in themselves, there is no reason why they should not be presented on the rostrum. It is the content of the program that will determine whether it should be presented in the church or not. If it is proper to present in the church, it is proper to present on the rostrum.

Rt. 4, Box 197  
Hood River, Oregon

Your final question pertained to the matter of practicing for such programs on Friday evening. There, again, I, again, wisdom must be used. Certainly there are times in the preparation of the Sabbath school program when it is proper to practice on Friday evening.

Dear Sister,

You have written inquiring for information from the writings of Ellen G. White regarding dramatizing the programs we have in Sabbath School and our Missionary Volunteer Societies.

We have no instruction from Sister White telling us exactly what should and should not be done in the presentation of our Sabbath School and Missionary Volunteer programs. I wish that more comment had been made on this subject, for it would help us to make some decisions which are rather difficult to make at the present time. We must be very careful not to give the impression that we are presenting theatrical performances.

In the Autumn Council actions of 1934 there was one which may prove to be of some help to you. I know of no other one along this line that has been taken since.

"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, or the taking of character parts in mission incidents or scenes." (Autumn Council, 1934.)

It seems to me that the principle involved is quite clearly stated by Sister White 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."

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1/12/54

On the other hand, we must not feel that every simple dialogue or the taking of character parts in mission incidents or scenes is wrong. It is very difficult to draw the line, and a good deal of understanding and consecrated judgment must be used. However, I feel that if we are careful to follow the brief line of thought laid down in the Autumn Council action we will not go far wrong.

You ask also whether these presentations should be brought onto the sacred rostrum of the sanctuary. If the presentations are proper in themselves, there is no reason why they should not be presented on the rostrum. It is the content of the program that will determine whether it should be presented in the church or not. If it is proper to present in the church, it is proper to present on the platform.

Your final question pertained to the matter of practising for such programs on Friday evening. There, again, I believe that much wisdom must be used. Certainly there are times in the preparation of such programs when the practising should not be done on the Sabbath. Generally the beginnings of the preparation for the program involve a good many activities, which hardly fit in with Sabbath keeping. However, after the program is more nearly ready to be presented, there may be more reason for permitting a practice on Friday evening. However, it seems to me that it would be better if our preparation for these things could be done at some other time than on the Sabbath, particularly if there is a group of individuals involved.

I am sorry that I cannot give you any more definite guidance in this matter, but detailed instruction has not been given, and we must simply adapt the great principles which God has given to us to our situations in the best way that we can. Ask the Lord for wisdom, and deal kindly and tactfully with those who are trying to lead out in the important work of the Sabbath School and the Missionary Volunteer Society.

Sincerely yours,

T. H. Jenison, Associate Secretary  
ELLEN G. WHITE PUBLICATIONS

We recommend that 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 Word.

It is recommended that the dramatizing of the lives of Bible characters or religious incidents be avoided.

"That the utmost simplicity distinguish the representation of an exercise or a dialogue, or the taking of character parts in mission incidents or scenes." (Autumn Council, 1931.)

It seems to me that the principle involved is quite clearly stated by Sister White in Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 360: "Our examples 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."