

JESUS CENTRE STAGE

Theatre Radio Church Television

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DEDICATION

Tony Jasper dedicates this book to Sandra Butterworth, Alan and Annette Smith for their constant practical concern during his illness in 2010, and to the friendship of Jon and Betty Dean.

THANKS TO Charlotte Emmett for help with the MS.

AUTHORS' NOTE

This book is the result of the collaboration between two writers with extensive and practical experience of theatre and the study of drama, theology and popular culture in the general arts field. They write as members of Christian churches and from a background of involvement with the presentation of Christian ideas through performance.

Although the book has involved constant discussion and debate between its two authors the first three chapters are essentially the work of Kenneth Pickering and the remaining chapters are by Tony Jasper. The final chapter brings the two authors together.

CHAPTER ONE

Enter Jesus

During the writing of this book the English National Opera Company announced that it would be performing Handel's *Messiah*, a choral work entirely focussed on the figure of Jesus, for two weeks in one of the largest theatres in London. This may have come as a surprise to many people for, surely, the *Messiah* is a national treasure that belongs securely to large choirs in churches and concert halls? Could it be that, on the brink of a new decade, the place to celebrate and think about the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, was the theatre? Nobody ever mentions poor Jennings who compiled and selected the words, but Handel, who wrote the music of *Messiah* was, in fact, a man of the theatre and the work's first performance was in a theatre in Dublin. However, by that time, Handel had abandoned writing fashionable Italian Opera in favour of Oratorios that did not, in the usual sense require 'staging'. So the idea that *Messiah* should be 'staged' in the twenty-first century might seem even more surprising.

Of course, the term 'theatre' has several meanings. Theatre is not only a place, it is an art form, an activity and, for some, even a way of life. So perhaps we might rephrase my earlier question. Has the *way* to celebrate and think about the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus become 'theatre'? And theatre historians might add 'once again'.

Almost simultaneously with the announcement of the performances of *Messiah* the website of an organisation devoted to large-scale dramatic productions of the life of Jesus advertised the fact that they had obtained permission to stage a Passion Play in London's Trafalgar Square at Easter. It would seem that Jesus had, indeed,

come centre stage and was experiencing high-profile exposure through the medium of theatre.

The Christian churches of various denominations have been somewhat suspicious of and sometimes downright hostile to the entertainment media. I well recall my Strict Baptist grandmother purchasing one of the few early television sets but insisting that it had doors which could be discretely closed 'when the Minister visited'. But even twenty years ago the parish priest of Oberammergau was saying of the famous Passion Play that it was 'inappropriate to call it "theatre", apparently oblivious to the huge package deals that brought audiences from all over the world to see the performances. We might ask if the thousands of dolls representing the baby Jesus seen in nativity plays every year are an aspect of 'theatre' or if they are somehow exempt from the opprobrium with which actors 'playing' Christ are sometimes viewed by Christians. Is Christ's childhood somehow less sacred than His manhood, perhaps? The answers may lie in new attitudes and a greater understanding of the nature of theatre as a fundamental human activity that will survive any intended repression and suppression. I recently heard an elder in the United Reformed Church explaining her experience in attending a series of sessions designed to enable certain nominated elders to be allowed to celebrate Holy Communion. When she expressed a feeling of inadequacy her tutor had said 'you are really an actor playing the part of Jesus'. For some this may seem almost blasphemous, for others it may help to explain why the Communion and dramatic re-enactment have such close links and why 'theatre' as we know it in the West, is often said to have originated in the Easter Mass.

The recent emergence of a website devoted to encouraging communities to stage their own Passion Plays and to use theatre as a form of witness whilst preserving high, professional standards of production, may be further evidence that old prejudices are breaking down. For what does the new generation of media-savvy Evangelical and charismatic Christians who choose to worship in sports halls, school halls and cinemas really know or care about the history of censorious attitudes of the churches that they have left half empty?

Very little I suspect. The new generation will use whatever communication medium fits its purpose, and this will include dance, acting, clowning, puppets, music, film, radio or digital technology.

However, many of the plays and theatrical events described in this book will have taken place against a background of some hostility and resistance from Christians and it is as well to confront this topic before we can go further.

In Britain the theatre still lives in the aftermath of two significant events although these are now distant in history. The first was the suppression of the 'Mystery Plays', a popular form of drama showing the whole story of Jesus, at some time in the sixteenth century. We do not know the precise reasons for this hostility to the plays but it is likely that it was the result of Puritan influence as part of the Protestant Reformation. The second more precise event was the closure of all theatres by the Puritan government of Oliver Cromwell at the time of the 'Commonwealth' in the seventeenth century. Even though this period of closure was no more than eleven years its legacy was long-lasting and the reopening of theatres at the time of the Restoration of Charles II was accompanied by much tighter controls.

So, given that many contemporary Christians are the successors of the Non-Conformists who brought about a change in attitudes to the theatre and that the Roman Catholic Church in Britain was equally slow in looking favourably on that art form we need to ask why the theatre was seen and possibly still is, as so undesirable. I would suggest that there are three main reasons: the first is that the theatre can be seen as being associated with riotous assembly and immoral living; the second that the theatre is essentially subversive and, thirdly, that there are particular objections to the representation of Jesus or any aspect of the deity on stage.

There is little doubt that, before the time of Cromwell, the theatre was a popular public meeting place where business deals, plots, assignations and discontent might well have been a natural part of the activity. It was obvious, therefore, that any authoritarian regime would see the theatre as a possible threat. If the theatre also provided an area for sexual infidelity and, indeed, may have encouraged it by its

subject matter, it became an obvious target for Puritan objections. Even when the theatres re-opened after their enforced period of closure clergymen and laymen alike continued to thunder their disapproval in sermons, tracts and other broadsides. Their intensity was stoked by the first appearances of women on the English stage and many plays were condemned as showing and encouraging a decadent and immoral life-style. Defenders of drama then, as defenders of television and film now, would argue that the theatre's job was to show life as it is not as some clergyman would wish it. Christian suspicions have also focussed on the off-stage lives of many of theatre's practitioners, suggesting that they were dangerously 'bohemian' and, in Victorian times, this was exemplified by the fact that it was actresses who first advocated not wearing corsets! Such was the prejudice with which the nineteenth-century Church viewed theatrical performers that several bishops refused to give them communion and, for the Non-Conformist the theatre was a highly suspect territory. Ironically, the Non-conformists failed to notice the innate theatricality of their preaching and modes of worship. The popular Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon employed histrionic techniques to rival any Victorian actor and, later, the great Methodist preacher Dr. Sangster choreographed his own preaching moves before the mirror on a Saturday night. The mainstream revivalists all had a particular style - some were visual in their images for they conjured up for their congregation flames of fire and eternal damnation. Young men attempted to adopt the style of their favourite preachers, from gesture to voice modulation. I well remember my mother speaking in reverential terms of the way in which a particular minister entered from the vestry at the beginning of the service producing a hush of expectancy and 'working' his audience with as much skill as a great actor.

But the state had seemed to confirm the view of the churches for, in the eyes of the law, 'players' remained classified with 'rogues and vagabonds' for many years.

The theatre has not only hit back at many of these strictures by pointing out the relevance and deep seriousness of much of its work but also by the emergence of groups of

Christian actors, directors, dancers, technicians and designers who support the industry from the inside.

Pioneers and attitudes

Present day theatre practitioners who are able to stage aspects of the life of Jesus owe a great deal to the pioneering work of a number of almost legendary figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century theatre. These include Sir Henry Irving, the first British actor to be knighted and thus bring a sense of respectability to his profession. Irving's most famous role in the closing years of his career was that of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in Tennyson's play *Becket* and all who saw the performance claimed it as a deep experience of faith. Irving had confronted the bigotry of the clergy in a famous address telling them to 'change their attitude' and assuring them that the theatre would join them in promoting more wholesome ways of living. Lilian Baylis, the remarkable manager of the Old Vic and later Sadler's Wells theatres brought the classic theatre and Shakespeare in particular to a new audience of low income enthusiasts and ran her theatre on a combination of flair, frugality and prayer. Convinced that she was doing God's will, she was instrumental in launching the careers of Sir Laurence Olivier and Sir John Gielgud and, like Irving, argued that the theatre was an educative medium that enriched and strengthened the moral life of the nation. Her producer, Harcourt Williams, who advocated a revolutionary manner of directing and performing Shakespeare, was also a devout Christian and was later to appear in central roles in the plays of one of the foremost Christian writers, Dorothy L. Sayers.

Irving, nevertheless, always maintained that the major achievement in reducing the hostility of the churches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lay with the Rev. Stuart Headlam, an Anglican curate who risked the disapproval of his bishop and jeopardised his chances of promotion by encouraging his congregation to read plays and attend the theatre. He is sympathetically portrayed in a thinly veiled disguise as the Rev. James Mavor Morell in George Bernard Shaw's play *Candida* and his name is still

preserved in a trust he established to enable London school-children to see plays by Shakespeare. Headlam was convinced that the theatre could contribute to personal and community development in a unique way and was instrumental in helping to create the Actors' Church Union which not only continues to minister to the needs of actors but also acted as a forerunner to such organisations as the Arts Centre Group, Christians in Entertainment and Artisan, all of which now provide a forum for support and discussion of the arts as a facet of Christian life.

However, the suggestion that the theatre deals with issues central to human lives has often been seen by the Church as threatening and subversive. It is no co-incidence that tyrannical regimes always fear and suppress the theatres when they take power. The apartheid regime of South Africa was undermined by an organised 'theatre of protest' and Iranian playwrights now work in perilous conditions. The Church has always suspected that it is the theatre's task to pose difficult questions, to challenge authority, to interrogate the morality of policies, to put people's beliefs under the microscope and, as Shakespeare put it 'to hold the mirror up to Nature'. This can all be an uncomfortable business for an organisation like the Church that seeks to teach people what they should believe and what authorities to venerate. Unfortunately for much of its history the Church has sought to control and it has been perfectly comfortable with theatre as a means of this control. However, the moment that the Church has felt that it has lost control of the theatre it has become unhappy and hostile.

One of the most interesting debates in an area now known as 'performance studies' is the debate concerning what is collectively termed 'Carnival'. Such an activity would be seen as growing out of a community and might include celebratory processions, parades, carnival floats or similar forms of spectacle. Such events may well celebrate ethnicity or sexual orientation, local pride, history or trade and would certainly embrace the many processions and rituals associated with Easter in Catholic countries. Some scholars have argued that 'carnival' is an expression of people-power, of vibrant community and of shared beliefs and values. Others,

however, have argued with equal conviction that carnival is simply another example of the status quo maintaining power by providing a safety-valve of apparent self expression whilst continuing to exercise control. This might well be said of those Catholic plays and pageants that dominate the lives of many communities at Easter but remain tightly under the control of the Church.

In Britain, the theatre has also been subject to various forms of state control and this has profoundly affected the way in which it has attempted to explore the Christian faith in an imaginative and honest way. With the 'Restoration' of the monarchy in 1660, King Charles II (who had spent a period of exile in the French court with its entertaining drama) was determined to re-establish the theatre, particularly as a part of the Court circle. Keenly aware of the theatre's ability to satirise and make political statements, Charles ordered his Master of the Revels, who was responsible for the licensing of all forms of public entertainment, to grant royal patents, establishing a monopoly on theatrical production in London to William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew.

Killigrew established himself at what became known as the Theatre Royal, in Drury Lane and his company was considered to be part of the Royal household. Davenant's patent eventually led to the establishment of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden (now the Royal Opera House). This monopoly on the ability to produce 'legitimate drama' was reinforced by the Theatre Act of 1737. Play performances by touring companies could obtain a licence but were subject to strict control, however, some theatres and companies found ingenious ways of circumventing the Act by presenting what we can now see as the roots of 'Variety' and 'Musical Theatre'.

During the late eighteenth century royal patents were gradually granted to theatres in provincial towns and cities: Norwich; York; Hull; Liverpool; Newcastle; Manchester and Margate were among those to have their Theatre Royal. A further Act of law passed in 1788 legalised acting in the provinces by enabling local justices to grant licences to players for sixty days at a time and the 1843 Act for Regulating Theatres finally ended the monopoly of the theatres

with a royal patent to produce 'legitimate drama'. All this activity greatly encouraged the building of theatres, many of which were named 'Theatre Royal' as a generic title rather than having any connection with royalty.

Censorship

The role of the Master of the Revels was eventually changed in title to 'Lord Chamberlain' and in this capacity he continued to exercise control and censorship over what could be performed in public until his office was abolished in 1968. Enshrined in the law which he was able to invoke were three forbidden ingredients for a stage play; nudity, obscene language and the representation of the deity. This final forbidden fruit provided a major stumbling block to those dramatists anxious to present aspects of the life of Jesus in dramatic form. When it came to considering plays submitted to him for licensing that contained 'religious' content the Lord Chamberlain invariably turned to the Archbishop of Canterbury for advice and usually found His Grace supportive of a refusal. Until 1913 there had been a total ban on any stage play dealing with biblical subjects but there had been increasing pressure from playwrights and producers for reversal of this position. Accordingly a number of biblical pageants and plays had been allowed to go ahead but the question of acting Jesus remained highly contentious. When in 1924, for example, the Archbishop, Randall Davidson was sent a play entitled *Judas Iscariot* he wrote to the Lord Chamberlain 'I wish they did not write these plays!' However, he did go on to say that, had the play been written by a well-known playwright such as George Bernard Shaw, he would have found the decision more difficult.

As it happened the Archbishop's fears were partly realised for in the same year no less a figure than the famous Christian poet, John Masefield submitted a play *The Trial of Jesus* which necessitated an actor to play the part of Jesus. This clearly exercised the Archbishop as he sensed Christian playwrights pushing at the boundaries of possibility and he conceded that the play had been written with great rever-

ence and scriptural accuracy. But he finally pronounced to the Lord Chamberlain:

‘I do not think protest would be awakened by the definite ruling that the Figure of our Blessed Lord Himself must not be produced in any drama which you sanction’.

Such is the early twentieth-century legacy of the theatre in Britain and the fight against it has exhausted and preoccupied many a playwright, actor and producer. Archbishop Davidson did not live to see a new and progressive Dean commission a play by Masfield for performance in his own Cathedral at Canterbury only four years after his ‘definite ruling’ and the play included the character of the ‘Anima Christi’. Admittedly this was only the spirit of Christ before His birth but the revolution had begun!

A new world

In fact, Christian writers of the 1920s and 30s established a platform which produced some of the most influential and enduring religious literature and drama, but it was created at a time of crisis in belief. Such writers were filled with sheer horror at the man-made hell of the First World War. They had read the disturbing poetry of Sassoon and Brooke; the alarming lines of Wilfred Owen, “And Abraham arose and slew his son/ And half the seed of Europe, one by one” the ghastly statistics and details in Robert Graves’ *Goodbye to All That*. They had seen R.C. Sherriff’s memorable play about trench warfare *Journey’s End* and terrifying images from painters and photographers; they heard dissonant music that challenged any concept of form or harmony. They had suffered personal loss and seen communities decimated by loss; they had witnessed a new role and independence for women; a refusal to return to old ways of servitude and deference. They had seen industrial unrest and unemployment; a frothy attempt by the bored affluent to party their way to happiness and, above all, they had experienced the collapse of simple faith and a growing sense that Christianity had little to say to this new waste land in the face of ever-intensifying materialism. There were also alarming shadows on the horizon of Europe.

Was it possible to catch a glimpse of God in such a situation? A group of writers that included J.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and Dorothy L. Sayers thought that it was. Indeed, they called themselves 'the inklings' because they felt that they had an inkling of the nature and relevance of God. They, along with C.S. Lewis and T.S. Eliot found aspects of what they were seeking in allegory and in the ritual and liturgy of the High Church. Tolkien, an expert in ancient literature, produced his massive *Lord of the Rings* a complex allegory of the eternal battle between good and evil; Williams, a publisher and theologian, wrote a play about Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury who had created the sublime words of the *Book of Common Prayer* but who eventually was burned for his adherence to principle; Dorothy L. Sayers, an Italian scholar made a verse translation of Dante's epic poem *The Divine Comedy* as well as writing a number of plays and C.S. Lewis is now best remembered for his remarkable Christian allegory *The Chronicles of Narnia* and through the play *Shadowlands*.

Modern readers or students of drama are more likely to be aware of T.S. Eliot's famous play *Murder in the Cathedral*, initially written, as were plays by Masefield and D.L. Sayers, for performance in Canterbury Cathedral. Almost alone amongst plays exploring aspects of the Christian faith produced during the 20s and 30s, this play broke into the London theatre scene and eventually established itself world-wide as a major classic. Its central figure, as with an earlier play by Tennyson that brought particular fame to Henry Irving, is Thomas Becket, the Archbishop who was murdered in his own cathedral. Like Jesus, Becket contemplates his approaching death and prepares his flock for the event through a memorable sermon. Patiently, Becket faces execution and explains to his perplexed followers that his death will not be without significance and that it is his destiny to die for a higher cause. Thus Eliot, who had created in his great poem *The Waste Land* an image of a world without meaning and hope, had provided in his play a sense that an individual, inspired by God, could make sense of existence and even experience peace beyond understanding.

The late 1920s and early 1930s saw a growing realisation among Christians that drama could be both a powerful medium for the exploration of faith and for evangelism. This resulted in the founding of the Religious Drama Society of Great Britain by a Non-Conformist, Olive Stephenson and Frances Younghusband in 1928. This society, which rapidly became known as Radius, has continued to promote high standards of Christian performance and writing through maintaining play collections and offering guidance in summer schools. Its first president was George Bell, who probably contributed more to the idea of a new and exploratory Christian drama than any other individual. He was Dean of Canterbury when he commissioned Masefield to write *The Coming of Christ* but then became Bishop of Chichester, in which role he continued to support a network of new playwrights and theatre practitioners and became celebrated for his opposition to the policy of obliteration bombing in the Second World War and his friendship and correspondence with the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Significantly, his final speech in the Convocation concerned the Church and the theatre.

The emergence of a specifically 'religious' drama in a predominantly secular Britain was largely a product of the traditionally strong amateur theatre movement together with a determination to include drama as an aspect of worship in some of the more progressive churches. This, however, carried with it the danger of worthy, pious and inadequately performed work which was not refined in the considerable heat of the professional theatre. It was this possibility of 'amateurish' writing and performance that preoccupied the founders of Radius and particularly its president, George Bell and his successor E. Martin Browne.

Whereas Bishop Bell was the source of inspiration to writers who aspired to explore aspects of Christianity in their plays it was the remarkable theologian-turned-theatre-director, E. Martin Browne who acted as midwife to their work and enabled a new generation of playwrights to shape their ideas into practical reality. Browne directed the plays of T.S. Eliot and Charles Williams and was also instrumental in encouraging Christopher Fry who ultimately became the

most commercially successful of English Christian dramatists in the immediate post-war years. Browne had showed himself to be a strict disciplinarian in rehearsals and, (consequently many would argue) able to achieve impressive results in a short time with both professional and amateur actors. He was also adept at exploiting what would now be labelled 'found spaces' and was able to mount plays in churches, ruins, halls and venues of all descriptions with flair and imagination. This skill became particularly relevant when, at the outbreak war in 1939, he and his actress wife, Henzie Raeburn, set up a professional touring company which travelled from its base in Canterbury to all parts of Britain staging Christian drama in whatever space they could find. Their search for suitable material was governed by a determination that it would be of the highest quality and included Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Two of their plays were based on biblical sources: James Bridie's *Tobias and the Angel* and D.H. Lawrence's *David* but when they wanted a suitable play for the Christmas season they turned to the Medieval Mystery plays and made their own compilation for these ancient sources. However, in seeking a play for Passiontide the company decided upon Henri Gheon's *The Way of the Cross* which not only caught the sombre mood of the war years but furthered the need for presenting incidents from the life of Jesus in dramatic form. The performance, which took place in such 'theatres' as miners' welfare clubs, schools and village halls, showed the events of the Judgement, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus through the eyes of a narrator together with two men and two women who play out the scenes. A critic captured the essence of the play by saying of the actors: "they are spectators who are, as it were, outside time and space, who suddenly change into a tragic embodiment of the things they see". Jesus Himself does not appear in the play, instead, the action is conveyed by the stare or stamped foot by one of the actors.

Browne and his company argued that if people would not come to the theatre, then the theatre would come to them. This sense of energy has permeated much Christian drama and is evident today in the resurgence of new and original community plays, often taking the 'Passion' as their

starting-point. E. Martin Browne remained a towering figure in the field of religious drama. His work was recognised by the award of a rare Lambeth Doctorate by the Archbishop of Canterbury and he was a pioneer director of the York Mystery plays as well as inaugurating the Program in Religious Drama at New York Theological Seminary (where one of his students would eventually write *Godspell*). Throughout his long career he had an obsession with high artistic standards and once famously remarked that 'much pious drama is impious art'. The story of the touring company which he and his wife ran during the war is engagingly told in their book *Pilgrim Story* (1945) but one wonders if the rapt audiences of schoolchildren pictured there as watching and listening to Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* were simply glad to be seeing live entertainment or enjoying a break from the routine of learning in difficult school conditions. Browne, like others who followed him may have labelled themselves too specifically as 'religious' drama specialists and eventually confined themselves too much to ecclesiastical buildings to make a substantial inroad into the thoughts of the vast majority of the population of post-war Britain.

However, in the 1920s and 30s, faced with the erosion of belief and the inadequacy of much Church life in the context of 'modern' attitudes, many Christian thinkers began to focus not so much on the distant and transcendental God but on the God who entered the torn world in human form. The upsurge of this 'Incarnational Theology' led to a renewed interest in the person, life and significance of Jesus, particularly among creative artists and, thus, for playwrights, the continuing prohibition of showing Jesus as a man and a character in a drama was a source of frustration and revolt.

The opportunity to challenge this entire aspect of censorship came when Dorothy L. Sayers committed herself to writing a radio play about the life of Christ to be broadcast during the Second World War. This play and its reception will be discussed in some detail in our chapter on the media but it is important to note here that the idea of Christ being impersonated by a human actor was seen by many conserva-

tive Christians as blasphemous and unacceptable. Interestingly, the actor in question was Robert Speight, who had played Thomas Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*.

Playing Jesus

The problem of showing the person of Jesus in drama did not appear to concern the writers and performers of the many ancient Passion Plays that appear to have had their origins in the Middle Ages but Robert Potter, who has researched the revival of such plays in modern times argues in his book *The English Morality Play* (1975) that, for medieval actors, it was not a matter of 'representation' but a matter of 'presentation'. Those actors, he maintains, in no way claimed to represent or impersonate the figure of Jesus, they simply spoke the words and carried out the actions as a presentation. They did not 'inhabit the role' as a modern actor would put it or identify with the character they were playing. In practical terms this is a subtle distinction.

Both the contemporary theatre and broadcast media appear to be almost obsessed by 'realism'. We expect our characters to be believable and like other people we know; we are sometimes not sure if we wish to see actors in dramatic situations or 'real' people in 'reality' shows. If our stage and screen actors play parts we demand that they bring psychological and physical realism to their work and so, that is how they are trained. We expect to care about, relate to and love or hate our fictional people. We may well know more about them than we do about world leaders and we expect to share their lives.

When we go to see a play or film about Jesus we may well expect to feel the same. The actor must convince us that he is Jesus, and in many cases, *our* Jesus. Convinced that the most significant event in history is the entry of God in the form of a man early twentieth-century Christian dramatists argued that, far from being blasphemous, it was absolutely essential that Jesus was shown as being human so that we could share His human experience.

It is not difficult to see why the figure of Jesus should provide such an attractive topic for a playwright. Few, if any figures in history have been so copiously discussed in litera-

ture. Unlike the founders of any of the world's other faiths, Jesus emerges from the Gospels that tell of His life and teaching as a highly complex personality. For some He is a great story-teller, for others great teacher or worker of miracles. Some see Him as a fearless debater, others as a mystic. He was the friend of the dispossessed, the vulnerable and the outcast and yet, clearly had extensive support in intellectual and noble circles. His life was, in every sense, dramatic and yet the details we have of it are sufficiently sketchy and incomplete to tempt a writer to fill in the blanks. He was a revolutionary who challenged the status quo as every playwright seeks to do; His words have become part of our everyday speech in the way that only great dramatists and orators have shaped our language; He was able to command the attention of huge audiences to such an extent that they forgot that they were hungry and yet, in moments of one-to-one dialogue He could be the most engaging and affecting friend.

No actor could ever hope to impersonate Jesus in His entirety but aspects of His being are images that can be preserved and cultivated through drama. It is through images that human beings strive to make sense of their lives: these may be visual or verbal, tactile or auditory but, ultimately they are the means whereby we are enabled to use our 'imagination' to take us beyond the mundane and humdrum towards something approaching the divine. The theatre brings together many diverse art forms and in this synthesis can provide an enrichment of life, belief and faith that has few equals.

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