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DRAMA AS A MEANS OF EVANGELISM
IN CHINA

by

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A THESIS

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TO MY MOTHER
who spent most of her life in
evangelism
in China
and by whose patience and love
this study was made possible,
this thesis is gratefully dedicated

The clear white light of truth in blending ray
Descends on man in swiftly moving course,
And striking on his mind's enfeebled eye,
Bedims the sight that seeks the holy source.

Above the altar, framed in pointed arch,
The stained glass window with its varied hue
Catches the dazzling light on symbolled pane,
Translates the softened ray that passes through,

And casts it clear on Drama's mask below.
Whose changing shadows have, from age to age,
Interpreted the great Director's Will,
That man in worthy role shall tread life's stage.

Loyd Edward Harding

Gift of the Author

Oct. 25, 1944

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. Importance of the Subject

The mission of the Church has been the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ever since the days when the Apostle Paul challenged the crowd on Mars Hill, followers of Christ have endeavored to portray the message of the Cross to the world in an effective way. In presenting the Gospel to unfamiliar people, if the method of presentation is alien to that people, naturally the approach will not be so apt to be attractive.

The president of an outstanding Chinese college, himself a Chinese, has said:

"He who wants to guide the Chinese must start by understanding them; he who wants to teach the Chinese must first learn what they have already been taught. The beginning of our understanding of the problem of evangelization and the discovery of the best method of giving Christianity to China lies in a careful survey of her spiritual heritage and religious background, and a discerning appraisal of its true worth and value." ¹

Someone has said that in a Chinese theater one really learns to know the Chinese people. Their deeper

1. Yang, Y.C.; China's Religious Heritage, 1944, p. 20

emotions, usually suppressed in public, are most apparent there. Chinese drama is more than a national art; it is a mirror of the nation. The Chinese have an ancient saying: "Men should not use water as a mirror, but should use mankind as such."¹ Chinese drama is thus the mirror of the people. It is the most popular entertainment of the nation, and as some one has said, it is the "national sport." Hence it is the most potent weapon for propagandists, or for anyone who can wield it well. When in China recently, travelling with an evangelistic band into the country, the writer was impressed with the lack of attraction of the methods used -- principally street-corner preaching and singing -- as against the great attraction of the festival theatricals which drew most of the village population. Evangelists take their vacation during the New Year festival since the theatrical attraction so overshadows the preaching efforts. Preaching, of course, has its place, but in this particular situation, perhaps there is a better way to do it. Here is

Stewart, J.L.; Chinese Culture and Christianity,
1926, p. 93

a chance for the religious leader to use this weapon, not the drama so familiar to the Westerner exclusively, but by the study of native drama and the harmonious combination of the two. With this method of approach, then, the Christian worker can present the Gospel to the Chinese in a comprehensible and appealing way, and therefore touch the lives of more people for the Kingdom of God.

B. Timeliness of the Subject

That Asia is to be the center of interest of the world of tomorrow is becoming increasingly apparent. Oscar M. Buck has made a rather startling statement:

"The future of the Christian religion is being determined in Asia. The continent of Asia with fifty percent of the total population of the world, still lies unconvinced across the path of Christianity's claim to be the universal faith to which all races and peoples must come in time." ¹

Another voice speaks with concern over the tremendous responsibility of Christendom to the Far East, when referring to the five religions, Buddhism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism, Taoism and Hinduism, all found in China, Dr. Y. C. Yang says:

1. Buck, O.M.; Christianity Tested, p. 33

"The five religions claim the allegiance of over three-fourths of mankind. If Christianity, therefore can find an effective way of dealing with the total religious situation in China it will probably discover a satisfactory working formula for dealing with all the religions of the world." ¹

Especially at this time of national testing, we are increasingly realizing, with Mr. Laufer, that "Greek and Rome are irrevocably dead, but China with a past of five milleniums is alive and looms in our eyes like a giant," ² or more correctly perhaps, a dragon awakened, and full of vitality as well as potentiality -- even for the kingdom of God. Hence the timely significance of approaching the people of China with the Gospel today in this particularly indigenous way - by portraying with drama a clear, challenging message.

More timely is drama today perhaps, because in our own country, comparatively recently, she has won her way back into the church in a very real way. As one writer observes:

"The church has been slower than other institutions to re-employ the educative power of the drama, a power it employed centuries ago; but it is beginning to regain its lost inheritance. While the Church has been chary of dramatic art and its artists, it is coming

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1. Yang, Y.C.: op. cit., p. 31
 2. Laufer, Barthold: The New Orient, p. 281

to realize that this form of art and religion belong together by identities of origin, subject matter, and inner experience. The principal subject matter of the world's artistic treasures is religion." ¹ And again, "The church is beginning again to express a frank appreciation of the tremendous potential force in the dramatic presentation of religious themes. The whole history of religion, the entire garment of the intense inner drama of agony, despair, hope, and attainments, show that feeling is the eternal spring of religious vitality." ²

With the church formerly looking askance at drama -- a Wesleyan and a well-justified attitude in its day -- naturally missionaries ^{look} with that attitude upon the Chinese theater with the same righteous disdain. (Strangely enough this attitude has its parallel in the history of Chinese drama. ³) But with the changed situation today, and with the potentiality of the right approach of Christianity to the Far East -- especially China -- it seems quite certain that drama, if it is handled wisely, can be an instrument of power in evangelism.

In the light of the world's present need Dean Inge is quoted as saying, speaking of the coming of a prophet, "When that prophet comes, I am disposed to think that he will choose to speak to his generation

1. Overton, G.S.; Drama in Education, 1927, p. 9
2. Ibid., p. 4
3. Post, p. 10

neither from the pulpit, nor from the printed page,
but from the stage. A great dramatist might help us¹
find our souls."

C. Delimitation of the Subject

In the field of Christian Education, the use of drama is generally limited to two types: educational drama and the prepared play. Educational drama is that form wherein the actual acting or "playing" together with other participants brings situations which resemble or actually are those of life. Spontaneous plays such as the impromptu dramatization of a Bible or other story is also classed as educational drama. The purpose of educational drama is principally to teach the participants to become familiar with Christian truth and to know how to face situations in a Christian way by acting them. The planned play also has an educational effect, but it is produced in a different way. The planned play is memorized and presented in the most effective way possible. As in a religious service, the participant players present a message and share with those to whom it is presented the blessing of worship.

1. Eastman, Fred: Modern Religious Drama, 1928,
Introduction, p. viii

Conscious of the possibilities and values of the former method in China, it is nevertheless with the latter form of drama that this study is particularly concerned.

D. Purpose of the Study

To make a study of the dramatic art in China would be a fascinating and absorbing pastime in itself, but art for art's sake scarcely enters the realm of religion. Being truly convinced of the potentiality of drama as a method of evangelism in China, and also sure that this method can be wrongly used -- even by well-meaning Christian workers -- the writer will seek to show through a study of available material on the subject of Chinese drama, how this method of drama can be used effectively as a means of evangelism -- that is of Christian awakening and spiritual growth. It will be hence, the purpose of this study to set forth the background of Chinese drama -- as against what we know of Western drama -- its history, and its atmosphere, and thus to have a clearer understanding of the dramatic approach to the Chinese; and further,

on the basis of this study set up practical suggestions for the writing and producing of Christian plays for use in China.

E. Sources

General information concerning the use of drama in the modern Church and throughout its development in the West, was found in The Biblical Seminary Library, New York, and the Library of Religious Education in the Union Seminary, New York. Sources of material on China -- its history, philosophy, and atmosphere -- were found in the Library of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., New York, and Missions Library of Union Seminary, New York, Columbia University Library, and its East Asiatic branch, and in books of the writer's own library. For suggestions of bibliography, the writer is indebted to the thesis of Mary Esther Reese - ("A Study of the Dramatic Method in Relation to the Religious Education of the Junior Child.") The writer is also indebted to numerous letters from and interviews with friends who have had experience with drama, both in China and in this country, success-

fully and unsuccessfully. Among these friends are Mr. G.K. Leung, Dr. Newton Chiang, Miss Marie Adams, and Miss Muriel Boone. The writer's own personal experience in China and her knowledge of Chinese drama have led to a keen interest in the possible effectiveness of this method of evangelism.

F. Procedure of the Study

In establishing a method today, one must inevitably turn to the previous pages of history to see how successful was that method in the past. Hence, in upholding drama as a means, or instrument of evangelism to modern China, the history of drama in China will be discussed first with the familiar background of our own church drama as a setting.

Out of the gleanings of history appear certain values in drama which have significance in the light of its being used as a religious means, or tool. These values will be described.

With a clear understanding of these values, their use in a religious capacity will be set forth. The two uses stressed here are: for the purpose of

leading toward religious conversion, and for a deepening of spiritual life.

There naturally will follow technical specifications, both in the leader's personality, and in the actual production of the drama. Here too, growing out of the present study will be suggestions of types of dramatic presentations and material which would appeal to the Chinese, as well as findings from those who have had experience in China in the actual production of plays.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHINESE DRAMA

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF
CHINESE DRAMA

A. INTRODUCTION

An ancient Chinese sage has said that without a knowledge of the past one cannot succeed in the present. It was George Santayana -- a modern -- who reechoed the same timeless thought: "He who does not take heed to the past is bound to repeat it." It is by means of understanding the origin and development of drama that its significance in the present becomes clear. It is by means of visualizing its course through history as related to the movements and attitudes of mankind that the characteristics of Chinese drama appear vividly as consequential in the lives of people. It is by means of catching the spirit of this great national art, that one can use it more effectively to appeal to those of whose lives it is a part.

In this chapter, therefore, the origin of drama will first be discussed, as a background for the study of drama in China.

The history of drama will then be traced through the centuries. The Yuan period will be shown to be an age of Classicism in drama, while it will be evident that during the Ming period, Scholastic drama was produced. In the Ch'ing period, it will appear that Romanticism will be characteristic of the drama. Then the modern period in drama will be reviewed -- showing the various modern tendencies, and the present situation in West China.

Among the most frequently used sources are: Hubbel and Beaty, dramatic historians; Overton, authority in Educational Drama; Arlington, authority on Chinese drama after spending many years in China; Fitzgerald, also an authority on Chinese drama and culture; Zucker, and Cornaby, whose work on Chinese life and drama are outstanding; Leung, Chinese drama critic; Hu Shih, prominent philosopher and man of letters, of China; and Newton Chiang of Nanking Theological Seminary, West China, at present in the United States representing many youth organizations of China.

B. The Origin of Drama

There is an interesting similarity in the source of drama throughout the histories of the nations. Scant as is the actual knowledge of the beginnings of drama, one point historians seem to agree upon, be they Christian, pagan, or indifferent -- that the beginnings are religious -- namely the ceremonial dance. In Greek drama, "The essential dramatic element, action, made its appearance without anyone realizing its enormous significance."¹ Greek drama, then, "was the offspring of religious enthusiasm: and even at the height of its development, Greek tragedy was the result of an endeavor to beautify and enrich religion with the art of poetry, music, dancing and acting."²

As Overton points out, shiba-ya the Japanese word meaning theater is a combination of shiba meaning house or temple, and ya meaning sod. And though Japanese drama, including the various forms,

1. Hubbel and Beaty: Introduction to Drama, 1932, p. 20
2. Ibid., p. 21

was never developed as was the Greek, the primitive drama of these two peoples had much in common. The Indian drama also bears every evidence of religious origin and even to-day no Indian religious worship is complete without a solemn dance performed as an introduction.¹ The Roman drama also sprang from religious festivals.

A familiar tale is the story of how "as early as the fifth century, in order to increase the attraction of worship in England, living pictures accompanied with songs were used on special occasions to illustrate the gospel narrative."²

So in China, Mr. Fitzgerald observes, "The art of the stage had its beginnings in the exorcist dancers of 'Wu', the magicians or the medicine men in the early feudal age. These performers were originally purely religious."³ In his introduction to the study of Chinese drama, Mr. Arlington agrees with Mr. Fitzgerald and summarizes the above statements:

"Back as far as 716 B.C., it is recorded that choruses danced and sang in a pantomimic way. In the eighth century, these dances were well established, and bear the same relation to the developed native drama that the dythyrambic choruses do to the later Greek dramatic literature.

-
1. Cf. Overton, G.S.: Drama in Education, 1927, pp 41-58
 2. Overton; op. cit., pp. 32, 33
 3. Fitzgerald, C.P. China, 1938, p. 489

In ancient Greece, the Nume was originally of a sacred character, and was employed in the ceremonies attending the worship of the shades of the heroic dead. Therefore like the Greek and English as elsewhere, where the early dramatic exhibitions were connected with the church, when the ecclesiastics were at first not only authors but the actors of the miracle plays and mysteries by which religious instruction was combined with a good deal of grotesque amusements, so in China the drama arose in a religious connection along with dances and songs of popular festivals. This is proven by the fact that the avowed aims of the Chinese drama are of the most elevated sort, glorifying all the virtues." 1

C. Periods of Development of Chinese Drama

1. Traditional Background

China is a country steeped in tradition. Even today there are reflections of the dim centuries which have made themselves indelibly felt. In their heritage of drama as in religion, present day practices and customs have their roots and origins in the earliest dynasties:

"The drama in China probably began as a religious festival and became a vehicle of expression for some of the deepest solemnities of Chinese religious thought and then gradually was secularized and lost its vitality. That this is pro-

1. Arlington, L. C.; The Chinese Drama, 1930, Introduction, p. xxv

bably correct may be gauged from their 'shen hsi' or 'sacred plays' which have been handed down from the Chou dynasty whose long history began in the twelfth century B.C. Certainly in the times of Confucius most solemn dances or posturing took place in the ancestral halls, and the modern drama is probably descended directly from that period." ¹

By A.D. 800-900, when the Church had broken up the corrupted ancient drama in the West, and was fostering a new form, in all unconsciousness introducing spectacle as an adjunct to lyric and epic accompaniments of liturgy, ² the ancient court with all its pomp and display was the scene of the fostering of drama in China. So the drama of those times was "a court act in classical language and the characters were limited in number, and conversationalized." ³ It is said that the stage play started in 279 A.D. in connection with the tyrannous outrages of the local ruler of Wu, as a warning to evil disposed offenders! ⁴ Such was the rather uncertain fate of drama until the thirteen century when it really came into its own.

1.Arlington; op. cit., Introduction, p. xxiv

2.Overton; op. cit., p. 33, and Hubbel and Beaty, op. cit. p.79

3.Fitzgerald; op. cit., p. 489

4.Carnaby, W.A.; New China Review, Volume 1, p. 58

2. Yuan Period Age of Classical Drama
1280-1368

The Yuan dynasty, though not natively Chinese, was more or less colorful, with the romantic visits of Marco Polo to the great Khan's court. The thirteenth century seemed to be a world-wide hey-day for drama. In Europe, "the central mystery of the redemption of the world as accomplished by the nativity and the passion, and the resurrection of Christ, was set forth. This type of religious drama reached its height during the middle of the thirteenth century."¹ "There was nothing essentially English about the first drama to be presented in England."² These plays, written and acted by the clergy were of course in Latin. Hence, they performed chiefly the function of inspiration and worship.

In China, strangely enough, "the Yuan plays were written and acted in an idiom hardly more classical than the speech of educated people and more characters were introduced. The subjects of the plays were more varied, freely drawing upon historical material and the life of the people. From a limited court entertainment the drama swiftly developed into a truly national art becoming and

1. Overton; op. cit., p. 33

2. Hubbel and Beaty; op. cit., p. 80

remaining the chief recreation of the common people of
China.¹"

The technique of this period was crude, with the characters introducing themselves, giving a conscientious account of their past lives, and indicating the part they represented in the drama. They dramatized narratives rather than contemporary life -- as did the mystery players.² There was only one singing part in Yuan plays.

So different and outstanding was the drama of this classical period that Mr. Carnaby quotes the Encyclopaedia Seneca as saying: "Drama is not indigenous to China, but was introduced with the novel by the Mongols in the Yuan dynasty."³ However, as has already been shown, it scarcely can be questioned that the native Chinese traditions which grew out of their own Confucian rites greatly influenced the whole course and consistency of Chinese drama.

3. Ming Period -- Age of Scholasticism 1368-1644

The Ming dynasty was one of the most productive dynasties of Chinese history. Chinese rulers took the

1. Fitzgerald; op. cit., p. 489

2. Zucker, A.E.; The Chinese Theater, 1925. p. 112

3. Carnaby, W.A.; Notes on the Chinese Drama and Ancient Choral Dances, New China Review, 1919 Vol. 1. p. 57

place of Mongols and China enjoyed a fairly peaceful, glorious age. As the miracles in the Western world grew out of legends of the people, independent of the church, naturally vernacular took the place of traditional Latin.¹ "As scenes and characters of more trivial nature were admitted into the plays, the comic element increased, and the plays became less sacred",² both in England and France. So there arose petitions from the clergy to have irreligious and uneducated people banned from acting in the Biblical scenes. Also due to the popularity of the plays, the stages had to be removed from the church to the out of doors -- symbolic of their eventual steady decline and actual separation from the church. At this time allegorical drama, Morality plays, personifying the fall of man and that of the human race, were at their height -- showing a definite tendency toward facing the actual social problems of man. It was also a move toward formalism.

In China too, drama was in the hands of scholars. The emperors reformed drama during the Ming period, as it had fallen into a low condition after the glorious and memorable rise during the middle of the Mongol dynasty.

1. Overton; op. cit., p. 34
2. Ibid., p. 35

Young drama enthusiasts formed the "Pear Garden Palace" -- a school for aesthetic studies, and the "Garden of Everlasting Springtime" denoting the rejuvenation which the young students injected into prodigal drama.¹ Plays were longer in the scholastic age, and there was a tendency to moralize,² to emphasize filial piety, and duty. Drama became more concerned with the ethical standards of man's life -- somewhat like the Morality play ideal, but of course, very different in content and without the degradation the latter suffered. The Ming plays are still very popular on the present Chinese stage.

4. Ch'ing Period -- Age of Romanticism
1644-1911

There is an accepted rule in the psychology of history, that the events which are most recent are the most vivid in one's memory. So, as drama looks back upon her own past, into the last important period of her career, the Ch'ing or Manchu dynasty stands out as the highest and most noteworthy.

1. Arlington; op. cit., p. 12
2. Zucker; op. cit., p. 112

In the days of merrie England, the Elizabethan stage was the center of all attraction and amusement and was completely scorned by the Church. Only on festival days did the element of drama enter the Church in the form of some pagentry introduced into the church service. At this time in China the emperors Ch'ien Lung and K'ang Hsi encouraged drama and gave it a high place among the arts. There was a marked resemblance to the Elizabethan stage, with starkness and simplicity, property men, and even the form of the stage itself common to both.¹ To this day, when visiting the Forbidden City in Peking, where the atmosphere of the last dynasty lingers, the court stage still stands. Here one can almost picture the emperor and his splendid royal court spellbound as the elaborately dressed cast brings to life on a stage over water to obtain a sonorous tone of voice from the actors, the famous scenes of China's romantic past history.

Ch'ien Lung prohibited women actresses, making drama a highly specialized art. This ban on women actors was not lifted until 1912. Following that time, women formed their own all-women companies, but it was considered

1. Ibid.

indecent to attend plays in Peking if any women appeared on the stage at the same time as men. So there grew up professional men actors who specialized in women's parts.

During the Ch'ing dynasty were composed two of China's historical tragedies which the Chinese enjoy seeing and hearing today.

5. Modern Period -- Age of Realism
1912-1944

In thinking of modern drama, one is apt to picture the Broadway type. Unlike the early fathers, Chrysostom and Augustine who had a righteous duty to perform in attacking the wickedness of their contemporary stage, our Reformation fathers didnot speak much about the evils of the theater. Our present day heritage of disdain for the stage is the direct result of the attitude¹ of our pilgrim and puritan fathers who couldnot say enough against the dire wickedness of the theater. Hence the whole dramatic method had an evil reputation. But with the comparatively recent interest in the dramatic method has come the recognition that there were two things our forefathers didnot

1. Overton; op. cit., p. 36

reckon with; "First, the dramatic impulse whose roots run deep in the human race; the second, the essentially dramatic nature of the Christian story and of Christian worship."¹

The influence of the West upon China had a pronounced effect upon their drama as well as upon other phases of their life. In 1904, Wang Chung Sheng founded the "Sun Society of Spring", which presented European drama including a version of "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Later a group of Chinese students who had studied the technique of modern Japanese drama organized the "Spring Willow Dramatic Society."² This strange beginning of modern drama with its intensely foreign accent didn't appeal to the populace who were steeped in their traditional music-drama. As a result this society soon died from unpopularity, but had its repercussions in the province of Kiangsi. There one member of the society gained financial backing from a wealthy citizen, Chang Chen, who endowed a dramatic club in Nantun. He believed drama to be an instrument of great potential force in making over society, and felt that with the proper use of the theater, his fellow countrymen could be helped to become

1. Overton; op. cit., p. 30

2. Leung, George K.; Modern Theater, Asia, 1936, p. 103

honest and patriotic.¹ In the local high schools students were taught the dramatic art. They then travelled through their native villages and towns, paying their own expenses, presenting plays in the village temple courts, spreading propaganda against opium smoking and foot-binding, and creating political agitation.

Modern drama has shown communistic influence. Mr. Leung states: "The frequent appearances of Dr. W.W. Yin, Foreign Minister to U.S.S.R. in photographs with the actor Dr. Mei Lan-fang, when the latter toured Moscow is symbolic of the new attitude."² Missionaries recently returned from West China tell of seeing propaganda plays, sponsored by the Chinese government, which show marked communistic influence. The stage is bare, the actors simply dressed, and the plays deal with present life situations.

Practically from the beginning, this new drama has been in the hands of amateurs -- theatrical groups of educational institutions or groups giving charity plays. In 1934, the China Travelling Dramatic Association was organized, making a serious effort to do professional

1. Zucker; op. cit., p. 112

2. Leung; Modern Theater, Asia, Feb. 1936, p.104

work and for the first time putting the new type of drama on a commercial basis. For the most part, acting in the new drama has been mediocre compared to the highly stylized art of old-style Chinese roles. Truly talented actors are few indeed. The aim of the new society, (China Travelling Dramatic Association), with its able president, T'ang Hwai-ch'iu, is idealistic. The actors are not paid, but form a co-operative. Educated classes support them. Among their repertoire is a version of Tolstoy's "Resurrection." ¹

An interesting experiment was carried on by Hsiung Foo-shi in connection with the Mass Education movement at Tinghsien in Hopei province, under the direction of Dr. James Yen. "As yet, very little modern drama has been brought to the village and farming populations. It should be borne in mind that the great masses in the rural districts closely associate their plays with performances given in temples in honor of the gods, in thanksgiving for crops. The gods, seated at their shrines, witness the open air performances on stages situated opposite them and well in their view." ² Hsiung said, unpacking his bag at the Peking National Fine Arts College on his return to his position as professor, "I wanted to prove

1. Leung; op. cit., p. 105

2. Leung, G.K.; Asia, op. cit., p. 105

that drama should be given to the largest number of people, all the people -- the masses.¹ He presented with his group of students educational and instructive plays on the subjects of agriculture, illiteracy and public health. The experiment was highly successful.

Modern drama can be divided into four types of activity and growth:

1. 1906-1916 A time of dearth in native plays.
2. "Patriotic Plays" produced, started by the student revolt in 1919. No development of dramatic art.
3. Scholarly plays by Chinese playwrights who had studied in Europe and the United States. Too scholarly and Western to appeal to the masses.
4. Propaganda plays -- for the common people. Proletarian, and anti-imperialistic plays produced, as well as plays for instruction.

Included in the last group are the efforts of students of several colleges such as Nankai University in Tientsin (formerly), who travel to the country at festival season, presenting plays for rural education. This method

1. Ibid.

is largely used among the schools and colleges in West China today. Madam Chiang, for example, sponsors organized groups of twenty to thirty high school girls headed by college students who tour the villages, giving educational plays dealing with life in war time. Military education among the camps is done by a special dramatic group sponsored by the Chinese government. The New Life movement is financing a campaign of education by drama for illiterate villagers, through the agency of the National Youth Movement. The two ideas stressed by them are Resistance and Reconstruction, with emphasis on the latter.¹

A Chinese drama critic concludes thus: "It is to be hoped that more playwrights will write actable dramas. Good stories, good ensemble acting and intelligent directing are absolutely necessary. Only if these are forthcoming can the modern Chinese theater be sure of its life, and catch up with the theater of other lands."²

D. Summary and Conclusion

In reviewing the history of Chinese drama, it was discovered that the origin of drama not only in China but universally, was in a form of religious rite.

1. From conversation with Dr. Newton Chiang

2. Leung: *Asia*, op. cit., p. 105

As the rise and fall of drama is traced, a correlation of its history to that of the thoughts and interests of the peoples who used it is evident. It found its early beginnings in the ceremonial rites and choral dances which expressed men's desire to worship some deity. As long as drama expressed a religious motive, it thrived, but when it became ~~a~~ tainted by secularism and low morals, drama was no longer respectable and was even driven from the courts of monarchs in a non-Christian world. Despite her ignorance of Christian standards, China's ethical ideals have been a strict task master to her arts. The result has been their longevity and their valuable contribution to the Western world as well.

Tracing through its development in China, the Yuan period was found to have been the time when drama really discovered herself as an art, even though a crude one. The Ming dynasty -- fourteenth through the seventeenth Centuries -- rescued drama which had fallen low and put it on a more scholastic basis, making contributions of historical plays which still retain their popularity. The Ch'ing dynasty -- seventeenth to the twentieth centuries -- was found to have a more romantic tendency, and thus contributed much of that spirit to the more scholarly stage. The modern period of realism

brought the new element of Western influence into the stage, and a reaction against the highly conventionalized drama handed down from the past. Today in West China the old-style drama was found to be retained, with some modernization. The very fact that so many agencies and organizations are now using drama -- of the more realistic type to suit the need of mass education -- would tend to indicate the potentiality of drama among the Chinese people.

Viewing the present situation of drama in China, two definite types of drama appear, one almost opposed to the other -- one the old music drama which is artistic, the other, drama produced by the influence of the West which is realistic. Surely, by using a Platonic or Confucian golden mean, a type of dramatic method can be employed which will embody both art and realism, but will be shot through with a dynamic Christian message.

CHAPTER II

AN ANALYSIS OF CHINESE DRAMA

II AN ANALYSIS OF CHINESE DRAMA

A. INTRODUCTION

One doesn't go to a Chinese theater for an evening of quiet relaxation. Upon entering the door, one is confronted with what almost seems like bedlam. Everyone seems to be competing for an audience -- pedlers, servants, orchestra, and actors -- and the orchestra usually wins. The theater crowd is kindly, jolly, smoking, talking, water-melon-seed-eating, singular to China.¹ Tea is served, and occasionally hot damp towels come flying through the air -- quite disconcertingly -- for the refreshment of patrons. (They are always aimed well, and caught!) People stream in and out constantly, and men seldom remove their hats. The audience seems to pay no more attention to the stage than do diners to the music in an American restaurant.² The theater in China is primarily social, and there is much cordiality between friends. The whole is somewhat confusing at first glance, but as the plays go on, (many plays continue for hours -- some but single acts

1. Cf. Zucker, A.E.; The Chinese Theater, p. 10

2. Ibid.

of long plays, with the best given toward the end) order seems to appear out of chaos, and one really feels the spirit of the drama. Then it is that one begins to realize that Chinese drama is a fine art, and not only that, but that it is an outgrowth of the very fibre of the race, typifying its highest ideals; and that with its use of imagination, suggestion, humor, and conventions, it is indeed the expression of the culture of the Chinese people.

The factors contributing to Chinese drama will be discussed first, then the general traits and characteristics. The ideas of modern critics will be set forth lastly, with the purpose of understanding more fully the actual make-up of Chinese drama, so as to be familiar with it, and its revelation of the Chinese mind.

Throughout this analysis there will appear certain elements and characteristics which can be adapted to use in religious drama. These will be gleaned with the purpose of inculcating them into religious drama, for the sake of making it more comprehensible and more indigenous to the Chinese people.

Within this chapter the following names will appear most frequently as authoritative sources: Mr. George Leung - drama critic of his own native Chinese drama, and recognized

authority in his field, at present residing in this country; Mr. Chang Peng-chen, another drama critic residing in China; Mr. L. C. Arlington, formerly Post Office official in China, for many years resident of China, and a close observer of Chinese drama, concerning which he has gathered a considerable amount of valuable material; Mr. Fitzgerald, also resident of China for many years; Mr. Laufer, resident of Peking, for some time, and editor of the publication The New Orient, a series of monographs on Oriental culture; Mr. Freyn, former post-graduate student of Columbia University, who compiled a comprehensive Master's Thesis on the Chinese drama; Miss Spencer, whose book "Made in China" is a recent publication, written after considerable experience in China, and showing the true attitudes and atmosphere of various phases of life in China.

B. Factors Contributing to Chinese Drama

1. Imagination

Without imagination, Chinese drama cannot be understood. As childish as it may seem to have the mechanism of the stage completely revolve around imagination, with the proverbial property man nonchalantly pushing a cushioned chair under the prima-donna who is about to give a long dissertation, or with the dead arising and calmly walking off the stage, it is this power of suggestion which is the genius of Chinese drama. And indeed greatness is fundamentally simplicity. The Chinese people, much like children, possess vivid imagination, and their drama is based upon imagination. "Chinese audiences imagine all that has been left out" comments one writer,¹ and another says, "The Chinese see the real thing, if only it is in imagination."² This fact accounts for the morality play idea so predominant throughout Chinese drama.

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1. Leung, George K.; The Enjoyment of Chinese Drama, Vol. 6. p. 9.
 2. Arlington, L.C.: The Chinese Drama, 1938

2. Religion

Since drama is an outgrowth of a people's culture and thought, the religious contribution is naturally implied. A proof of the religious significance of drama in China might be found in the name of a theater somewhere near Peking -- "God and Demon Theater."¹ Festival days are celebrated by featuring plays. On New Year's Day -- the greatest festival day -- a play is given which portrays the gods' conquest of devils. For centuries theatricals were religious in both private and public theaters.²

The three predominant religions of China which have influenced drama so manifestly are Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Confucianism gives the moral background. The scholar (rather than the warrior) is venerated, and filial piety (covering all relationships) is the most outstanding virtue.³ As Mr. Leung puts it: "Religion and ethics are forces to be considered. Confucian ethics exalt filial piety, devotion of servant to master, loyalty of friend to friend, the worth of learning, etc."⁴

1. Cf. Freyn; The Chinese Theater, 1934. p. 42

2. Cf. Zucker, A.E.; op. cit. p. 196

3. Ibid.

4. Leung, Pacific Affairs, 1929, p. 176

Buddhism adds the romance of monks and nuns; through these the humorous element is introduced. The monks were always depicted as ignorant and sensuous.¹ "Buddhism peoples the stage with nuns and lazy, scheming, licentious monks; and provides many temple scenes."²

Contrasted against the coolness of Confucianism and the unfanciful ribaldry of Buddhistic influence, was the Taoist insertion of the supernatural and of ridiculous elements. With its mythological and ghostly figures, with its superstition, its fancy and imagination, "Taoism furnishes a veritable pantheon of demi-gods, fairies and supernatural animals Just as the three forces harmonize in the everyday life of the people, so they blend together in their contribution to the world of make believe."³

Chinese drama gives to the Chinese what morality plays used to give to the medieval mind. Its purpose is to "uphold eternity, not to picture life." Its function is never to criticize life, but to uphold the image of a lasting, moral world.⁴ The happy ending to Chinese plays is the outcome of righteousness and its victory over evil.⁵

1. Cf. Zucker, A.E.; p. 196

2. Ibid.

3. Leung, Pacific Affairs, 1929, p. 179

4. Freyn, H.; op. cit., p. 46

5. Ibid., p. 49

3. Western Culture

As has been previously shown¹, the Western invasion into China left an indelible imprint upon a nation which was perfectly satisfied with her own ancient culture.

Mr. Laufer says that the difference between the East and the West is not the trite mystic as opposed to the materialistic, but rather a non-ego-centric East against an ego-centric West. We of the West, says Mr. Laufer, are obsessed by the glorification of the individual -- thereby forming a standard of codification of individual rights. (As for example, Western artists inscribe their names on their works very visibly, and the artist is more prominent than his work.) In the East, continues Mr. Laufer, an individual's duty is to the state or family. Arches and tablets are erected to commemorate ideas rather than people. The result, he observes, is that there is a far greater true freedom² in the East, while the Western individual is fettered. Herein Mr. Laufer has discovered an interesting point of contrast, but it has exceptions.

1. See Ante p.14

2. Cf. Laufer, Barthold; The New Orient, 1933. Introduction.

However, Western culture has influenced every phase of life in China, including the stage. This has brought about a complete break from the old form of drama, and the formation of a new school of drama patterned after the European stage. So complete was the cleavage that the new type of drama might be classified under a totally different form of drama -- one which is entirely Western.

Even the old form of drama has shown signs of Western influence, with the introduction of a spirit of realism, stage tricks, lace and ruffles, and also occasional innovations such as the singing of a Western tune. Western melodrama, however, hasn't entered the Chinese theater as it has in India, where it has driven¹ out much of the native art.

Though the Western influence may never be a permanent ingredient in the development of Chinese theater, it has left its mark, and with the world growing ever smaller, doubtless there will be more changes evident in the future.

1. A. Zucker, A.E.; op. cit., p. 190

C. Characteristics of Chinese Drama

1. Types and Traits

It is said that the purpose of drama in the Middle Kingdoms was to divert, to edify, and occasionally to instruct. With this rather general purpose in mind, it may seem queer that the Chinese name for drama is hsi (戲), which means "to make fun of", "to ridicule." This reflection on the Chinese sense of humor so evident in their plays will be referred to later.

As has been said, an evening of drama in China constitutes a generous program. "It is the custom to present ten to twelve short fragments of long plays during an evening. Hence a patron must possess not only an imagination, but previous knowledge of background and the story of the plays which most of the audience have known since childhood."¹

Instead of the usual division into Tragedy and Comedy found in Western drama, in Chinese drama there are these two general types of plays: wen hsi -- quiet operatic works with much show, costumes, and sentiment. These are civil plays. And wu hsi -- noisy military works with historical content, bleary with kings and

1. Leung, G.K., Cross Currents in the Chinese Theater, Pacific Affairs, 1935, p.182

battle. One goes to hear the wen hsi, but to see the wu hsi.

One authority likens Chinese drama to Shakespearean plays. The most popular subjects are: Family drama; magic or mythological drama; satyric treatment of superstition (of which they are most fond); character dramas; historical dramas; and religious dramas. The two general types which predominate are either interesting stories centering in life, or stories dealing with the inevitability of fate. Except for gags of comedians, and lao-tan or old woman characters, there¹ is no stark realism.

Chinese drama like the early Greek, says another authority, deals with types rather than with characters, often using the mask for visual expression. A sort of fate rules -- a "blind struggle against accidents and not from inner² destiny foreshadowed from the outset by his own individual nature."

Still another writer likens the classical drama of China to Elizabethan plays, with almost identical projecting stage, simplicity of scenery, gorgeous cos-

2. Cf. Ibid.

2. Freyn, H.: op. cit., p. 43

tunes, female parts taken by male actors, and clowns.¹

There are superstitions galore, taboos, duties, and reams of idiosyncrasies associated with the theater. There is an accepted "bravo" and hiss, which like all other customs are simply understood.² The old play is the epitome of convention. The theater in China is not just a mirror of mankind, though it embodies the ideals and reflections of the people; nevertheless, as has been said, drama also presents aspirations and a means of escape. Above all the theater is a social function.

a. Tragedy

Tragedy is the highest dramatic art. The Greek drama presenting pure, unrelieved tragedy is not the type of tragedy found in Chinese plays. There are two main types of tragedy according to one author: Fate itself the dramatic attention, found in Greek tragedy; and interest in the character in the play. The latter is the type of tragedy found in Chinese drama unless nobility and sublimity could be called so.³ Hence the element of tragedy is there -- as in life -- but since

1. Cf. Zucker, A.E.; op. cit., p.196

2. Cf. Arlington, J.C.; op. cit., p. 31

3. Cf. Zucker, A.E.; op. cit., p. 3

righteousness always wins, the effect cannot be completely depressing. This is an indication of the type of people the Chinese have always been. No unrelenting pessimism dominates the thought and philosophy of any individual. Dr. Hu Shih says that the Chinese need a conception of tragedy instead of the eternally happy ending.¹

(Japanese plays on the other hand do have a far greater tendency to portray pure tragedy, which may be related to the practice of hari kiri which is not as popular a retreat from reality in China.)

b. Comedy

Perhaps one reason for the apparent balance of temperament in the Chinese people is their keen and almost child-like sense of humor. Again let us remember that the very name for theater, hsi means "to make fun of". It would be unfair to write of the Chinese in any capacity without presenting this outstanding national trait. So far does humor appear in the drama of China that there is no play without at least one sparkle of it. In fact, so characteristic is this sense of

1. Zucker, A.E.; op. cit., p. 180

humor in acting that even Christians cannot seem to refrain from introducing the ridiculous element into a supposedly serious play. This factor is the major objection expressed by Western leaders who have tried to use drama as a means of religious presentation. The Chinese improvise so readily that humor (which is so natural to them) creeps in unawares.

One author speaks of drama as the reflection of the race:

"The Chinese theater is one of masks and of characters created and defined by ancient traditions. It is this which brings it so near to the antique theater, the mystery plays, the 'comedia dell'arte', so near to all forms of theatrical art which are not the expression of individual personality, but the reflection of a race. It is an art which thus seems to express the moral traits of a people." 1

This excellent description of the theater as an expression of the people themselves reveals how Chinese drama, an art in itself, does portray the culture of the Chinese people, who, though bound by convention, are able to laugh through the tears of common suffering.

1. Quoted by Freyn, H.: op. cit. p. 42
(From the Preface by Jacobovleff Alexander.)

2. The Actor and the Art of Acting

In the West, "the play's the thing", while in China, "the actor's the thing."¹ Trained rigorously from childhood in the theater, an actor becomes master of his art. His training begins when he is six years or even younger. He must learn acrobatic feats first: he must walk out in the open air for an hour every day with his head thrown back and his mouth open to strengthen his voice, and he must have a special diet. Fifty-six actors make up one company, and each of them must learn from one to two hundred plays, perfectly, for there is no prompter on the Chinese stage.²

This severe training of the actors in China teaches them to coordinate their muscles and mind: adopt traditional patterns, and conventions; and encourage them to make their own contribution to the heritage of the stage.³

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1. Leung, G. K.; China Journal, Vol. 6, p. 9
 2. Cf. Spencer, Cornelia; Made in China, 1943. pp.167-175
 3. Chang, Peng-Chen: The New Drama and the Old Theater, Quoted In B. Laufer; op. cit., p. 328

Even modern audiences are contemptuous over the former types of actors because they represented the ill-literate who openly ignored the time-honored moralities of the people.

The actor's lack of time to study anything else has been one reason for his ignorance in the classical learning by which the scholars judged the learning of others.

In Japan there has always been a great veneration for actors, while in China as in old Rome, the actor has always been the object of contempt on the part of scholarly¹ men.

There are two principal types of characters in Chinese drama: sheng, or male impersonator, and tan, or female impersonator. There are six types of the latter. A female impersonator has a falsetto voice which is stronger than that of a woman -- but admittedly artificial. When the great male actors appeared on the stage, all female actors were given a vacation, as playing together was considered indecent. Speaking of men giving up the old time female impersonation, Mr. Leung asked: "Would we desert the old to welcome the new?"

1. Cornaby, W.A.; op. cit., p. 60

It would be to our own irrevocable national loss."¹

Though the new school has introduced much trickery, bright nitrogen lights on the stage, and foreign lace, it has been said of Dr. Mei Lan-fang, who is doubtless the greatest modern actor in China, "He cannot in the end, however, abandon old traditions, from which it may be understood how powerful the old school is."²

Acting editions of plays are seldom obtainable and if so, seldom reliable, for actors change their script to suit their tastes. "Players themselves seldom learn from books, but from one another, and if they learn a part, they never forget it, but will play it at a moment's notice."³

3. The Use of Music

Westerners are apt to look down upon the pentatonic scale, and upon melody to the exclusion of harmony, as a means of musical expression. Actually music has played a significant role in the history of China, and some tunes date back to the earliest recorded history.

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1. Leung, G.K.; China Journal, Vol. 5. p. 174
 2. Ibid., p. 180
 3. Arlington, J.C.; op. cit., pp. 30-31

Of this one authority says:

"The Chinese ear can detect in an instant the style of singing or music in a play The Chinese say that 'music is the soul of art.'; and that it 'calls out the strain in their hearts, the emotion of recognition and sacrifice', and that it is 'the inspiration of acting'. This is not strange with a people who practically do everything in music: they are born, they marry, they worship, and they die with music." ¹

Of primary importance is music. Real lovers of drama go to hear rather than to see a play (as is evidenced in old play houses in Peking where some of the seats run at right angles with the stage.) In the orchestra which is seated in full view of the stage, and is almost actually on it, "the hu ch'in or Chinese violin, its two strings being bowed with a horizontal movement, is the leading instrument for the vocal accompaniment." ² Drama is classified by the type of music which it employs. ³ The fact that none of the orchestra of four or more pieces -- violins, cymbals, flute and drum -- ever use a score demonstrates how natural music is to them.

1. Ibid. p. 21

2. Leung, G.K.; Public Affairs, 1929, p. 178

3. Cf. Zucker, A.E.; op. cit., p. 10

One can trace the melody of music back to Confucious. In 341 A.D. when the Chin memorial was presented to the throne by Ku Ch'in, they found that "the melody of pipes might inspire the hearer to just dealing, and the sound of horns, in union with propriety, while the mingled note of silken strings of chants of bells and drums might enrich and expand the faculties. For true music permeates the spirits and renovates the mind, and well-mannered dancers influence popular manners toward a condition of harmonious joyfulness."¹ Confucious speaking of music in the ancestral temple account of worship said that it harmonized the family into affection.

It is characteristic of Pekingdrama, as is thought true of ancient Greek drama, that actors spoke until their emotions became aroused to a high pitch, whereupon they poured forth their feelings in song.² "We modern Europeans and Americans seem to have given up the idea of music as a means for developing harmonious and moral souls."³

Tragedy and comedy are musical terms in China; and when one speaks of going to the theater, one says "to hear the theater."

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1. Cornaby, W.A.; op. cit., p. 66
 2. Leung, G.K.; Public Affairs, 1929, p. 178
 3. Zucker, A.E.; op cit., p. 192

Characters and their actions signify certain meanings:

A woman dressed in black -- poor woman

Certain masks designate certain types: Clown, scholar, villain, demon, etc.

Again, imagination and background are necessary to enjoy a Chinese drama. If a man carries a riding whip, and gallops across the stage, it is obvious that a horse and rider are implied. Simplicity is genius. Here again is evidence that Chinese drama is a fine art.

5. Drama's Relation to Literature

To compare drama with other forms of literature in China one must have a general picture of Chinese literature in mind. It has always been in classical form, not in vernacular. The scholar has always been the highest type of individual -- even so portrayed in the theater. And the highest government positions have been given to the foremost scholars at the yearly comprehensive examinations. Therefore, since drama has always been written in the vernacular form, not the classical, it "stands on a relatively lower level than

some of the other Chinese arts, for example, landscape painting and lyric poetry ----. Yet, though poor, "the Chinese actor has at his command consummate skill to hold the mirror up to life,"¹ says one writer.

Most well-known plays of China have three editions; one that is read, one that is learned by the actor, and one which the actor actually gives under the stimulation and inspiration of the audience.²

The language of the play does not attempt to arouse passion or pathos. Thoughts, however important and significant, are always expressed in a commonplace way. Gesture, caricature, tricks of tone, and suggestion, turn the work of the Chinese actor into an art differing from that of a Westerner who learns his part word for word. The Chinese dramatist depends upon his own sensitivity to respond to the attitude of the audience.³

Only a few present-day innovators consider the drama as literature. Dr. Hu Shih says that the Yuan dramas were far superior to others because of their poetic diction and content. Dramatists and novelists were not the best writers in Chinese literary history,

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1. Zucker, A.E.; op. cit., p. vii, Introduction
 2. Cf. Spencer, C.; op. cit., pp. 167-175
 3. Ibid.

but drama was for the people. An interesting comment might be inserted here -- China's literature -- including novels and plays -- is the least objectionable, morally, of that of any nation throughout history, whose civilization is continuous today. Policemen always have reserved seats at the theater. Gross immorality realistically presented is rigorously forbidden. There is no question of nudity on the Chinese stage, because it is never found, and apparently has no appeal,¹ though Mr. Cornaby says that crude, licentious theatricals are presented on the country stages in the evenings, in places² remote from official censorship.

"No Shakespeare or Sheridan wrote for the Chinese stage. On the other hand though the plays were not great literature, the standard of acting became very high and the art of the stage escaped the paralyzing influence of antiquarian classicism. Up to the very end of the empire and still today, the Chinese drama has remained vigorous and alive, showing no sign of petrification which attended the older arts. It has successfully resisted the influence of alien European dramatic tradition."³

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2. Cf. Cornaby, W.A.; cop. cit.
 1. Cf. Zucker, A.E.; op. cit., p. 90
 3. Fitzgerald, C.P.; China, 1938, p. 490

D. Evaluation of Chinese Drama

It is scarcely fair to speak in positive temporal certainties when one is dealing with a country which is undergoing internal renovation and yet as Mr. Dewy assures us, change is a most certain reality. Hence, through the changes which have effected China have come rather specific trends which do combine to influence the thought, art, and actions of the people.

Dr. Y. Y. Tsu has made the remark that:

"The trend of thought in China today is realistic, scientific, and humanistic, with emphasis on the social objective, 'The greatest happiness for the greatest number'".¹

Throughout China's history of philosophy the inner life was emphasized, a fact ^{which} tended to establish a "spiritual civilization." Europe on the other hand, during these past three hundred years has emphasized science and man's control of nature, a fact which made for a materialistic civilization, which eventually has led the world into wars. The influence of Western civilization upon China has brought her to a cross-roads. Now

1. Tsu, Y.Y.; Trends of Thought in Religion in China Today, 1938

an adequate philosophy of life is needed. Instead of religious faith there seems to be collective responsibility.¹

As has already been shown, the influence of the West upon Eastern drama is tremendous. One Chinese writer observes:

"Now prose plays are being written reflecting on life in the present day's complex social situation. For instance, pieces have been done taking as themes the experiences of the new industrial proletariat, the revolt of youth against the family and social restrictions, the exultations and disappointments of romantic love, and the indignation and resolute courage in facing the invading foes. New life experiences demand new forms of expression."²

Modern experiments are directed toward simplification, synthesis, and suggestiveness.

There are two main schools of thought concerning the new type of drama and its introduction into the life of modern China. Mr. Johnson says:

"What the Chinese love best to see on the stage is a sort of fairyland, something to take them out of themselves and the work-a-day world what they want, and in this they are far from being unique among the races of the world, is something that ordinary life has never given them and can never give. They have no craving for a drama that is true to life."³

1. Ibid.

2. Chang, Peng-chen: op. cit., p. 337

3. Johnson, Quoted by Freyn; op. cit. p. 60

After World War I there was an influx of Western play subjects with prolific translations between 1925-30. A few Western plays were more popular than the Chinese plays, and are so today. Mr. Leung says, "Chinese playwrights have produced little that can be used on the modern stage." Most of the modern plays lack "soul."¹ Mr. Freyn suggests: "Perhaps the break with the past was too sudden; at any rate, the fervent movement was purely academic and did not win in the long run, popular favor."² From people accustomed to a drama that was a process of extracting essence from actuality, the realistic school would arouse no lasting response. Those who really enjoy the modern theater are those educated in Europe, and they are few.³

In the other school where the trend of thought is more liberal and actually tends to outmode the old-style music drama, are two bitter critics.⁴ Dr. Hu Shih, (who was instrumental in introducing vernacular text-

1. Leung, G.K.; Asia, Feb. 1936, p. 104
2. Freyn, H.; op. cit., p. 58
3. Ibid., p. 66

books in the place of the old time classical ones in Chinese universities), says the changes in literature were a gradual progress from low origin to classical perfection, and in the history of Chinese drama he saw the same continuous struggle against formal restrictions, gradually overcome. Useless survivals of certain conventions like military plays, falsetto speech, musical accompaniment, and the like, should be cast out of Chinese drama, as the "aside" was thrown out of Western drama, he insists. Besides a new conception of tragedy, (as has already been referred to), Dr. Hu Shih¹ feels the Chinese need a conception of dramatic economy.

Dr. Soong, formerly of the Peking National University is also derogatory in his criticism of the music-drama. He calls it "comic opera," a burlesque, and mad house. He suggests adopting European technique entirely, so equipping the stage that the theater will be prepared to be a powerful instrument for new doctrines and modern ideas. He insists that they present life in-²stead of morality.

1. Cf. Freyn, H.: op. cit. p. 65
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 66

Both of these gentlemen have been educated in Europe and in America, and have become acquainted with the Western stage and ways. Mr. R. F. Johnston criticizes the Chinese play "for neglecting modern conditions and problems, for being out of touch with everyday life, and for not making the slightest contribution toward an intellectual awakening." But he concedes the influence of the stage to be an ethical force, with its clear definitions of good and evil, and reward and punishment, though the latter, he says, is not true to life.¹

Mr. George Leung holds the middle view between these two more extreme views, and expresses it in a personal letter:

"Leaders in the modern movement, although of the opinion that the old music-drama should be preserved at its best as an example of Chinese art, nevertheless claim that it is an unsuitable vehicle to express modern aspirations. Modern youth, they believe, no longer desires poetry and escape in the theater, but reality and inspiration."²

The drama of the future is tied up in the fate of the whole of Chinese culture. The future will be what the Chinese people want it to be. As one puts

1. Cf. Ibid., p. 49

2. Leung, G. K.; Asia, Feb., 1929, p. 103

it: "A new order is bound to arise from the present chaos which will reconcile the traditions of three thousand years and the aspirations of modern humanity." ¹

Mr. Leung speaking of the new dramatic material states:

"Writers of contemporary Chinese drama who know their own country and who have their proper technical training abroad, should help remedy the state of affairs. Some good work has already been done but the ground which has but recently been ploughed needs much fertilizing and careful planting." ²

Here is a people, steeped in the conventions and traditions of their ancient rich heritage, suddenly challenged by a new and effective way of portraying reality, searching for a vital philosophy of life adequate to meet the staggering needs of their souls. It would be an irreparable loss if Westerners, from whom the Chinese first got Western drama along with other contributions, do not seize this tool indigenous to China, fit it, shape it, according to modern lines -- not forgetting the old conventions -- and use it for a potent force to challenge individuals into the highest way of life, and the only adequate philosophy.

1. Freyn, H.; op. cit., p. 67

2.

Leung, G.K.: op. cit., Asia, p. 105

E. Summary and Conclusion

In analyzing the dominant religions of China, to discern its contributing factors, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, were found to have lent considerable atmosphere, and even motive to the plays. The culture of the West effecting China in so many fields, had its inevitable influence upon her drama also.

In the study of the characteristics of Chinese drama, two types were discovered -- the military, noisy play, and the civil, quiet play. The Chinese stage was seen to be like to that of Greece and England (both Elizabethan and Shakespearean) by different authors. The Chinese actor, highly trained and specialized, was found to bear considerable influence upon the convention of the stage. Music which is the background of every Chinese play, was discovered to be indigenous to the very life of the people themselves. Many stage peculiarities in articles, actions, and colors were found to be symbolic.

Drama in China was always written to be acted, and hence much of it is in the vernacular. It was found that it thus had little in common with the

classical form of literature. Since the classical form has been replaced by vernacular today, a great field was found to be open to better dramatists at the present time.

It was apparent that the drama in China is the expression of the culture of the people. Without being totally depressing, their tragedy is as it appears in life -- not unrelieved by comedy. Indeed the Chinese is apt to hide his deeper sorrow by a humorous remark. Comedy then has a very real place in the lives of these people. It is expressed on the stage by improvisations and spontaneous side remarks as well as in the very content of the play itself, which is often extremely humorous. However, Chinese drama as a whole cannot be divided into tragedy and comedy, as is the drama of the West. They are elements, rather, of the expression of the culture of the Chinese people.

In the general survey of the various reactions toward drama in China, there appeared two principle points of view. One -- that the old-style drama must eventually be outgrown and supplanted by the modern, European type; and the other that despite time and innovations, the old-style music drama will remain as a

national art, while the new style drama with its realistic trend, its ability to portray life and its complex problems, is a necessary addition to the present-day life in China yet, and will not replace the old-time cultivated art. The chief advocate of the latter view was seen to be Mr. George K. Leung who feels that there is a tremendous opportunity in the European-style drama in its ability to portray present problems, and in its use as an educative instrument, though he laments the fact that there is such a dearth of good plays which will adequately perform these functions.

The exact purpose of the foregoing analysis is to discover the values inherent in Chinese drama which may be inculcated into religious drama in China so as to make it more appealing and vivid for the people participating in it. These values will be discussed in the following chapter, with suggestions as to their use.

CHAPTER III

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS COMMON TO EVANGELISM
AND DRAMA

III. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS COMMON TO EVANGELISM AND DRAMA

A. Introduction

Chinese drama has been reviewed with the object of obtaining a deeper understanding of its background and significance. In order to determine its effectiveness as an instrument of ^{an}evangelism, it will be necessary first to discuss the nature of evangelism. The value of the dramatic method will then be considered to discover the potentiality in that method which makes it adequate for the important task of evangelism.

The sources which will be most frequently used are: Those concerning evangelism: Mott, Zwemer, and Paton, all active in the Christian World, and authors of numerous books dealing with the subject of evangelism and the foreign mission enterprise; Loomis whose work with drama is outstanding; Overton, whose book on drama in education is authoritative; Betts and Hawthorne, and Ferris, also experienced authors in educational dramatics; Hubbel and Beaty, dramatic historians; Fred Eastman, outstanding dramatic instructor; Marie Adams, missionary, experienced with religious drama in China; Arlington and Leung, authorities in the field of Chinese drama.

B. Basic Factors in Evangelism

1. Evangelism Defined.

In this day when the church has had to face such gigantic social needs and demands, church men and women have had a tendency perhaps to overstress the social message of the Master to the neglect of the preceding part of the great commandment which He gave, which is of course, the fundamental stimulus for the second part and must precede it in actual life. To quote Dr. Zwemer:

"Throughout the long centuries both Roman Catholic and Protestant men of God have agreed that primarily missions is not a philanthropic or political or secular work. It is a spiritual and religious work. It deals with the other-worldly and the eternal values. It is to preach the Gospel to make Jesus known to all men; to evangelize the nations; to carry the message of salvation to every living soul." ¹

The Encyclopedia Britannica defined evangelism as that term which "stands for a certain interpretation of Christianity emphasizing the objective atonement of Christ, the necessity of new birth or conversion, and salvation through faith." ² Dr. Adolph Keller has put it thus:

Into All The World,

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1. Zwemer, Samuel M.: op. cit., p. 131
 2. Encyclopedia Britannica; Vol. XIX, p. 240

"The central theme for present day's preaching is the Cross, the unfathomable depth of the world's sin and the unfathomable depth of God's love as revealed in Christ who died for us that we might live."¹ Dr. L. P. Larsen of Denmark makes the statement:

"Evangelism is the work which aims at giving men an opportunity to know the Gospel of Christ as 'the power of God unto salvation.' Not to know and receive Western form of civilization. Nor is it simply to know the teachings of the Christian Church and to adopt its form of life. This work may be done by preaching to men the good news and by giving them, where possible, such relief as they need in their lives. Both these ways were followed by Christ Himself, ² and were set by Him before His disciples."

Dr. John R. Mott defines the core of evangelism:

"The core of evangelism is the presentation of the Gospel -- the Christian message that God loves mankind, and has sent His Son into the world to save men through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son and the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. The Gospel concerns the individual it involves the redirection and remaking of his life."³

In short, evangelism is the means of communicating the message of the Cross to individual people. It is the call to repent, to confess sin, and in the light of the Cross of Christ and His resurrection, to live a new, abundant, and purposeful life in Him. It is dynamic, not static.

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1. Keller, Adolph, Quoted in Zwemer, S.M.; op. cit. p. 19
 2. Studies in Evangelism, Edited by William Paton, 1938, p. 49
 3. Ibid., pp. 53-54

As in the first century, so today, the power of the Holy Spirit is active in the world, and evangelism depends upon this power, and not upon man's ingenious ability. Rather, man's ability can be used to its most worthy end only when it is the instrument of the Holy Spirit, and yielded to the Plan of God.

2. The Specific Appeal of the Evangelistic Message to the Chinese People

To a life full of poverty, disease and drabness, such as that of the ordinary peasant in China, especially since the war, the message of future hope is most welcome. Furthermore, since Christians are in the minority in China, the assurance of a constant Presence and source of strength amidst ridicule, criticism, and uncertain conditions, is most appealing. To a civilization and culture in which the importance of ancestors and posterity so completely engulfs the individual, the realization of personal worth and equality as found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives new life, and is therefore most challenging.

As an outcome of the influence of Christianity, the New Life Movement was established in China. It is an active power today, though not specifically religious. Its principles are basically Christian in their emphasis on becoming

a new individual -- morally, politically, and economically. In the Christian message of New Life in Jesus Christ, this Movement would find the needed dynamic.

Pascal in his Thoughts on Religion reviews the centrality and completeness of the evangelistic message. It might well be applied to fit China's particular need:

"Jesus Christ is the center of everything, and he who does not know Him knows nothing of the order of the world and nothing of himself. In Him is all our felicity and virtue, our life, our light, our hope; apart from Him there is nothing but vice, misery, darkness, despair, and we see only obscurity and confusion in the nature of God and our own." ¹

Hence in evangelism there runs this central theme which meets the needs of every individual, in China as well as everywhere; Jesus came that man might have life, and might live more abundantly -- "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." ²

3. The Effect of Evangelism upon Personality.

Ever since the days that Christ drew great crowds on the hills of Galilee because of his attractive personality, and down through the centuries, individuals have met Christ face to face and have become transformed. This is still the test of effective evangelism. Several aspects of this transformation will be discussed.

1. Pascal, quoted by S.M. Zwemer; op. cit., p. 39

2. Hebrews 13:8

a. The Emotional Element

As a natural reaction to over-emotionalism in the extensive revivals in the last century in America, there has arisen a feeling of caution among many church people lest emotion be the ruling element in religious faith to the exclusion of intellectual understanding and rational thinking. There has developed an idea among non-church people on the other hand, that religion is all emotion. The truth probably is between the two. Unless religious faith touches the deepest emotions of men, it obviously cannot become a part of that individual.

In a current play a family endeavors to change a lad who is thoroughly indoctrinated with Nazi teaching. No one in the group can make any impression on him, for their method is wrong. They all fail except one -- a progressive teacher who realizes she can do nothing with the child unless she makes him cry. When the child breaks down and weeps, he becomes teachable and reasonable.¹ The avenue of approach to an individual's deepest feelings are through his emotions. Evangelism provides a transformation of an individual's deepest being, and therefore must be associated to some extent with the emotions.

1. Tomorrow the World, by James Dow and Armand D'usseau

b. The Stimulus to the Development of Personality

When it is ego-centric, the personality finds itself bound by limitations. It is cramped, and not satisfied. But when that personality is transformed, there opens before him the plan of His Creator for his life. Satisfaction comes with having a purpose in living. It is a dynamic rather than a static satisfaction, for his world becomes more than the world about him, and he sees his social responsibilities in the light of his Christian conviction. He is no longer living for self, but for a greater purpose. As Dr. Mott expresses it:

"The Gospel likewise and equally meets the social needs and problems. Man cannot live in isolation. Social adjustments are often as important as personal integration Nothing less than the carrying out of the will of God fully in all the relationships of life can completely express the idea of Kingdom which Christ taught must be the object of the quest of His followers." 1

There is no static platitude in the evangelistic message, and therefore no marking time for the personality which has been transformed by it. Spiritual living should be spiritual growing; thus the transformed individual grows by constantly measuring his life by that of the Ideal -- Christ Jesus. In the words of St. Paul

1. Mott, John R.: Evangelizing the World in This Generation, p. 30

whose personality nearest approached that of his Master:

"Not that I have already reached perfection, but I am pressing on to see if I can capture it, because I have been captured by Jesus Christ Forgetting what is behind me, and straining toward what lies ahead, I am pressing toward the goal, for the prize to which God through Christ Jesus calls us upward." ¹

Evangelism, to be effective, then, must have in its message the stimulus to Christian growth, and development of the personality in all relationships, both to God and man.

C. Basic Factors in the Dramatic Method

1. The Effectiveness of Drama as a Method

One need not search far to discover how many agencies are using drama today as a means of communication. In the educational world it is used for instruction; in the political world, for propaganda; and in the amusement world, for entertainment. Dr. Fosdick, after much experience in using drama in the church of which he is the minister says, "We cannot leave to the monopoly of Secularism an agency of beauty so able to serve the spiritual life as drama." ²

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1. St. Paul: Phillipians 3: 12-14 (An American Translation, Edgar Goodspeed)
 2. Alexander, P.C., and O.P. Goslin: Worship Through Drama, 1930, p. x

A teacher in India, one who has had much experience in using drama, delineates three major characteristics of drama as a method:

- (1) Drama is a composite art, requiring for its full expression and perfection an understanding of, and proficiency in other arts.
- (2) Drama is at once a most vivid and most subtle artistic medium, and is therefore a powerful instrument for the convergence of ideas.
- (3) In consequence drama can be, under right conditions, an equally potent instrument of moral, artistic and intellectual degradation.¹

The essential value of drama is well expressed by one author:

"The essential value in the dramatic technique is that ideas are made so concrete, facts become so vivid, that an individual shares the experience of the dramatic presentation, and it becomes a real and significant part of his thinking and feeling."²

The Greeks thought drama so significant that it was maintained in Greece for nearly five hundred years. Its great contribution was an aesthetic one, but the state considered this so important that by law all business was stopped during the plays, all law courts were closed, and all prisoners were released from jail. Interestingly enough, the chief seats were reserved for priests (denoting

1. Cf. Hatch, E.G.: Drama For the Village Teacher, Teaching India, Dec. 1931, p. 84
2. Alexander and Goslin: op. cit., p. xviii

the religious significance of the plays.) The result of this devotion to drama was that Athens with a population of thirty thousand gave the world more great poets and artists than the United States in the same length of time, with a population of one hundred eleven million.¹ Another author adds: "Since first the poetry of Aeschyllis rolled down the hills of Hellas, the function of the drama has been educational, and in an ancient and noble sense, religious."²

Drama is inevitable because it is so natural. As Mrs. Overton observes:

"Dramatic presentation secures a natural response. By natural response is meant the interest that is secured because it arises within consciousness as it reacts to its environment instead of being arbitrarily imposed by some other consciousness. Artificial interest, on the other hand, comes into existence by some special act of another person rather than by the natural course of events. Artificial interest lacks essential permanence, while interest aroused through the ordinary association with things and people is ordinarily self-perpetuating and may be regarded as genuine natural interest."³

Man longs for loveliness to brighten the monotony of daily life. Having been robbed of the reverent and deeply satisfying experience of religious ritual, he has tried to satisfy himself with such dubious substitutes as the

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1. Cf. Eastman, Fred: Modern Religious Drama, 1928, Introduction, p. v.
 2. Loomis, Amy C.: The Drama at Fountain Street, International Journal of Education, Feb. 1942, p. 14.
 3. Overton, Grace S.: Drama in Education, 1927, pp 70-71

intensely emotional revival meeting and sermons that are overdone. To fill this craving in man for a dignified, beautiful worship experience, and to make man aware of his responsibilities in the world in which he lives, the drama offers the non-liturgical church a valuable ally.¹

With the effect of drama so pronounced, it is no wonder that the Protestant Church today is realizing the potency of this method of expression and communication of a message, and is becoming more interested in its technique.

2. The Universal Appeal of Drama

That drama is universally appealing is an obvious fact. Every age and every race enjoy a good play -- because drama is life and men are all creatures whose business is living. Indeed, life can become so vivid on the stage that lives in the audience as well as among the cast are often affected, with an eternal significance. Dr. Dewey, in speaking of the universal appeal of drama says: "Drama deals with men in groups, and men in action. It shows action rather than talks about it. It does not paint life but sets it before us. It shows us man's interior nature working itself out as an objective fact."²

1. Cf Loomis: op. cit., p. 14

2. Dewey, John: Psychology, p. 321, Quoted in Overton: op. cit., p. 82.

One minister witnessing the effectiveness of religious drama in its power to appeal told of a three-year experiment in his church. The drama-sermon was a regular part of the winter Sunday evening services. This experiment continued for three years with the result that the congregation of a handful increased to the capacity of the church. Eighty new members joined the church, and scores entered into the activities there. The church giving was multiplied almost ten times.¹

To the Chinese, regardless of background or education, the appeal of drama is especially great, as has already been pointed out. As a people, the Chinese are fundamentally curious and eager to learn and therefore respond readily to drama. Being an indigenous art, moreover, drama is a more natural means of approaching the Chinese than other more foreign methods.

3. The Effect of Drama upon Personality

a The Emotional Element

Since drama is such a universal avenue of appeal, especially to the Chinese, the following statement seems to explain the innate reason: "The theater today no

1. Candler, Martha: The Drama in the Religious Service, 1922, p. 46

longer makes its appeal to ordinary instincts -- it serves¹ as a stimulant, an excitant to higher emotions." Another author in stating the use of drama in the teaching of religion declares that as soon as the dramatic method is used, an emotional quality becomes infused into the ideas to be communicated. For emotion is the connecting link² between facts and life.

When one is aware of the psychology of the crowd, one realizes the tremendous effectiveness of a good play when it is well done. The great characters of a play are motivated by emotion rather than by reason. Indeed, if the emotions are not stirred, the potentiality of drama has not been utilized, for the really great play is one that first profoundly stirs one's emotions, then directs them by the power of some great idea. The theme progresses by logical action prompted by genuine emotion.³

Sinceⁱⁿ evangelism, as has been said, emotion plays a major part, drama, with its potentiality of touching the emotions, naturally lends itself to the conveyance of the great and challenging Christian message.

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1. Candler: op. cit., p. xi
 2. Cf. Overton: op. cit., p. 115
 3. Cf. Ibid., p. 131

b. The Stimulus to the Development of Personality

Among the inherent values of using drama is the effect it has upon the personalities of the actors and of the audience. True actors are not merely entertainers, but are a group of people working with a purpose. The effect that the actor or interpreter, (for the actor is an interpreter) has upon the audience depends upon his own interpretation and sincerity.

In evaluating drama as a means of expressing personality, Dr. Dewey says: "It consummates ... the range of fine arts, because in dramatic form we have the highest ideal of self, personality displaying itself in the form of personality. The idea and mode of embodiment are both personal, and beyond that art cannot go, for in this man finds himself expressed."¹

Not only is personality expressed through drama, but it is also developed. One missionary who has done a great deal with the use of drama witnesses to the response being most gratifying. Young people who would not be reached spiritually any other way, were profoundly touched by the dramatic approach. Personality expression and development are both revealed in her experiences:

1. Dewey, J.; Quoted in Overton: op. cit., p. 4

One girl who is now doing an outstanding piece of work in the New Life Movement in West China, after playing the part of Isaiah in a play came to this missionary and gave this testimony:

"I have had a wonderful experience tonight! I come from a Christian family and am a fourth generation Christian My grandmother, you and others have longed for me to see God's call to Christian work. Tonight is the first time I ever really answered God's call to me. As I was answering God's call to Isaiah there in the play tonight, I was not imitating Isaiah, I was answering God's call to me. I forgot everything else. Just God and I were alone on the stage. From tonight I am in God's hands for whatever He wants me to do." 1

Another girl who having been part of the audience of the same play, and who had been drifting spiritually for ten years, told the missionary:

"God has never been a real person to me till tonight. As I sat through that play I realized for the first time what my sainted preacher father and you have always said to me. I know now that God can be a real presence, nearer than breathing. I am going out from this night on to find Him in a deeper way." 2

In one play the director had placed in the part of the rich young ruler a boy who needed to play the part. He played it so vividly that many young people there were drawn into a deeper relationship to Christ. From that day on people noticed the transformation of the lad himself.

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1. Adams, Marie: Spiritualizing Chinese Youth Through Dramatics, The Chinese Recorder, 1940, p.356
 2. Ibid.,

He had told the director: "I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to be in this play. I want you to know that I can never be the same again. From tonight I've sold out to Jesus Christ."¹

A small child was in one play -- the son of a seminary student. At home later, when his father recounted the success of the play, stressing costumes and lights, he broke in: "But Daddy, you have forgotten the most important thing: If we in the play do not show the spirit of Jesus, those who see it will not learn to love Him."² Through the times of quiet and prayer which came naturally during the rehearsing of the play, this child had gleaned the true spirit and purpose of it. Years later, the experience still influenced his life.

Inherent within man's original nature is the desire to act, to copy, to create, and to live in imagination the life that is denied him by the bounds of his own personality. This dramatic urge is expressed differently at different stages in life. At first it is scarcely perceptible, but as it matures, it becomes a potent force in the development of personality. It is a valuable instrument in the skilled teacher's hands for making truth vivid, and for linking religion to life.³

1. Ibid., p. 357

2. Ibid., p. 358

3. Cf. Betts and Hawthorne: op. cit., p. 232

Indeed, with an understanding of this urge to act and with a creative imagination, the Christian leader can accomplish much by way of personality development. In writing of the possibilities of using this instinct in young people one author says:

"When this God-implanted instinct which so often finds its only expression in the lighter funny (sometimes silly) type of 'plays' can be guided into an expression in noble words, dignified action, and beautiful settings, then a real victory has been achieved, a real need has been met, and achievement attained of which one may well be proud." ¹

Though the prepared play is not truly under the heading of educational drama, still in the presenting of the prepared play, it is obvious that educational values are by no means lacking. Indeed, for an adult, the greatest educational value will be found in the formal, printed play, where character is analyzed, as it is traced through the development of the plot and actually lived by the actor every day. Some of the most important decisions must be met by young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty. In a well-chosen drama the answer to a particular problem may be obtained. One author concludes with the remark: "As for the relative educational value of the different types of dramatic material, we have found

1. Boyd, Charles A.: *Worship in Drama*, 1924, p. 4

that for young people and adults, the play has the highest value."¹

Another author gives a summary of its values:

"The prepared play has power to exert a tremendous influence over players and audience as well. It grips the imagination, stirs the emotions, kindles enthusiasm as it teaches graphically and vividly great lessons. That the prepared plays have great educational value, when they have been selected with extreme care and produced with skill, there can be no doubt."²

Another phase of character development is that of the increased responsibilities which come with maturity. One educator says:

"But even stronger and more clear is the challenge of the real need to the teacher of young people, especially those in their teens, because of the increased capabilities of appreciation which have come with the years, the richer possibilities of interpretation, and the ability to undertake a real task and hold to it until its accomplishment."³

The power of drama in the field of character education can hardly be exaggerated, since only as a person possesses the power to enter appreciatively into another's personality, can he be able to help him. "Personal appreciation, and the power to enter into the lives of others," says one author, "and to realize how they feel and react to situations is an element of great importance in the kind of character that religious education seeks to foster."⁴

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1. Ferris, A.B.: op. cit., pp. 36,37
 2. Betts, G.H. and M.O. Hawthorne: Method in Teaching Religion, 1925, p. 362
 3. Boyd, C.A.: op. cit., p. 4
 4. Overton, G.S.: op. cit., p. x

D. Summary and Conclusion

In discussing the basic factors in evangelism, evangelism itself was defined and its significance analyzed. The specific appeal of the evangelistic message to the Chinese people was then discussed. It was found that that message meets their needs in an adequate way.

In the discussion of the effect of evangelism upon personality, several underlying elements were discovered. The emotional element was found to be outstanding as the message of evangelism is one which concerns the deepest feelings in humankind. The personality when truly effected by evangelism, is challenged to face a new life. This new life was found to transform the individual, and to lead him into a new world of thought and action -- life with a purpose. In this new life that new self was found to develop and grow toward the likeness of Christ, and thus live more abundantly, so as to become a personality better adjusted to life.

The effectiveness of the dramatic method was then shown. Here again, it was found that the appeal of drama was universal. The effect of Christian drama upon personality was discovered to be one which was based upon emotions, appealing to the deepest and finest in man.

Personality was found to be profoundly affected by drama which was carefully chosen. The dramatic instinct was found to be the drive to the expression of personality. It was shown that by the character education of the prepared play, personality could be developed, individuals could learn to face perplexing problems, and grow spiritually.

Since drama as a vehicle of communication has in it the elements of approach and potentiality of individual development, which suit the dynamic of evangelism, it was concluded therefore, that drama was a most suitable means of evangelism in China.

CHAPTER IV

PRINCIPLES OF THE USE AND PRODUCTION
OF CHRISTIAN DRAMA IN CHINA

IV. PRINCIPLES OF THE USE AND PRODUCTION OF CHRISTIAN DRAMA IN CHINA

A. Introduction

With the values inherent in drama in mind, there follows naturally the practical utility of these values with special references to evangelism in China. The principles underlying the use of Christian drama will first be discussed, then will follow a consideration of the essential elements to be kept in mind in the production of Christian drama in China. Possible adaptations of certain elements in Chinese drama to Christian drama will be considered here. Suggestions will follow including technical ideas and dramatic services and plays. It will be obvious that the directions for production included in this study must of necessity be brief. Hence there will be included a bibliography for further reference and additional suggestions.

Among the sources most frequently used will be: Martha Candler, and Phyllis Alexander and Omar Goslin whose work on the dramatic quality of worship is the result of experience. The latter have compiled a collection of Worship services using drama, which have been given in Riverside Church, N.Y.; Fred Eastman, noted authority on

religious drama, and instructor of drama in Chicago; Betts and Hawthorne and Overton, previously mentioned authors -- sources on technical and theoretical material in regard to the mechanics of producing a play; Marie Adams, missionary from China, whose experience in using drama among the youth has proved to be most successful.

B. The Use of Christian Drama

As wide as is the scope of possibilities for drama in Christian work, drama for the purpose of evangelism has a more limited scope. Since the purpose of this study concerns evangelism, the use of drama considered here is only that of promoting and inspiring worship. The chief function of the church has always been to nourish the spiritual aspirations of man. It has therefore provided a place, a time, and an atmosphere for the worship of God and for the deeper understanding of His Person. Worship has always been man's highest experience, and he has learned to vivify this experience and make it more real, by using such means as picture, song, liturgy, ritual and drama.¹ Hence drama in the church should never be thought of as entertainment, but as a means to a more intensely worshipful experience.²

Drama as a Technique of Worship

In the preface to a collection of dramatic worship services, Dr. Fosdick remarks: "The limitations of worship, reduced to a few exercises of devotion appended to a sermon are so narrow that we are facing now the inevit-

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1. Cf. Charters, Jessie A.: Young Adults and the Church, 1936, p. 28
 2. Cf. Candler, Martha: The Drama in Religious Service, 1922, pp. 18-19

able rebellion against such starvation diet."¹ Miss Candler upholds this statement, and speaks of the new vision of the church meaning the increased emphasis upon the use of drama for worship:

"Now the church with the new vision inevitably takes one step further, utilizing the drama for its own transcendent purposes in acting sermon, in ritual, liturgy and church holiday services. Magically, it is in drama so utilized that the pent-up social and spiritual impulses of the participants, suddenly released, take on a form, a beauty and vividness of appeal which even the sponsors of modern Biblical drama scarcely foresaw. It is here that the significance of Christian teaching blossoms anew, infinitely fresh, infinitely miraculous. 'O Come, let us worship Him in the Holiness of beauty ! It is a worship so vibrant with life and truth and sincerity² that the heart of even the unbeliever is touched."

Dr. Fosdick describes worship as a necessary function of the human soul. It is the experience of being lifted out of one's self by something loftier than one's self.³

In China "worship" (in the non-Christian sense) is a ceremony. Either before ancestral shrines in the home, or before idols in temples, the ceremony is truly only one⁴ of obeisance. As has been said this Chinese custom concerns an individual, and there is little corporate worship except among the priests. Hence the whole conception of

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1. Alexander, P.C., and O. Goslin: Worship Through Drama, 1930, Preface p. ix
 2. Candler: op. cit., p. xiii
 3. Cf. Alexander and Goslin: op. cit., p. ix
 4. Ante, p.5

corporate fellowship in worship is new to the Chinese, and must come as a natural outgrowth of the Christian life. However, since this original Chinese idea of "worship" is ceremonial and thus related to drama, the dramatic method or technique of developing the conception is logical. Moreover since the art of worship is fundamental to the Christian faith, not only the older generation, but also the youth should enjoy it and learn to appreciate its significance.¹ Here drama can be used effectively.

It is fitting then to use drama as a technique to aid in the development of a sense of worship in the Chinese people. As one author has put it:

"Dramatic expression is now, as it has always been, a great servant of worship'.... Drama lends itself naturally and significantly to the technique of worship which is needed today. It appeals ~~to~~ primarily to the feelings and the senses, by its use of light and color. The imagination is captured by the study of human experience which is unfolded. A sense of worship is gained by the participation of the actor and the communion of the worshipper through the drama that is portrayed Thus the drama offers to the church today a new and adequate method." ²

The term worship holds in it more than the idea of quiet communion between God and man. It must naturally imply the beginning of communal relationship between God

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1. Cf. Whiting, I.K.: Dramatic Services of Worship, 1925, p.xi
 2. Alexander and Goslin: op. cit., pp xix-xx

and man, and also the development of that relationship. Hence these two essential elements in worship will be considered, for in worship of God is found the dynamic power of evangelism.

a. Using Drama to Present a Challenge to
Christian Decision

The purpose of leaders in evangelistic work, using the dramatic method is to present a play so vivid in its reality, so true in its presentation, so reasonable in its logic, and so full of the message of salvation, that those seeing it will be deeply challenged to turn from their sins and accept the only Way of Life. This after all is at the heart of Christian drama. Then social action which is inspired by this stimulus will follow naturally.¹

This principal message can be communicated effectively only by a production that is adequate. With a reasonable knowledge of the values of indigenous drama, the production may be presented in a way and with an atmosphere that is familiar to the Chinese, and thus quickly gain the interest and confidence of the audience.

It hardly need to be said that even with a masterful and perfect production, unless the Spirit of God is the power working in and through the cast there can be little

1. Plays with social emphasis have their unquestionable importance in Christian work, especially in China, and are excluded here only because of the delimitation of the subject.

use in it, for it will not accomplish its purpose and must therefore be classed as entertainment. Only with the portrayal of the Truth through the Spirit of Truth can individuals be led into a knowledge of the Truth.

As an example of how drama can be used successfully as a challenge to Christian decision is an event that took place in Tientsin, China one Easter. While discussing the possibilities for a cast, one lad volunteered to play the part of Peter, because he himself had denied his Lord. The result was significant. The part was played so well, that the play became a real challenge to each person present. One girl who before had been antagonistic to Christianity came from the back of the room and openly confessed Christ as her personal Savior. (Such an act is the more outstanding in China because by doing it she "lost face."¹)

If this dramatic technique were more highly developed, and broader in its outreach in China, the results would naturally be proportionately great. A cast, presenting a powerful play of this and other types, traveling throughout the country to many villages (as do government sponsored groups for the purpose of spreading propaganda in West China today), would undoubtedly attract the majority of the villagers and have far-reaching results. As Miss Adams concludes:

1. Experience recounted by Miss Minta Stahl, Missionary in Tientsin, China

"Religious Dramatics is a real field in which to spiritualize the youth of China. Either the Church must see this and use its opportunity, or it will lose some of its youth and run in danger of having programs and Dramatics which will be no aid in this great business of spiritualizing youth. Let us use Religious Dramatics to spiritualize our youth of China." ¹

b. Using Drama to Promote Spiritual Growth

After a Christian enters upon the new life, that life must be nourished. Not only is Christian drama a potent means of bringing people to a decision but it is also an excellent method of aiding Christian individuals to search out their faults and try to rid themselves of them. And indeed this is the function of worship. This is done by the vivid, dramatic portrayal of human characters as against the character of Christ. This searching out of weakness, and resultant spiritual growth may be done effectively by using Bible plays and those centered around the Bible. Thus the personality is developed, and one of the chief aims of evangelism accomplished.

c. Possible Adaptations of Elements in Chinese Drama to Christian Drama in China

The following aspects of Chinese drama, old-style and

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1. Adams, Marie: Spiritualizing Chinese Youth Through Dramatics, The Chinese Recorder, 1940, p. 356

new may be used to great advantage in Christian drama. To use an alien means of presenting an old art would scarcely be effective. But to present a message to a people in a familiar, appealing, and indigenous method could scarcely help but be effective.

1. Simplicity of stage setting, costumes, and properties found in Chinese drama should be used in Chinese Christian drama, remembering that the imagination of the Chinese will supply all that is omitted.

2. Religious and Moral Conception. Of this conception already described under the characteristics of the Chinese stage, Mr. Arlington remarks: "With all its drawbacks the stage in China is a civilizing agency It has always a moral aim In all their finest drama, unrelieved badness has never been presented as the subject for amusement." ¹ The struggle between good and evil in which the good always wins is the theme of most Chinese plays. A Chinese drama critic says:

"The Chinese dramatist delights in teaching a moral lesson and often goes to what may appear unreasonable length to reward good and to punish evil. Variations on a favorite theme are common. For instance, the story of a husband

1. Arlington, L.C.: The Chinese Drama, 1930, p. 29

who has been away from home eighteen years and returns to test the faithfulness of his wife, may be seen in no less than three plays any of which may be presented in leading theaters in a city several times a year." ¹

The struggle of righteousness against evil found in plays of Christian content, will not therefore be alien to the Chinese.

Supernaturalism as portrayed in Taoist influenced plays especially, is a commonly accepted element. The Chinese who are fundamentally a mixture of mystic and pragmatic, have an innate sense of the supernatural. Thus it is not difficult for them to have a conception of Deity. They also have a primitive conception of the devil. Though pictured vividly in drama, the idea of evil spirits predominate in actual life also. These two conceptions, though fundamentally pagan, may be transferred into the concept of the conflict between righteousness and evil, when their significance is fully understood. Related to the supernatural is the idea of worship. Communal worship is totally strange to the Chinese people who have known nothing but individual obeisance. It is an art which is

1. Leung, George K.: Cross Currents in the Chinese Theater, Pacific Affairs, December 1935, p. 437

linked with Christian fellowship, and can be developed with practice.

a. Sacrifice is found much in Chinese drama as it is in all their life. (In a noted Buddhist play, a wife tries to release her husband's soul from Hades, by going through difficult tortures.) Self-discipline and sacrifice then, so fundamental in Christian living, are not alien to the Chinese, who have never been wasteful. Sacrifice is a term well understood, one which can draw the Chinese into a deeper understanding of the Gospel of the Supreme Sacrifice.

b. Filial piety, as Mr. Arlington remarks concerning the race, is true also of the plays: "As love of ancestral tradition is characteristic of the Chinese race, anything that has survived the test of the ages is, of necessity¹ they imagine, something not lightly to be discarded." Not only reverence for ancient tradition, but for parents, elders, and those in authority, is involved in Filial Piety. This trait can be transformed into a Christian conception of reverence and honor, not only for parents, but for God.

c. Immortality is another conception which is representative of many dramas. Mr. Laufer says the Chinese believe

1. Arlington, L.C.: op. cit., p. xvii

that there is no infallible religion -- that all have their good. They donot boast about belonging to any one religion. They are eager for long life here and for immortality, and in anything which will offer either one, they are interested.¹ As has been said, with life so drab and uncertain, a future hope is all many have as a certainty to which to cling. Christian drama can fulfil this desire with the surety of hope in eternal life, which can begin immediately upon acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

3. The actor is an individual artist on the Chinese stage. Mr. Leung says that an actor of first rank can by means of pantomime, singing and recitation, convert the empty stage into a moonlit garden, a quiet temple, courtyard, a field of battle, or whatever scene the play requires.² The art of the actor is supreme. Though his part is one in the scheme of the play, nevertheless, he expresses his own personality in his portrayal of the other character. In transferring the art of acting to religious drama, the actor expresses his own personality only in so far as it is one with the character which he is endeavoring to portray. Remarks to the audience, common to Chinese plays

1. Cf. Laufer, Barthold: The New Orient, 1933, Introduction

2. Cf. Leung, G.K.: op. cit., Pacific Affairs, Dec. 1930, p. 437

would naturally be eliminated from Christian plays.

Pantomime and mimicry are natural to the Chinese.

One author in speaking of mimicry says:

"Mimicry which is fundamental to the acted drama, is, of course, a part of human nature, and is doubtless to be found in most people. The Chinese actors sometimes carry mimicry to the extreme, dealing frankly with personalities, and not hesitating to caricature the Emperor himself." ¹

This trait, so highly developed by the Chinese should by all means be used in Christian drama. It must be adapted, however, and guided so as not to let it become an end rather than a means.

The actor does not necessarily learn his part by heart, and he is free to improvise. Occasionally, however, there appear rhyming couplets which have a depth of meaning in them. These are repeated accurately. This idea might well be adapted to Christian drama - both for the sake of learning the parts, and for the meaning which could be conveyed to the audience, in a form which is easily remembered.

4. Music as has been shown, is at the center of the life of the Chinese people. The Chinese play is acted to music throughout. Music is fundamental -- it is the expression

1. Arlington, L.C.: op. cit., Introduction, p. xxvi

of man's emotions. Some of the greatest music has come out of man's deepest experiences. (For instance, Handel's Messiah.) Music then must be an essential to Christian Chinese drama, expressing man's emotions. Very little Christian Chinese music has been composed, but Confucian chants and historic folk songs can be adapted to Christian use, and can be played as a setting for appropriate parts of the play. One author speaks from experience: "Combinations of spoken dramatics and music are usually effective, for music has the power greatly to enhance and intensify the influence of the spoken drama."¹ If they are familiar to the group, hymns of the Church can be used effectively because of their context.

5. Symbolism and Suggestion have been mentioned as fundamental elements in Chinese drama. Imagination is the key to their interpretation.

a. Colors symbolic of certain virtues and characteristics of people can play a great part in creating atmosphere in Christian drama. These may be used not only in costumes, but also in background. Strangely enough, the colors of Chinese drama and those of traditional Christian significance coincide amazingly well.

1. Betts, G.H.; and M.O. Hawthorne: op. cit., p. 363

An example of this is given below:

<u>Color</u>	<u>Significance in Chinese Drama</u> ¹	<u>Significance in Christian Symbolism</u>
red	loyalty and uprightness	suffering, passion
blue	virtue, kindness	sincerity, truth
white	mourning, youth	purity
black	brusqueness	sinfulness
green	wickedness	envy
yellow	craftiness	slyness, cowardice

Thus drama can be made more meaningful for the Chinese through familiar symbolism of colors.

b. Certain articles were found to be symbolic if² treated in certain ways. The suggestion with the use of imagination is not amusing to the Chinese, but rather, has significance. Christian symbols may therefore be adapted and used in Christian drama. For instance in a certain Christian work for Buddhists, the symbol of the lotus flower so familiar to the Buddhists is used, but above it, springing out of it, is the Cross. To a Buddhist this is most significant.

6. Tragedy and Comedy are blended in Chinese drama, so that they are not mutually exclusive.

Tragedy is the key to the emotions. Drama, essentially emotional, must have tragedy as a component part to

1. Arlington: op. cit., pp 3,9,19,41
2. Ante, p. 40

fulfil its function. But in Christian drama tragedy is never victorious. There is always hope.

Comedy is, as has already been said,¹ one of the chief objections to using drama for a Christian end in the Orient. One missionary writes of India: "The religious drama is being used extensively. Indians have great histrionic ability. Illiterate village children delight in parable impromptu; and mission schools present most effective religious dramas. No matter how serious the theme, they never omit the jester."² So, too, in China. The aptitude of the Chinese for improvisation is remarkable, but herein lies the danger. The last sentence in the above quotation displays a typical Chinese trait which has deprived many otherwise worshipful plays from having the desired effect. As soon as the jester (who is just one of the characters in the plays who feels in the mood) is introduced, no longer is the play^a worshipful, broadening spiritual experience, but merely an amusing entertainment. Of course, humor is an essential part of drama, but when improvisation and jesting begin (and they go hand in hand), they are distracting, and defeat the purpose of the Christian play. One missionary who

1. Ante, p.34

2. Wiser, William H. and Charlotte V: For All of Life, 1943, p. 136

had had considerable experience in the field of drama in China said he had discovered the only solution of this real problem to be for the actors to learn their parts perfectly, then to be drawn into a unity of Christian purpose. That it can be done successfully, has been demonstrated by the results it produced. This ability of improvisation will always be an asset to a Chinese actor when he is in a difficult position. It could also be guided into the construction of plays.

7. Prologue. There is usually a prologue in a Chinese play. Mr. Arlington says: "The prologue of a Chinese play today which formerly was actually acted out, is a wish from the eight immortals for the longevity and prosperity of the audience."¹ In old-style Chinese drama, as has been said, the audience usually knows the story of the play. In Christian drama, therefore, a Prologue or Introduction would not be out of order, as people naturally would expect to know something of the drama at the outset. Repetition might be mentioned here, as a means of emphasis and as a reminder, for the Chinese people are teachable and repetition is not boring to them.

1. Arlington, L.C./ : op. cit., p. xxxi

8. Realism versus Convention. Convention is recognized as being the soul of the old-style drama. It is the element which makes it what it is -- a highly stylized art. It is the element against which moderns in China revolt because it eliminates realism.

Chinese Christian drama can afford to be conventional only in the light of the above discussion.¹ It must be realistic (as is modern drama in China) because life is real, and Christianity is the real Way of Life. This does not destroy convention, but with the above uses, rather fulfils it in giving to convention a purpose and a worthy end.

The slogan of drama in West China today might well be adapted to Christian drama.² Resistance may be turned into resistance to evil, while Reconstruction may be applied to the growth and development of personality in the Christian life.

D. Essential Elements in Production

The purpose of religious drama used in China has been stated. To accomplish this high purpose, and use Christian drama effectively there are certain requirements which are essential:

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1. Intra., Section C
 2. Ante, p. 18

1. The Human Element

Drama being essentially an art which portrays life, human beings must comprise the art itself. Their relation to drama is a three fold one, that of the director, the cast and the audience.

a The Director

The director bears the same relation to his cast as a conductor to his orchestra.¹ Skill is needed in conducting rehearsals if they are to achieve their purpose. Their achievement depends upon the leader. He must be calm, fair, firm and impartial in his attitude toward all the players. The fruits of dramatization are lost unless the leader enters wholeheartedly into the activity equipped for the task, possessed with tact and enthusiasm, inspiring within his players confidence in themselves and in the part they are to take.² The director must have not only literary ability and social aptitude but also be an organizing genius with executive and technical knowledge. He must be a person who is devoted to God in Christ and leads a consistent Christian life. One author suggests that the ideal director be a minister, adding that dramatic

1. Cf. Overton, G.S. : Drama in Education, 1927, p. 158

2. Cf. Betts, G.H. and M.O. Hawthorne: Methods in Teaching Religion, 1925, p. 369

means has not gone further anywhere than under the direction of a minister.¹

The specific task of the director consists in giving the cast such a vivid conception of their roles that they forget themselves. Experience does not matter.² Another significant duty of the director is to promote a spiritual bond among the actors -- an essential task in the successful communication of the message to the audience. As one author states it:

"Since the dramatic service is intended to enrich the religious experience of those who attend and of those who participate in it, it must be produced with the same artistic conscience and the same spirit of reverence with which the minister prepares a fine sermon or a choirmaster trains a cathedral choir."³

The director must supervise costuming, lighting, scenery, and casting, as well as rehearse the plays. Of course, before the director begins, he must have the aim clearly in mind. Specifically, it is to capture the dramatic impulse and direct it into life processes. Naturally, there is no place in religious drama for art for art's sake, but as Mrs. Overton says, "It must not be handicapped by having the technique so poor that the production

1. Cf. Candler: op. cit., pp. 5-8

2. Cf. Alexander and Goslin: op. cit., p. xxi

3. Ibid.

is offensive. Art for art's sake does not have a message. On the other hand a crude presentation cannot be of great educational value,¹ nor of great spiritual value. In brief, everything is a success or a failure as the director² succeeds or fails.

b. The Cast

As has been stressed, the cast should be a corporate group with a real spirit of prayerful purpose uniting them. Each individual should feel himself a part of the body, using his talent to glorify the purpose of the play rather than his own personality. One means of realizing this end is for the names of the actors not to appear on the program.³ Also the cast should be trained tirelessly to learn their parts, and not allowed to improvise.

Of major importance it is that the actor understands his role. Macready has expressed this well: "The player's part is to fathom the depths of character, to trace its latent motives, to feel its finest quiverings of emotions, to comprehend the thoughts that are hidden under the words, and thus to possess one's self with the actual mind of the individual mind."⁴ Actors must be

1. Overton: op. cit., p. 14

2. Cf. Candler: op. cit., p. 42

3. Cf. Alexander and Goslin: op. cit., p. xxi

4. Macready; Quoted in Overton: op. cit., p. 159

led to feel that the minute the curtain rises, they lose their identity, and must be another character, both in speech and in response. Thus, until the curtain falls, this must predominate the thinking of each individual par-

¹ participant. Miss Adams, after a great deal of experience with young actors in China, says what with their natural dramatic ability they are bound to act. If the church does not direct this talent, the future of dramatics in the church will be a grave question.²

c. The Audience

In religious drama, the audience plays a major role. In China the audience are accustomed to the old-style theater, and therefore are apt to behave the same at a religious drama. They must be educated to the quiet of worship, and that cannot be done suddenly. Miss Adams has found that once the cast is trained, they become like leaven among the audience, for the same cast is not used repeatedly. She adds: "A good plan is to choose different young people each time until many have had the experience of worshipping through drama, and they can gradually educate the audience. This is difficult If however, we are in the field of religious dramatics for spiritual values, we can afford to give anything for the sake of results."³

1. Cf. Ibid., pp. 169-170

2. Cf. Adams: op. cit., p. 356

3. Ibid.

2. The Material Element

The material element in the production of the Christian play is part of the machinery which makes it possible for the human beings to operate. Naturally the most important material element is the script.

a. The Script

"The play", says one authority on drama, "consists of a great crisis¹ worked out through a series of minor crises." In a Christian play, the great crisis is a situation in which an individual is faced with the compelling demands of Jesus Christ upon his life, recognizes the challenge, and accepts it by repenting of his sins and giving his life, or rededicating it to Christ. The minor crises have bearing upon this main theme.

The plot of a good play should be a struggle -- one taken from life -- one which expresses genuine passion, yearnings, sympathies, and vital human emotions. The plot will be developed by the play of these emotions. The characters must be the medium expressing these emotions, and thus they must change and develop throughout the play.

(1) Selecting the Play

The chief criterion of selecting a Christian drama for use in China is its ability to match the standards set above. Naturally there is a scarcity of material in the

1. Hubble, J.B., and J.O. Beaty: Introduction to Drama, 1932, p. 3

Chinese language because of the lack of the development of the art and hence the demand. A religious dramatist says that drama was adopted by the church in America when it came into its own and Mystery plays being unsuited to modern thought there mushroomed suddenly, inexpertly, badly written, so-called religious dramas.¹

As basic principles of selection one authority in religious dramatics suggests:

1. Materials must embody dramatic possibilities, plausible action, and human interest.
2. Materials must be suited in content and meaning to the interests, needs, and capacities of the players.
3. Materials must possess positive moral and religious value, insuring a wholesome contribution to the character development of the players.
4. Materials must be selected according to the types of dramatic activity into which they are to be organized, suited to the demands of situations in which they are to be used on the one hand, and² the psychological and social needs on the other.

These may be summarized in terms of acceptability and appeal.

1. Cf. Gould, Marshall H.: Saint Claudia: A Religious Drama, 1925, Introduction
2. Cf. Betts and Hawthorne: op. cit., p. 356

Of course Biblical material adapted to the situation and the people with which to work are ideal. As one author remarks: "The ordinary play may be forgotten but the Biblical play is constantly recalled by association."¹ Parables are favorite subjects of dramatic effort in the Orient, but unfortunately too often the parable story is stressed to the exclusion of the truth it conveys. Miss Adams in her fruitful experience chose plays of Biblical content, with the characters of those whom she desired to help in mind. In this way by using printed material and her own original scripts, she was able to influence the lives of many of her associates toward higher Christian living.²

(2) Writing a Play

Often it is difficult to discover a play that will promise to have the desired effect upon the cast and audience. There are occasions when an appropriate play is not available -- particularly in China. If one has any talent in writing, one could by following a few simple rules and suggestions, write an acceptable play. The standards of selection, namely, acceptability and appeal apply to the writing of a play.

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1. Benton, Rita: The Bible Workshop, 1923, p. 19
 2. Cf. Adams, M.: op. cit., pp. 355-358

Fundamental among the motives most powerful in the control of human action is interest. Failure to interest is a defect in the appeal rather than the audience. George F. Baker makes the remark that there are two great essentials of drama -- action and emotion,¹ while Ferdinand Brunetiere, a French critic observes that "The essence of drama is conflict."² Mrs. Overton adds from her experience:

"If a play is truly dramatic, there will be a well defined conflict between human desires and ideas; the truth will be revealed in action, not in sermonizing; the most important events of the play will take place on the stage; the characters in the play will determine the outcome without the intervention of external forces. To accomplish these ends the play must be of good dramatic structure, be unified by a basic idea -- the theme --and have good character delineation, the characters acting from proper motives."³

There are three elements in drama: action, speech, and singing. Action naturally involves conflict and emotion. One authority speaking of dialogue says: "Dialogue should be vivid, interesting, natural, and colored with emotion."⁴ The functions of dialogue are these:

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1. Cf. Baker; Quoted in Hubbel and Beaty: op. cit., p. 4
 2. Ibid., p. 3
 3. Overton: op. cit., p. 32
 4. Hubbel and Beaty: op. cit., p. 15

- (1) To carry forward action
- (2) To explain its significance
- (3) To communicate to the audience^{en} facts it otherwise would not know
- (4) To arouse emotion in the audience
- (5) To reveal character
- (6) A thing of beauty in itself.¹ (In Christian drama in China, it might be in the form of a couplet which is beautiful and meaningful, and in this form easily retained.)

There should be emotional harmony between the setting and the plot. The emotional level should not be the same throughout the play as there must be a reserve of strength and power for a climax.² The use of music aids in the ebb and flow of emotion, and is of utmost importance in a play in China.

In general the rules in writing a play are those of writing a story, that is there must be an "inciting moment" at which something happens setting all the action or events of the play going. Then comes the middle, or the orderly succession of events which lead up to the climax or the point of the whole play, then the climax itself.³ The exposition should be clear for some are

1. Cf. Hubbel and Beaty: op. cit., p. 4
2. Cf. Overton: op. cit., p. 168
3. Cf. Ibid.

stupid, and some are late, and in China the audience feels free to walk around during the play. In the first act the writer should tie the knot which must be untied in the last.¹

b. Properties

As has already been shown the properties should be simple. Plain costumes and background tend to accentuate the action, dialogue, and spirit of the play, which in Christian drama are essentials. The properties, though simple, should be historically accurate, appropriate, and of the best available quality. All the talent available should be used. Dr. William Guthrie remarked from the pulpit that if only the church would make demands of the artists and of the people, it would have a more beautiful and effective service.²

E. Suggestions for Production

1. Technical Suggestions

a. Color

In the discussion of symbolism, color has already been mentioned.³ The tone of cool colors have a distinctly calming effect, while warm colors are more obtruding and

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1. Cf. Hubbel and Beaty: op. cit., p. 4
 2. Cf. Candler: op. cit., p. 84
 3. Ante. p. 69

exciting. It must be remembered that in any scene, too much intensity of color is wearing, and in settings and costumes of long scenes especially, colors should be more reserved.¹

b. Costumes

For Bible characters, a simple slip foundation is excellent and can be used with an Egyptian sash, a Babylonian fringe, a shepherd's skin, or a striped straight coat of the ordinary Palestinian. Designs may be painted or printed on the material as desired.² The Hebrew or Palestinian costume so common to Biblical plays may be simply made of a long piece of plain or striped goods, doubled back and sewed up on the sides leaving room for the arm hole. Then a slit for the neck should be cut out. This is the foundation. It may be worn with sleeves or fringe depending upon its purpose.³ Certain adaptations might well be made such as the Chinese Sheeplined coat reversed, and worn as a shepherd's costume.

c. Stage

For all practical purposes, the minimum stage width should be not less than thirty-five feet. The proscenium arch should equal the stage depth which should be one half

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1. Cf. Overton: op. cit., p. 184
 2. For further detail see Benton: op. cit., p. 95
 3. Costume ideas may be obtained from pictures by Tissot, and those of the Oberammergau Passion Play.

of the length of the stage. The line of visibility is most important. Therefore the stage should be elevated high enough to make all seats good seats. From three to four feet is adequate elevation. Over four feet is¹ too high.

The old-style Chinese stage was square. In the rear was a silk curtain with doors on either side -- an entrance on the left, and an exit on the right of the audience. The nine-dragon entrance for stars was on the left of the audience also. Celestial beings appeared on the front of the stage.² Adopting the modern form of stage, in order to obtain maximum visibility, the old-style form of entrance and exit might be used for Chinese Christian drama. Angels and such celestial beings might appear on the forestage. This might prove less confusing to a Chinese audience.

d. Lighting.

One recent authority suggests that all lights should be portable; the fewer fixed lights the better. No foot-lights are necessary, as the best lighting is from the sides and overhead. Amateur equipment is as effective and as expressive as professional lighting. Good effects can be obtained through practice.³

1. Cf. Candler: op. cit., pp. 58-97

2. Cf. Arlington, L.C.: The Chinese Drama, 1930, pp.3-9

3. Cf. Alexander and Goslin: op. cit., p. xxviii

e. Background

In speaking of scenery, one authority says that scenery is a thing of the past. Practically any play may be set within curtained spaces, and many are far more appropriately set thus than with the old-fashioned interior flats.¹ An interior in China may be done effectively with a few scrolls against a plain background, or Chinese screens might be set up.

An excellent, simple, and inexpensive effect for a Bible play is the set to represent Jerusalem on a hill, (or the same idea may be used for other subjects). A large white fold-less backdrop is used with compartment board cut-outs of the towers and roof-tops of Jerusalem set immediately behind the drop. Lighting from behind (with colored lights to signify the time of day) forms an effective silhouetted background. One author remarks: "The whole present-day tendency in settings is away from the crudely realistic, toward the suggestive."²

Another suggestion is the use of a neutral colored curtain with softly colored opaque lights falling on it, as a background. One director says that with one or more of these backdrop curtains of dull grey, blue or violet, the rest of the scenery can be taken care of at little

1. Cf. Cander: op. cit., p. 64
2. Ibid., p. 66

cost. She adds: "With a single silhouette of a rock or tree a small screen, a piece of furniture, a half dozen steps, with accompanying change of light, a whole gamut of emotions and artistic effects can thus be wrought, leaving one breathless at their beauty and simplicity."¹

Material for backdrops and general use which take lighting well are dull-finished ones which do not reflect, such as Canton flannel, denim, rep, and cotton poplin. These are not expensive and make a rich effect for a draped stage.

For a traveling play, screen or panels are practical. Screens of bamboo frames and cheap yellow cloth are used in China by a group of modern players. In America theatrical companies make portable stages with wing entrances and space for two sets. One religious group found these satisfactory in using them for a "Church basement circuit" of plays.² Such an arrangement might easily be made and used in China.

f. Workroom

To have a room set apart in which to keep the materials and sets is ideal. If the young people and adults who form the cast or committee are responsible for the

1. Stevenson, Mrs. Yorke - producer of Hollywood Passion Plays; Quoted Candler: op. cit., p. 67
2. Cf. Candler: op. cit., p. 69

materials and actually make some of the properties and costumes, naturally they will take a greater interest in the whole production. If possible, individual boxes or hangers for the costumes are desirable. Around this room might be hung pictures by Tisot for costume inspiration.¹ And most important of all, this room should be a place where the cast and director can come together for spiritual inspiration. At least one picture such as Solomon's Head of Christ should be in the room to give it atmosphere.

2. Dramatic Worship Services and Plays

The following services and plays are the result of much thought and of experiment in the line of dramatic worship services. They have all been tried, and found successful in producing the spirit of true reverence and worship.

a. This fragmentary miracle play was used effectively in a large church in New York City for the Easter evening service. It can be adapted to the facilities of a church in China, and could be used on a stage too.

1. Cf. Ibid., pp 41-58

The Resurrection

- (1) Pilate brooding alone in the twilight in his garden, over the condemnation of one in whom he had found no guilt.
Caiaphas comes to him, then the centurion, then the Roman guard. The stage goes black.
- (2) Guard at the tomb discussing the strange things that have occurred. Rumbblings. Flash of light - they are hurled to the ground. Darkness ensues.
- (3) Light comes. The empty tomb is revealed. The three Marys appear. They find the tomb empty and summon Peter and John. (Music from The Crucifixion and Hebrew chants)
The angel announces the resurrection. This is followed by Handel's I Know that my Redeemer Liveth from The Messiah.¹

This is an intense drama, and carries deep spiritual significance.

b. Tableau is another form of drama which can be used effectively for spiritual growth and development, and a real worship experience. In speaking of the effect of a tableau with music and singing one author says: "No word is spoken throughout the service. There is only the living breathing story, and immortal music. Nothing more ²is needed. A spirit of worship, intense, complete, possesses the spectator." No longer is one a spectator then, but a part ^aof the spirit of the tableau.

c. A worship service revealing the meaning of love is formed around the familiar play of Leo Tolstoy: Where Love is God is Also.

1. Cf. Candler: op. cit., pp.6-7

2. Ibid., p. 16

Hymn: When thy Heart with Joy O'erflowing (By E.W. Bullinger. Tune - Geneva)

Antiphonal Congregational Reading:

First Group:

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,
and have not love, I am become as sounding brass
and a clanging symbol.

Second Group:

And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and
if I give my body to be burned, but have not love,
it profiteth me nothing.

First Group:

But now abideth faith, hope and love, but the great-
est of these is love.

Dramatization adaptation from Tolstoy's play: Where Love is God is Also

Hymn: We Praise the Lord (By Alexander Von Goof - Tune - Russian)

This play shows the spirit of Christianity, and can be adapted so as to contain a real challenge to accept the Christian way of life. It sets Christianity in the light of love which will form a deep contrast against merely a moral or superstitious religion.

d. The following is a service concerning light and the challenge of the Cross:

Processional Hymn: Light of the World we hail Thee
(By John Monsell - Tune - Salve Domine)

Choir processes bearing candles. They take the front seats and extinguish their candles.

Play: He Came Seeing ¹

Theme: The blind men is healed by Jesus. At first he is overjoyed, but he soon finds a deeper meaning to the act. Seeing, he finds is a costly asset, for he must carry the cross of following Christ.

1. By Mary Hamlin, Copyright 1928, Royalty \$5.00. Permission must be obtained from Samuel French, 25 W. 45th Street, New York City

Epilogue: The Light of the Cross (The blind man's face stands out, caught by a small spot light. The shadow of a cross falls from the back of the stage -- on the darkened figures on the stage, but especially on the man who is no longer blind.)

Soloist sings: In the Cross of Christ I Glory.

Curtain

Hymn: O Light that Followest All my Way (Last two stanzas of O Love that Will not let me go by George Mathison)

Prayer and Benediction:

Eternal God search our hearts

(Pause for silent prayer)

Open thou our minds to Thy purpose for our lives

(Pause)

Illuminate our way that we may not stumble in darkness

(Pause)

Forgive our blindness in the face of need

(Pause)

Give us courage to dare the difficult

(Pause)

Strengthen us that we may bear our cross in the spirit of Jesus Christ Our Saviour

(Pause)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Recessional Hymn: Lead Kindly Light

The choir marches out on the last stanza lighting their candles from one on the way.¹

e. Other productions that could be used with a cast which is not highly trained are:

Bayard, Lyman: Christmas and Easter Pageants

Converse, Florence: The Blessed Birthday

Thy Kingdom Come

1. Alexander and Goslin: op. cit., pp. 167-199

f. As has been suggested, the Bible is a rich source-book of drama. The Old Testament is full of characters which could easily be placed in the center of gripping stories which have both elements of worship in them: Isaiah's call, or that of Moses ~~use~~ always new and challenging; Jonah's journey and the breaking down of his resistance to God would certainly touch someone's weakness; Habakkuk's experience out of doubt into faith; and Amos with his practical yet dynamic appeal for heart worship.

In the New Testament, there are also countless characters who would make challenging appeals: Stephen who would not deny his Lord and therefore influenced Paul and others to become Christians; Timothy would bring in the family life -- an always popular subject in China; Nicodemus, who met Christ and became a different person.

g. Another source of material for plays is in the life of the Chinese themselves. A convincing play could be centered around a Chinese man who had become disillusioned, and hopeless. A Taoist friend tries to help him with his mystic philosophy and endless superstitions, but the man finds them too vague and fantastic. His Confucian friend offers lofty moral ideals for living, but these he finds impossible, for he has no innate desire to discipline him-

self with no end or purpose in mind. His Buddhist friend offers Nirvana if he will utterly remove himself from all positive living, but again the hero is dissatisfied; he finds no purpose in such living. At last the Christian friend gives him a practical philosophy with a purpose. He finds that he does not need to depend upon his own power for salvation from the boredom of life, but that in Christ he may find purpose, and drive which makes all of life full of meaning and gives hope for eternity.

There are divergent opinions concerning the wisdom of representing the person of Christ on the stage. Often a voice or light is used, or the conversation indicates that Christ has just left the scene, conveying the idea of His immediate presence. In China where symbolism plays such a predominant role, such representations and other similar ones might be a better way of portraying the person of Christ than actually representing him as a character.

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F. Summary and Conclusion

In discussing the principles of the use of Christian drama, it was found that as a technique of worship, drama could be used for the purpose of presenting a challenge for Christian decision, that is presenting the Way of Life so vividly as to win individuals to Christ. As a technique of worship, drama was also found to be most effective in promoting spiritual growth. But unless it is well produced it cannot be as effective.

In order to make Christian drama indigenous to China, the characteristics found in the native art were suggested with adaptations to Christian drama. The essential elements in production were then presented. Human and material elements in production were discussed - including the director, cast and audience as well as the script and properties.

There followed general suggestions for presenting Christian plays in China. Technical suggestions included those concerning colors used, costumes and designs, the stage and its lighting, and the background of the play. The idea of having a workroom was then discussed - a room where spiritual as well as material preparation for the play is carried on. Since these directions were all of the simplest kind, with but few actual technical or specific directions, a bibliography was included for further study and suggestions.

It was shown in this chapter that the Christian drama in China was for one purpose -- that of worship, since through worship is found the dynamic of evangelism. Included in the idea of worship are the elements of decision and growth. Christian plays, if effectively given, can bring individuals to a place of Christian decision and foster their spiritual growth. The directions and suggestions are for the purpose of aiding Christian drama to give the maximum effect in both these phases of the worship experience of those to whom it is presented, and therefore perform the function of evangelism

In considering the value of using an indigenous art for evangelism in China, Mr. Lo makes a telling statement concerning his people:

"When the spirit of Christ has actually taken possession of the heart and mind of the Chinese people, then it is bound to have some indigenous experience and expression. Until then and not until then I can hardly conceive of an indigenous church." 1

By using this age long Chinese method, transformed by a real message, surely Chinese Christian drama will be a means of making the church indigenous to China.

1. Wiser: op. cit., p. 30

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Throughout this study there has run one dominant theme--the imperative of evangelism, and the importance of a means which can adequately communicate the message of Salvation to the Chinese people. Drama was found to be an adequate method of evangelism, because it was an indigenous implement of religious ideas, and because the elements in drama so closely coincided with those in evangelism. In the preparation for this study it was discovered that the material dealing with Christian drama in China is distinctly limited. It was also discovered that there was no material on the specific subject of this study.

To appreciate drama more fully as a Chinese indigenous art, the first step in the study was to review the history of drama in China. It was discovered that all drama originated in the innate religious instinct of man--in the form of ceremonial rites and early dances. Through the dynasties in China, drama followed a rather irregular course. It was found that throughout that course whenever the quality of drama became poor or degraded, it was cast out of the courts of emperors, and not until drama regained its moral standard again was it allowed to return to society. Thus the drama which remains today has a high moral content. Modern drama in China was found to be a reaction against the highly stylized convention which characterized the old-style

music-drama. Modern drama in China concerns contemporary problems of living.

The next step was to discover the inherent characteristics in Chinese drama which could be adapted and used in Chinese Christian drama in order to make it more appealing and also more readily understood by the audience. The factors contributing to Chinese drama were found to be a vivid imagination so characteristic of the Chinese, the three religions common to the Chinese, and the Western influence which has permeated so much of China's life. The types and traits of drama were then discussed as well as the actor, the use of music, of symbolism and suggestion, and the relation of drama to literature. The conclusion was made that old-style Chinese drama is an art which depends upon convention for its existence. It is an art of the people, filled with the expression of the culture of the race.

In establishing drama as a means of evangelism in China, a clear understanding of terms was made by a discussion of the effects of evangelism and that of the dramatic method. It was discovered in this process that both drama and evangelism have universal appeal; that they are composed of the same dominant element--emotion; that they both effect the human personality in bring it to a realization of living truths; and that they both are potential

means of the expression and development of personality. Hence it was clear that drama is a most suitable tool by which the important task of evangelism might be accomplished.

In order to use this potent force of evangelism by drama in China, it was found that by adapting certain characteristics of the Chinese drama, Chinese Christian drama would become more indigenous. But it was clear that without an adequate knowledge of the use of drama and the principles of its production, the dramatic method was apt to fail. In discussing the use of Christian drama, one fact remained clear, that drama may be used as a technique of worship. It was shown then, that worship contains two elements--that of the challenge to become a follower of Jesus Christ, and that of nourishing spiritual life and growth. Drama was shown to be adequate to inspire and fulfil these two functions. It was stressed that to obtain the maximum effect, the essential elements of production of Christian drama in China must be understood and used. Suggestions were then given for technical procedure, dramatic worship services, and a bibliography of additional material was added.

It was with a sense of the possibilities of the use of the dramatic method in China of which leaders were not taking advantage that this study was undertaken.

Considering the fact that the use of drama as a means of evangelism in China has in it such a wide appeal, and has such challenging potentialities, it is hoped that more leaders who have the ability will develop the indigenous art, and give to it the high purpose for which it was Divinely destined.

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