Aspects of Style in the Bible as a Recitative/Meditative Text

By

Ben-Fred Ohia, PhD
Department of English and Literary Studies,
Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria
Phone: 07062947849, 08135087207, 09078892171
Email: benfredohia911@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper interrogates the recitative/meditative style of the Bible in spite of being written, and its impact on believers, especially women and children. Approaching recitation/meditation as a category of orality, the Bible text was thought about and closely read for aspects of recitative and meditative therein, and twenty-three (23) meditative aspects were subsequently identified in the Bible, from Joshua to revelation. One recitative aspect was identified in Psalm.49:4. Fourteen recitative aspects were analysed, findings show that the Bible selects the spoken mode for reason being a discourse for humankind, yet an exclusive address to individuals who recite or listen to it; that inability to speak Hebrew or Greek is not a barrier to enjoying it; and that by virtue of them recitative mode, believers are able to come in early contact with it, and to recite, recall, memorise, and listen to it. These perhaps has aided its survival over centuries, and retained its linguistic flavour, which may have contributed to its perpetual freshness. Its technology-aided availability as mp3, mp4, phone and computer Apps further advanced its orality. The narrative style is therefore not only a preservative device, but also a beautification mechanism for humankind.

Keywords: Bible, recitative, meditative, orality, style.

Introduction

Modern-day church operators and Christianity do not understand the listing and compilation process of the book called Bible. They do not also understand how the book came into existence. The best they have been able to understand is how the book came into existence. The best they have been able to understand is the word of God written by some men many years back through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This mentality that focuses on the Bible as merely inspired work of some men of old without recourse to how various books were compiled and some rejected in the process is causing confusion in the body of Christ. The Bible was translated from Hebrew to Greek languages by King Ptolomey of Egypt 2000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ; the aim was to have such writings in the Egyptian world library. King Ptolomey invited 72 wise men from Jerusalem to carry out this project.

The Bible is the supreme, central text of guidance for the Christian faithful worldwide. The Bible is the most widely read book in the history of mankind, a source of immense inspiration, guidance and wisdom for millions of Christians all over the world. According to Ordu (2013), "this book called the Bible was put together in the council of Hippo, (Canon 36), October 8, 393 A.D, affirmed in 397 AD and reaffirmed in 471 AD, long after the various authors of the books that make up the Bible had died. … the time covered by all the books spread to over a period of one thousand years" (p.2). it was revealed to the patriarchs from Moses in the Old Testament to Paul in the New Testament at the inception of their ministries and committed to writings after deaths-the various books were merged into one book called the Bible for preservation and reference purposes. It must be noted that from the time the Bible was not compiled to the time its existence, the Jews operated on traditions. These traditions were passed from generation to generation through orality. Hence the Old Testament of the Bible is preoccupied with Jewish traditions.

Therefore, Christianity has a tradition and apostles handed down these beliefs and practices from one generation to another, hence they consistently wrote in their letters and teachings that followers should follow their teaching in both oral and written. So, we have the terms "sacred scriptures" and "apostolic tradition" in Christianity. Sacred scriptures are the speeches of God put down in the Bible by the authors under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, Apostolic

Traditions is the word of God that did not form part of the Bible but transmitted to humankind through the apostles. This is found in the frequent use of his word by the authors of New Testament books and expressions of such phrases among others as "… all that I have taught you … all that I have handed to you… in my previous letters… hold fast to the traditions, etc (2Thessalonians.2:15, 2Timothy.2:2, 1Corintians.11:2 and 1Corintians.15:1-2), etc.

The books are organised into sixty-six (66) books of 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament, not in chronological order of revelation or subject matter but perhaps according to collation and compilation. There is the general belief that the compilation of the Bible has only been made possible under divine inspiration and guidance because God says about the Bible to Joshua "this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth but thou shall meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous; and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua.1:8). For Biblical scholars, it may be affirmed that within the literature or the Hebrews, wide and fecund as it is both in poetry and in evacuated prose, there is nothing to compare with the Bible. It is the finest literature (work of prose) in existence. The Bible is referenced by God Himself and the prophets referred to it by various names, notably, as: the book of the law (Joshua.1:8 External book Psalm.119:89, Isaiah.40:8, Matthew.5:18; 24:35, 1Peter.1:25; the book of the Lord Isaiah.34:16 (NKJV) law & commandment of God Psalm.119:47, 72, 97, 140.

However, most of us know the Bible as a book, and I have met people who wonder how the Bible as a book came to be. The New Testament of the Bible comprises the Pentateuch or five scrolls (law), History, Prophecy, Poetry and Wisdom while the New Testament comprises history, letters and revelation. These books came about from writing on clay tablets, pieces of pot, waxed boards and even bits of wood. "People in Bible time also started writing on parchment, made from sheep-skin, and on papyrus, a type of paper made from papyrus reed, which grows near the River Niger" (The Bible NKJV, p.2). The Bible also included the apocrypha – a collection of books and additions to the Old Testament books written between 300BC and AD 100. The books are interesting and valuable historical documents that range from historical narratives to pious fiction.

Recitative as style

Various sources have defined recitative as a style more speech-like than song-like.

> Recitative is a style of musical composition for solo voice, in which the melodic contours and note values are based largely on the natural inflections and rhythms of speech. The form occurs primarily in opera and oratorio where it contracts with the aria, in which the melodies and rhythms have a more purely musical structure (the Microsoft Encarta software, 2012).

Merrian-webster defines "recitative" as a rhythmically free vocal style that imitates the natural inflections of speech and that is used in dialogue and narrative in operas and oratorios; also a passage to be declared in this style" (Merrian-webster.com, 2020). Recitative has also been described as a form of declamation, which refers to formal dramatic speech delivery, usually in theatrical style. Declamation is defined as "the art or practice of rhetorical speaking or recitation as an exercise in elocution" (Merriam-webster.com, 2020). Declamation is more fully defined as "a speech made in public, in the tone and manner of an oration, uniting the expression of action to the propriety of pronunciation, in order to give the sentiment its full impression upon the mind" (Bell, 1810, P.109).

It is therefore clear from the foregoing definitions that recitative is "a mode of intonation which is used in certain dramatic and vocal compositions", a means of expression (Rush, 1833, Pp.426-427). It is a style of delivery in which a singer is allowed to adopt the rhythm and delivery of ordinary speech. Its primary function is "to match in song the rhythm of the spoken word" (subtilormusicengraving.com). Recitative comes about as a result of "the desire to restore the primacy of the text and to retain the rhythms and melodic patterns of speech" (Parlov, 2011, P.44). An outgrowth of monody, it is meant to lay the "pathway between song and speech", and invite singers "to declaim text in a style that is at once measured and free, lyrical yet rhythmically fluid" (Bonds, 2010, P.202), A fit that was first composed and "discovered" by Claudio Monteveredi (Kerman, 1988, P.21). The rise of recitative marks the triumph of the word over harmony as against harmony that was the master of the word during the

Renaissance (Bostrom, 1986, P.22). It thus becomes according to Kerry Bostrom, "a new vocal style, designed to initiate the natural rhythms and inflections of spec, unbound to regular tempo and free from specific formal organization" (Bostrom, 1986, P.22). Recitatives, used generally to narrate or describe action, thought, or emotion (musicterms.orpium.com), do not repeat lines as formally composed songs do. They are materials meant to be recited orally, and not just read. Gillis (2016) defines it as "any semi-spoken, semi-song now repetitive part of an opera that advances the action" (www.operasense.com).

Meditative as style

Meditative is describing something that is reflective or deeply thoughtful. It means disposed or given; describes things that are related to the act of meditating or the act of thinking very deeply about something. It also meant giving your attention to one thing as a religious activity or to relax. It encompasses being thoughtful, cogitative, contemplative, deliberative, excogitative, pensive and reflective. It therefore follows that as a religious activity, meditative means being thoughtful deeply and it synchronises with orality since thinking take place before uttering a speech. Hence meditative and recitative are performed in sequence in speech. Meditation was practised before 1500 BCE at about 3000 BCE.

The Bible mentions to meditate twenty-three times and nineteen of them appear in Psalms. Believers are told to meditate on the law in some way. We are told to meditate on His actions, law for testimonies - all of which are found within His word. Meditation has been a part of the Christian tradition since its origin. We can also recall countless moments in the Old Testament in which the faithful spent time in silent, intentional prayer to draw closer to God. Psalm 1 explains that when believers meditate on God's word, they will be blessed with flourishing just like a tree flourishes if it is planted by continuously running water and nourished by a constant source of life. Regularly meditating on the Bible, it is believed, will nourish the soul. "Meditation began to be seriously studied for its medical benefits in the I960s" (https:time.com).

According to Britannica.com, recitative and meditative developed in the late 1500s and it is "modeled on oratory" (britannica.com), while its first known use was in 1654 (Merriam-webster.com). For Ferdinand de Saussure, orality, or oral speech is primary and writing is a kind of compliment to it (de Saussure, 1959, Pp.23-24).

The power or orality goes beyond its spoken ability and nature. Bandia (2015) argues that "the very act of speaking… involves the translating (sic) of thought into audible words or speech(s) (and) (t)he survival of such thought is made possible through oral transmission….(P.125). However, unequal scholarly attention has been accorded orality compared to writing for centuries in the scientific and literary study of language and literature…, "despite the oral root of all verbalisation" (Finnegan, 1977, Pp.1-7; Ong, 2002, P.8). Asserting the primary orality, Ong 2002, avers that "oral expression can exist and mostly has exited without any writing at all, writing never without orality" (P.8)

He further asserts: [s]peech is inseparable from our consciousness and it has fascinated human beings, elicited serious reflection about itself, from the very early stages of consciousness, long before writing came into existence".

It is therefore clear from the foregoing that, aside from being a category and style of orality, the recitative spoken is a free vocal style that emphasises the spoken and rather than the melody or musical accompaniment while the sonority and creativity is built around the voice and the words in form of a spectacular, breath-taking speech so beautiful to listen to, a speaking composition rather that a singing composition. Its main function in the 16th century Europe was story telling (subtilormusicengraving.com), "often used for narrative or for the forwarding of the plot of an opera" (musicterm.artopium.com), "To carry the dialogue and to advance the action of the plot" of the operas (britannica.com). The spoken form of language is primary and generally accessible to everyone. However, we have only seen the Bible as a book, and it is often described as a "Holy book". How can a book be a spoken document and it is said to be a book? How does orality come into play in it? What are the linguistic evidences and larger patterns to distinguish the Bible as a spoken variety? This paper therefore aims to show that although we see the

Bible as a written book, it is actually a recitative. I will approach this by analyzing aspects of its register and linguistic style.

The voice and the non-verbal complementation

The primary instrument of orality is the human voice, just as the pen is to writing. The pitch of voice and tonality can be used to influence, persuade or manipulate listeners to accept certain views or think in certain direction. Emotions can be easily aroused when some strong feelings are touched, especially when such sentiments as fear, wickedness, oppression, nobility, joy, bravery, loss, and dignity are whipped up in certain manners to excite certain strong emotional or physical reactions such as support, sympathy, happiness, protection, defence, victory, honour, etc. this can be easily achieved through and appropriate voice tonality and modulation, as well as relevant complimentary gestures, facial expressions, etc. This shows part of the powers of the spoken word on its audience, especially on the Jews for whom the spoken word is as important as life itself.

Recitative is often used to represent "a character's emotions/state" (subtilormusicengraving.com) as the style concentrates on the text and not on musical segments. Selecting the recitative is thus apt and strategic for the life-changing message of the Bible as listeners are able to follow the text and the message therein.

Women, Children, Christian Faithful and Bible as Meditative/Recitative Text

The Bible is a text that emerged out of inspiration, children and adults have a lifetime commitment to meditate/recite it always as instructed. The input of women in the Bible meditative/recitative for children at home in morning and evening devotions is both effective and far-reaching. Traditionally, children spend more time with their mother than with their father, and so for all children, their first contact with the Bible is through their mother.

Some children have been reported to have memorised the whole of the Bible on their mother's laps or recited during morning or evening devotions as they are compelled to do, while others have done so while listening to their mother recite it

at home while doing house chores. Examples suffice in the Roman Catholic Church where the Bible is recited with the use of chaplets in a similar manner as the Muslims do. Children also learn portions of the Bible while following their father to the church for prayers, especially when the priest recites the verses always. The learning continues when they join Bible classes as soon as they are able to talk. This is all due to the meditative/recitative style of the Bible.

Aspects of Meditative/Recitative Style in the Bible

Orality: The Bible was given or revealed in spoken form to the apostles by inspiration – not written form. It was given by word of mouth and received by hearing, meditated and recited daily, by believers and adherents in it, and memorised by them, before it was eventually committed to writing "into a simple book" (Bible). The apostles to whom it was given are also commanded, for instance in Numbers.22:38, Psalms.1:2 to preach and meditate on the word day and night.

The apostles are directed as to the appropriate manner to meditate and recite the Bible indicating that the Bible is orally given, thus: "We have thought of thy loving kindness, O' God in the midst of thy temple" (Psalms.48:9).

An oral mode of presentation has the advantage of being direct, and providing first-hand contact with the message, which seems to be clearer and more touching than a message in written mode. It also combines the non-verbal support which makes communication more comprehensive and real as the human touch in orality can be quite compelling. Children who could not read yet could listen and benefit from an oral recitative. Oral recitatives give room for the collection and regurgitation as long as one keeps reciting the content, and may eventually lead to memorisation. No wonder then that there are children worldwide who have memorised the content of the Bible after listening to it for some time regardless of the meaning and proficiency in Hebrew and Greek languages from varies translations are made into other local, national, and international languages

Orality is a more powerful and effective means of persuasion, guidance, admonition and control. It addresses itself at different times and situations either

to specific people or the people in general. The Bible is neither the voice of any human nor the idea of any mortal. Thus it has with it certain reverence as the unedited word of God directly from Him. Direct Address of the Bible in a direct address by God to His creatures through his servants (apostles). Some of the biblical messages are addressed to individuals, people, prophets, people of the book, believers, unbelievers, women and a host of others depending on the message and time. For instance

> In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candle-stick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote "(Daniel.5:5)
> …, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language, for we understood it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall (Isaiah.36:11).

> "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, they ye might believe that Jesus is the son of God, and believing this might have life through his name (John.20:30-31).

The advantage of this recitative style is that this direct address subsists as long as there are reciters and listeners to the recitations, and the message thus continues to be alive and fresh to succeeding generations.

Rhythm: Rhyming is a common phenomenon in the Bible, particularly the Hebrew/Greek text, especially those chapters characterised by short and pungent verses revealed in the early years of revelation in Jerusalem, Judea, Egypt and Nazareth. Rhythm can only be shown In the Hebrew/Greek text, book in letters and sounds as this is lost in translation Adekoya (2017) defines and summarises the beauty of rhythm as follows:

> [r]hythm is the representation of similar rounds of regular and irregular intervals. Its purpose may be magical (to charm hypnotise…

> or overpower one opponent mnemonic (to aid memory); therapeutic (to ease a tormented mind…); aesthetic (to find pleasure); or economic (to coordinate work, make labour light and increase efficiency) (Adekoya 2017, P.367).

The following verses in English lettering (known as translations) are instances of rythming scheme in the Bible:

> With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wonder from thy commandments
>
> With my lips I have declared all the judgements of thou mouth
>
> I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riche.
>
> I will "meditate in all thy precepts, and leave have respects unto thy ways.
>
> I will delight myself in thy statutes:
>
> I will not forget thy word (Psalm.119:9b-16)

Notice the initial rhymes of "I" and "the" sounds pronounced in English as /ai/ and /ðai/ from verse 9b-16, medial rhymes sound pronounced in English as "I" and end rhymes "s" sound pronounced in English as /s/ sound. Rhythm has helped to greatly enhance the beauty, recitative culture and memorisability of the Bible. It also helps to memorize English translations of the Bible especially when it was being revealed through inspiration.

Story-telling: Story-telling is one of the usual subject matters of recitatives. Stories interest people because they tell the unknown, and so story-telling has the tendency to arrest listener's attention because they want to know. it is also a form of "new information" for people. Even where they are more familiar with the story, they want to hear "this person's version of the story". Finally, a person may wish to criticise out of hatred for the teller and/or perhaps for the story, so people listen attentively for any of these reasons. The whole of Genesis chapter 37 of the Bible is the story of Joseph and his father in the hands of his brothers. The story begins thus:

> And Jacob dwelled in the land wherein his father was a stranger in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph, being seventeen years old was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto other their evil report (The Bible, NKJV: Genesis.37:1-2) and ends with the following last verses of the chapter:

> And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and his daughters rose up to console him; but he refused to be comforted and he said, for I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard (Genesis.37:34-36).

Several other stories abound in the Bible, such as that of Nebuchadnezzar in (2Kings.24:1-20). The narrative goes like this:

> In his days Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon came up and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. And the lord sent against him bands of Chaldoes, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it according to the word of the lord, which he spoke by his servants the prophets (2Kings.24:1-2).

Recitative is therefore the best suited style to present story for effective, long lasting impact.

Narratives: The Bible narrates the series of events such as conquest in northern Canadian in Joshua.11:1-6 thus:

> And it came to pass, when Jabin the king of Hazor had heard those things that he sent Jobab the king of Madon, and to the king of

> Simon and to the king of Achshaph and to the king that were at the north of the mountains and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of dorion on the west (Joshua.11:1-2).

Another event is the narrative of Joshua as the Israelite general in the battle against Amalek as in Exodus.17:8-16, Joshua led the conquest of Jericho in Joshua.6:1-27 and how Joshua commanded the sun to stand still in about 1405 BC in Joshua.9-10 respectively. Of great importance is the narrative of Moses' birth, the freedom of the Israelites from Egypt to the movement in the wilderness on the way to Canaan, the promised land from about 13th Century B.C. (Exodus.2-40).

Similarly, the story of Saul, David, Goliath and the Philistines reachily comes to mind. "And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the valley of Ellah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines (1Samuel.17:2). All these real events and incidents are presented in a style which includes conversations and real participants – speakers and listeners in real time in the Bible history. The Jews cherish this style as they are given to poetry and scholarly renditions and oratory.

The recitative/meditative thus remains the most effective style of discourse for this set of people where the most effective method to teach, challenge, persuade, and humble them is through the spoken word devoid of incantation. In addition, recitative/meditative provides vital information as a foreword to an opera.

Dialogue/Conversation: Recitative/meditative is "vehicle(s) for dramatic action and dialogue" (substilomusicengraving.com). The Bible is a dialogue between God and human beings. A dialogue details in at least three entitles, namely the speaker, the addressee and the speech itself all of which are found in the text of the Bible. There are several instances of dialogue/conversation in the Bible. It is either between God and His people, the prophets and God/people, all as reported by God as there is no human reporter in the Bible.

In the Bible, we have the following instances of dialogue between God and His prophets/people and between the prophets and their people:

> And God said, "let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Genesis.1:26).

Jesus answered them. "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my father's name, they bear witness of me. But yet believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (John.10:25-26).

And he said unto me, it is done. I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely (Revelation.21:6).

Other dialogues include Exodus.3:4-22 between Moses and God in the burning bush at the desert; Ezekiel.2:7 between Ezekiel and God; Job.1:7 between Satan and God; 2Samuel.12:1-10 between Prophet Nathan and David concerning David's crime of adultery and murder and several others. This indicates that the Bible adopts the recitative/meditative style which emphasises the primacy of the text so as to patiently show its onerous message to the people.

Rhetorical question: The rhetorical question functions, according to Quirk and Greenbaum, "as a forceful statement "where" a positive rhetorical question is like a strong negative assertion, while a negative question is like a strong positive one" (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973, P.200). This can be better displayed in a recitative where the full import of the rhetorical function would be experienced in real time. This recitative device is a conversational means by which the listener is encouraged to participate in the Bible dialogue. The rhetorical questions are directed at listeners' hearts, and they are expected to reflect on the answers no matter how obvious they are. Instances of this in the Bible include:

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? (Matthew.10:29), for what saith the scriptures (Romans.4:3a); Isaiah.55:29. Several other instances abound, such as (Job.8:11); (Job.10:10); (Psalms.79:5); (Psalms.13:1-2); Matthew.8:26-29); (Matthew.5:7). The Bible thus seeks through recitative/meditative strategy to make its listeners witness and affirm the truthfulness in its message.

Parable: Parables are short moral stories meant to pass specific messages and admonition. They can be so effective when told orally, as the accompanying non-verbal expressions during the recitative tend to complement the recitative, and not only ease comprehensibility but produce maximum impact. It also aids remembrance because of the figurative, comparative (simile and metaphor) and the imagery usually embedded in the parable.

> Parable, a story or fable used to illustrate a religious or moral truth. Jesus made use of the parable to a great event. All the gospel stories record many of his parables except the account of John. (Afeiffer, 1996, P.320).

For instance, Jesus says in the parable of the sower:

> A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. Some fell upon a rock… it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some feel among thorns…. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bear fruit an hundredfold (Luke.8:5-8).

Other parables include: A lamp under a jar (Luke.8:16-18), The Good Samaritan (Luke.10:30-36), The Rich Fool (Luke.12:16-21), The Wedding Feast (Luke.14:8-11), The Great Banquet (Luke.14:12-24), The Lost Sheep (Luke.15:4-7), The Lost Coin (Luke.15:8-10), The Prodigal Son (Luke.15:11-32), The Dishonest Manager (Luke.16:1-13), The Persistent Widow (Luke.18:2-8), And The Pharisee And The Publican (Luke.18:10-14).

Proclamation: The orality in this activity is clear, since to declare or pronounce is to articulate. Proclamation is the act of announcing, pronouncing, disclosing, or

declaring something publicly and formally, and this is better done orally using recitative/meditative style for several reasons. It has to do with belief, and an orally proclaimed idea has better appeal and comprehension to the listeners, and can be easily spread from mouth to mouth to those who are absent, while those who are present could be witness to one another in case someone tries to distort the claim in such proclamation. Also, it cannot be assumed that everybody is literate, and a proclamation can be removed and destroyed by an opposer if it is written on a paper and posted somewhere. One other striking thing about the proclamations in the Bible is that each proclamation is like a challenge to the addressees. So in making a challenge, it has to be publicly and orally done for higher effect, since it is meant to attract both the potential supporter and opposer. For instance, to proclaim is to call, herald, publish and announce. Gods proclaimed to Moses:

> "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest". I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight and I know thee by name (Exodus.33:17).

> And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy (Exodus.33:19).

These and several others, are all declarations proclaimed publicly and orally so that they can spread like big, breaking news to others who are absent, and for continuous discussion among people. It is important to note that these declarations are still being proclaimed all over the world by those who believe in them, including women and children. It is also interesting to note that when an individual takes up the Bible to recite/meditate, he/she finds God proclaiming to him/her.

Prayers: Prayers cannot be said or done, or are not normally done in writing. A prayer is a plea, a call or a petition to higher power to fulfill certain request or

demand. It is the practice of communicating with one's God, orally. The Bible is replete with prayers related by God to the believers.

Examples suffice of the following in the Bible:
The Lord's Prayer is often recited and transmitted orally: "Our father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven…for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen (Matthew.6:9b-13). The same is the practice in the grace of our lord:

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm.23:6). Another recitation/meditation is "My refuse and my fortress" in the Psalms of David that is usually recited at the end of every prayer thus: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Psalms.91:1). The prayers of Jesus and Stephen already come to mind. "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke.23:34) and "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts.7:60).

Stating the obvious, Christ and Stephen said their prayers orally in particular events that took their lives, and so it is meant to teach the prayers to the believers as the right manners of prayer in specific circumstances. However, believers are not bound to these prayers alone as other prayers are said orally at home, in church, work place, market, and in school as the need arises. Others are in Gen.25, Gen.5:21-24, Exodus.17, Job.21:14-34.

Prophecy/Prediction: A prophecy/prediction is a statement of what would happen in the future, and for those who believe in God, the predictor, His prophecies/predictions through His prophets which are not just forecasts, probabilities or for fun. As the supreme power behind all occurrences and events, whatever He and His prophets prophecies/predicts for the future is certain to happen. Since this kind of claim to supreme knowledge is meant for humanity to know, it has to be announced publicly and orally for easy spread among the people, as, again, literacy cannot be generalised. Instances include the following:

prophecies of his (Jesus Christ) preexistence – Old Testament Theophanous on the Ancient of Days reigns:

> I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure-wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire (Daniel.7:9).

> I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the son of man came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him (Daniel.7:13).

> Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgement was given to the saints of the most high, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom (Daniel.7:22).

A prophecy/prediction that comes originally as an oral proclamation can hardly be edited as long as it is preserved in its original form since the original is what people work, as against a written document that can be diluted in the name of editing, translating, copying, etc. There is no better way to keep the originality of an oral form other than to make it a recitative affair to those who believe in it. This way, the prophecy/predictions and other contents of the Bible can be preserved as long as its reciters and listeners to those recitations, who themselves are reciters and memorisers (meditators) of the Bible, exist. Jesus predicted of his betrayal by Judas Iscariot in (John.13:21b), and Peter's denial of him (John.13:38). He also prophesied of his death thus: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John.2:16).

Instructions: Instructions are statements of command, and normally come in sentence with an imperative function; and since it is meant for humanity, it is best presented in oral recitative pattern so that the instructions can keep occurring whenever the Bible is recited. Instances in the Bible include the following:

> Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, I intreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord (Joshua.8:8).

> Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is the Lord (Jeremiah.16:21).

> And the lord said to Hosea, 'Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord (Hosea.1:2b).

From the above, we can gather that instruction in the Bible is an address that comes in form of warning upon failing to heed the commands. However, as a recitative, it has to be recited day-in day-out and both the reciters and listeners are reminded of the instructions each time they are recited or heard.

Reminder: The Bible is a reminder, and this is due to the recitative adopted by believers which requires some of the verses to be recited often so as to remind reciters and listeners of its instructions and admonitions. Human beings, being a forgetful set, require something of recitative nature to always remind them of the will of God so they can be perpetually in line. In addition, God clearly uses the word "remember", which shows that God intends to keep human beings abreast of what has appeared in the past. Instances of God's reminder include the following:

> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh is the Sabbath of the lord they God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates (Exodus.20:8-10).

> And when he had given thanks, he breaks it, and said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me…. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do shew the Lord's death till he come. (1Corinthians.11:24-26).

> For what saith the scriptures? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Romans.4:3).

Thus, the recitative style helps listeners to remember as the text is often recited on a daily basis either by self or around.

Admonition: To admonish is to advice, and this is best done orally, the purpose of an admonition is to persuade and touch the heart of the hearer. An orally presented admonition would be first hand, clearer and more touching than the written mode due to the absence of human touch. All the clergies in the Christian religion admonish believers to show penitence for their actions and inactions.

For instance, God admonishes the Israelites on his compassion through prophet Isaiah thus:

> Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness (Isaiah.55:2).
>
> Whom God has set forth to be propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God (Romans.3:25).

An orally presented admonition tends to generate empathy, and clearer comprehension.

Impact of the Bible recitative style on believers

The recitative/meditative style and mode of the Bible has impacted the lives of the believers, particularly women and children in a way that no written mode of learning has ever done. The Bible as a recitative has to be recited often,, at least three times a day - even if the recitation of the Bible aloud one out of the three minimum times for worship, daily, the following are some of the impacts:

Bible Schools: Places where people can learn how to recite the Bible are established for believers. Even when they do not know the meaning; they keep reciting until it becomes part of them, until they can recite fluently, and without holding the book. Examples are in the seminaries, prophetic schools and school for speaking in tongues.

Memorisation: The recitative style of the Bible makes it easy for people to memorise the Bible especially children as soon as possible. Their first teacher is usually their mother who recites it as part of her worship activities, and during her period of devotion (morning and evening) at home.

With time, the children pick it up from their mother and practice it alone. As they grow, they are enrolled in a Bible school where their recitation is perfected. They continue to attend the school alongside their western education school until adulthood. This verse is often memorised: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverb.22:6).

Sermon: Sermons (ministrations) are oral religious talks given to a listening audience, and are usually interspersed with verses of the Bible recited in beautiful voices. The more people listen to sermons the more they tend to memorise the verses of the Bible in them. A mother or father can give a sermon to her children using verses of the Bible as evidence or point of departure. He/she can then recite selected verses over and over to them so that the children can memorise them. In this era of advanced audio-visual technology in form of mp3 (audio) and mp4 (video), a sermon can be recorded on mobile phones and played over and over, making the Bible verses in them easy to memorise.

Recalling: Continuous recitation and listening to it help to recall what has been memorized of the Bible. Children recite what has been placed on their tongues either at home or at Bible schools till it becomes part of them. It is therefore important to note that this is mainly done while they are children-adults can recite them-regardless of whether they can read the text of the Bible on their own or tell its meaning or not. Therefore, due to this recitative/meditative style, inability to speak any translation of the Bible is not in the least a barrier to learning, memorising, recalling, or using the Bible to worship. As adults, they also have to recite to recall and to worship. The oral recitative style is therefore a remarkable, landmark quality of the Bible. The Anglican Communion uses it for "confirmation of members", induction into "lay reader", "mothers' union" and "women's guild" respectively.

Radio Recitation: In contemporary time, verses of the Bible are played on radio for families and individuals to listen to, usually without any translation or explanation, while people at home and elsewhere listen and enjoy the recitations which are usually sponsored.

Bible recitation completion: In most countries of the world, in the Christian communities, the recitative style of the Bible has facilitated regional, national and worldwide Bible recitation competition among children, male and female. The competition includes intra and inter church debates and quizzes. "Students ages 7 – 24 all over Nigeria took part in annual Bible debate and quiz competitions organised by the local churches, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) (Ohia, 2021, P.206). Perhaps the aim behind this is to preserve the Bible should the written version be lost; believers will be able to pass in onto the next generation and all generations because they have it in their hearts and minds. At the annual UK Bible memorization competition organised by National Bible Bee 2022, each of the overall winner male and female gets a pilgrimage package to Israel (https://Biblebee.org/).

The overall objectives of these competitions are to encourage improved recitation of the Bible, encourage greater attention to the Bible memorisation, preserve the

text of the Bible in the hearts of Christians, and engender increased acquaintance with the Bible at an early stage of their lives, and this may not have been possible without recitative style that the people have strategically adopted for the Bible.

Conclusion

It is amazing how the inability to read the text of the Bible or understand or converse in any language it is translated has never been a barrier to listening to it, memorising it and recalling it to men, women and children. This miracle, perhaps, resides in its recitative style, which has helped to enhance its survival across countries of the world, and has made the biblical text to remain constant and fresh to listen to even from birth. This further shows that the Bible was given as a speech, and not as a paper with inscriptions. It is a spoken and not a written text as shown in all the aspects discussed above making it to cut across all manners of literacy level. The Bible is also found on all technological devices designed to play their contents. Its text thus has the potentials to remain fresh as long as it remains a recitative which is daily recited and listened to by it lovers. The oral recitative style is therefore a remarkable, landmark quality of the Bible, and plays significant role in the preservation of its originality.

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