

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Music is a universal means of communication that is relevant in all ages and every sphere of human life. Its uses cannot be over-emphasized. Music cuts across cultures, secular, sacred, natural and supernatural. Because of its common use, it seems not recognized or fully utilized as a pedagogical tool in Christian education. Some people feel that the role of music in the church should be only during hymns, praise and worship but it goes beyond that. This paper discussed the role of music in Christian education. Historical and observation methods were employed, examining the challenges of using music in Christian education, principles for effective music education and roles of music in Christian education. It is noted from the study that dearth of music teachers and skilful teachers, lack of teaching aids, accommodation among others affect music in Christian education. The writer, therefore, recommends that seminars and workshop on music should be organized for church leaders and teachers, teaching aids and accommodation should be provided for effective music education in the church.

Keywords: Music, Christian education, Teachers and Pedagogical tool

Introduction

Music is one of the gifts God has given to mankind for various purposes including education but how it is utilized in Christian education is an issue. Oladapo (2019) expressed that “music is a great gift of God to our world; a gift that transcends the natural into the supernatural. It has no bounds, a neutral ground that accommodates all manner of expressions and belief system.” There is more to harness from music but it depends on what, when, why and how it is utilized. Music in the church is not only for praises and worship. It can also be used to educate people in the church and drive the message of the service home. In corroboration, Olatona (2005) said, “The church is a main provenance of music and it has always contributed a great deal to its development. Many musicians all over the world started from the church.” Also, George Janvier in Olatona (2005) asserted that “Christianity is the most musical of all the world religions because Christians have the most to sing about.” It may not be completely true that Christians have the most to sing about but they harness more of this great gift of God. This work centres on the role of music in Christian education.

Definition of terms

Music

According to Ekweme (2008) music can be described as “ a phenomenon using the medium of sound which is organized and manipulated into socially accepted patterns that communicate intelligibly and meaningfully, verbally, or non-verbally, ideas, feelings, emotions and event to people.” Music in the context of this study can be seen as a means of

communicating the gospel message beyond written and spoken words to the human heart. It is a medium through which the church educates its members, especially children. To buttress this, Oyeniyi (2016) explained that church life is greatly influenced by music in one form or the other. At Sunday Schools, prayer meetings, Sunday services and other events, there is the singing of hymns or choruses; choir anthems; the use of musical instruments, etc... a church worship service without one form of music or the other is almost unthinkable.

Education

Education is derived from Latin words 'educare' which means to "bring up", to rise and to nourish, to train or mould (Bhatt 2017). According to W. Kent Gilbert, education may be thought of as that process whereby the community seeks to assist the learner to assimilate, react to, integrate and use those elements of its heritage which are most valued, relevant in such a way that he may grow in his person and make the greatest contribution to the common good." From the definitions above, education can be seen as a process of assisting, training, or helping someone have a better understanding of something useful to the person so that he can help others too. It is helping someone have a better understanding of his world or whatever one is doing, in this case, a better understanding of the word of God to help build others.

Christian education

According to Dewolf (1963), Christian education is the nurture of Christian commitment and character in the Christian church, by the teaching of the true Word of God through the use of the Bible, and catechism or other church manuals, in constant relevance to life as experienced and including much group process. Also, Zuck (1998), said, "Christian education is the Christ-centered, Bible-based, student-related process of communicating God's written Word, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to guide individuals to know and grow in Christ". In corroboration, *Diepenbrock (1990)* added, "Christian education can be defined as comprising two basic concepts: (1) The efforts of Christians to transmit their Scriptural beliefs and practices to the next generation, and (2) the efforts of Christians to nurture and edify one another spiritually. This is done, as St. Paul affirms in Ephesians 4:13" until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ".

Finally, Ojo (2015) quoting Miller, submitted Christian education as "a process by which the Christian community seeks to discover and convey the truth of Christian faith to individuals so meaningfully that they become Christian disciples; doing God's will in every relationship". It can be deduced from the definitions that Christian education is a process of transmitting Christian faith and lifestyle to others, nurturing them to become like Jesus Christ in words and action. Becoming like Christ is the main purpose of Christian education. The Bible is the content for Christian education and should be handled in a way that all who are exposed to it will experience transformation in their lives. Christian education is more than memorizing and telling Bible stories, learning about Christian doctrine and heritage. Carlson (2006) opined that teaching the Bible in Christian education is more than Bible

Drilling and knowledge; but, towards living a life of obedience. “The purpose of Christian education according to Horton (1992) is the directing of the process of human development towards God's objectives for man: godliness of character and action”. The result of Christian education is to produce godly character and for one to make heaven at last. In corroboration, Graendorf in Areo (2018) expressed that “ education in the church is an important function that the church cannot do without because the church has a teaching function. The purpose of education in the church is to bring people to saving faith in Jesus Christ, to train them in a life of discipleship, and to equip them for Christian service in the world today.” This purpose is to be achieved with children as well as adults.

The Purpose of Music in Christian Education

Music is a universal language of the soul which cuts across all ages without a language barrier. According to Burton (2010), “music sidesteps the demands of written and spoken languages. It has an appeal that crosses national and continental boundaries.” It is such that can be used to communicate, nurture and transform lives from cradle to the grave. Church life is highly influenced by music. Almost all the activities in church involve music- Sunday school, prayer meeting, wedding, women/men forum etc. Therefore, the purpose of music in education, especially in Christian education, cannot be over-emphasized. According to Ojo (2015). The purpose of church music in educational function of the church is two dimensions to serve as a vehicle for impression and expression of religious concepts as a means of personal growth and development.

In corroboration, Alford (1967) said, “specifically, music may be used as an effective arm of teaching and educational ministry of the local church through developing and providing musical programs and experiences which will serve to accomplish the following:

1. Teach Christian ideals. This is accomplished by providing music which has at its basis the fundamental Christian concepts of living, and by utilizing the privilege of singing and teaching music which expresses a positive aspect of Christian living and Christian worship and praise.
2. Promulgate doctrinal concepts of the church. Hymns and gospel songs can be used in this regard as a means of teaching Christian concepts and doctrines of the church.
3. Provide for social and recreational needs. There should always be a place in the church program for social development and recreational expressions. Music provides a basic tool in programs like this. There is a place for Christian-oriented fun songs, activity songs, game songs, or even spontaneously created songs in the complete church musical program.

In summary, the two underlying purposes of music in Christian education is to win (evangelistic function) and to wean (to train-educational function). The word of God is taught through hymns and choruses which are based on the Bible.

The Scope of Music in Christian Education

According to Living Voice of the Gospel (1996), “The scope of church music, in Christian

education encompasses all the educational ministries of the church, concerning its activities. The objective is to use appropriate music materials, to enhance Christian nurturing and growth. Hence, the pastoral musician is committed to the spiritual growth of the entire congregation, not just those currently serving in the music ministry organization” The educational ministry of the church include Sunday school, youth activities, Children Bible Club, Vacation Bible School (VBS), Church Music school, Men forum, Women forum, family devotion among others. The role of music in some of the ministries mentioned above will be discussed later.

The Role of Music in Christian Education

1. Teaching

Having discussed the purpose and scope of music in Christian education, its role cannot be over-emphasized. Since basically, the Holy Bible is the textbook for Christian education, it is also essential to church music (Ojo 2015:162), it will be necessary to see the biblical view on music in Christian education. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Colossians 3:16 (NKJV). From the verse above, one of the major roles of music in Christian education is teaching. It is very easy for people to learn through music. Fortunato (1986) writing on this, asserted, “It is clear that music that focuses on biblical instruction is directed to the people of God. Also, if it is to be profitable or valuable, its content should be characterized by teaching, reproof (doctrine), correction and instruction in righteousness.”

In corroboration, Gangel (2005) expressed that “the basic joy of Christian faith makes music a learning ingredient even more important in Christian education than it is in secular education. The status of music as a universal language offers an outstanding vehicle for the communication of any message, and more particularly, for the message of the eternal Gospel. Gangel citing Lawrence Bixler says that this universal language appeals first to the emotions and then to the intellect. The emotions serve as a doorway to the throne room of the mind”. Though songs are not the only elements in worship, they constitute a very vital element that Christian educators cannot afford to ignore. Using songs to teach agrees with what Oyinloye (2003:260) called "hearing what Christians at the grassroots are thinking about Christ.". Ango (2014) explained that as we hear the voices of the people as they speak about Christ especially in songs, that we may be able to teach effectively what the Bible is saying about Christ.” All these buttress the point that teaching is one of the roles of music in Christian education.

More so, music is used in teaching church doctrines and beliefs. Ojo (2014:163) citing Miller buttressed this “thus, consciously or unconsciously, Christians probably learn more of their doctrines through music, than by any other means. Music communicates not only in melody and rhythm, but a message which can change the direction of a person's life". Most of these doctrines and teachings are found majorly in hymns. For example, The Church's One Foundation, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Have Faith in God, Jesus Lover of My

Soul, Standing on the Promises of God and others.

2. Moral and Spiritual development

Music is not only useful in teaching and instruction, but it also helps in moral and spiritual development especially of children. Music to a large extent contributes to the general development of children. Esimone (2013) asserted, "Music no doubt is the most simple, easy and best way to inculcate all good knowledge into children hence it leads to their all-round development." The Bible puts it this way, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6). The moral upbringing of children is better achieved through music. Oyeniyi (2016) citing Sample said, "Through church music, children learn and express feelings of love and adoration to God. Songs of trust and faith, if they are sung with understanding, help to reinforce a child's growing commitment to God's care." Children especially if taught in their class, feel free and relaxed to listen and learn. They learn songs like :

Read your Bible pray every day,
Pray every day, pray every day
Read your Bible pray every day,
If you want to grow.

Drop your Bible never ever pray
Never ever pray, never ever pray
Drop your Bible never ever pray
If you want to die.

Another song

Love your neighbour 2x
Love your neighbour as yourself
Love your neighbour 2x
Charity begins at home.

When children are exposed to songs like the ones above, it helps them think of harmonious living with their neighbours, develop moral values, boost their love for God early in life, instils the fear of God in their hearts and help them become better citizens of their countries. Hence, Esimone (2013:211) citing Onyiuke asserts, "songs and the accompanying moral lessons are hardly forgotten by the child". It is left for parents to send their children to church to build their moral and spiritual values. A child that is connected to God early in life will find it difficult to divert to the world later in life.

3. Communication

Music in Christian education plays two major roles in communication; a means of speaking to God and a means of God speaking to the church. Music is a great tool for worship. It allows expressing one's self in a way that words cannot do. It is easier to worship or make a request

to God through songs than spoken words. Sometimes it is difficult to construct words in prayer when one is passing through hard times. Through soul-lifting music in the church, people learn things that encourage and strengthen their faith in difficult times. At that point, it will be easier to sing, "Pass Me, not O Gentle Saviour", I Need Thee Every Hour etc. Also one can easily enter into worship through songs than words. God can speak to our hearts through the lyrics of the songs especially if they are derived from the scriptures. That is why it is necessary to compose Bible-based songs.

4. Reminder

Music helps us to remember things especially Bible passages that talk about healing, health, wealth, fruitfulness, greatness, success, life and death, the second coming of Christ. For instance, if one is sick and suddenly remembers the song that says, "I shall not die, but live and declare the works of Lord Amen". The person will be encouraged and have faith that he/she will not die in that situation. Olatona (2005:65) buttressed this point thus, "if there is a message from God that your congregation finds difficult to understand or adhere to, your musicians should convert it to a song. Teach the people...it then means that music is a great asset in reminding people of certain teachings. People used it in time past but we hardly have songs with a message again. Why?"

5. Instruction and correction

Music is a very useful tool for instruction and correction, especially when dealing with children. According to Olatona (2005), it is a known fact that music is a major means of instructing children in kindergartens. It is used for example, in teaching the importance of hygiene, good morals, etc. It is also used in correcting some ills in the society and sounding warning to the adamant." Here is this childhood song is taken from Proverbs 29:1 " He who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing. Such songs can help correct stubborn children.

6. Deliverance

It is obvious from the scriptures that deliverance comes through music as seen in the case of King Saul (1 Sam16:16). David was skilful but the presence of God in his life made the difference. Paul and Silas also got their deliverance through songs. Christian educators should not overlook the place of music in their teachings because deliverance can take place any time the right atmosphere is created for God to act through music.

7. Attracting and retaining youths

Music is useful in attracting and retaining youths in the church. This is close to music being the power of God unto salvation. Any church that plays with her music is likely going to have a low turnout of youths because music is the drive for this age. Therefore, church leaders need to evaluate their music and make necessary amendments to avoid losing their members.

Other roles of music in Christian education

1. Church music school

The church may not have enough time during the Sunday school to organize musical training for the members especially children but yearly church music school can be established. A church music school is designed to provide a week or two weeks of intensive training for people of all ages in the church. It is usually conducted during the summer. Alford (1981:81) gave the following as general purposes of the church music school:

- a. To provide devotional and inspirational materials and experiences relating to church music.
- b. To provide fundamental training in music reading and theory.
- c. To present and discuss the principles of singing and good vocal performance.
- d. To furnish instruction and training for church instrumentalists
- e. To provide a period devoted to the intensive rehearsal of music to be performed in church by the congregation, choir, instrumentalists and special groups.

Conclusion

This work has looked at the role of music in Christian education by giving the definitions of music, education and Christian education. It treated the purpose, scope and roles of music in Christian education and observed that music in Christian education is more demanding and has a major purpose of life transformation to become like Christ. The music though common with us can be used to achieve what looks like impossible in the lives of people if properly planned and practiced in the church. The church can grow if she is ready to grow her music. Music remains a great gift to the world which must be well utilized by man.

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