


Scriptures To Pictures: Interrogating The Channels of Adapting Bible Stories for Contemporary Audiences

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Abstract

Effective communication in today's contemporary world is a herculean task as audiences have transitioned beyond the traditional means of accepting information through verbal and non-verbal communication to the level of aesthetic communication. The bible for one, is a phenomenal religious book that contains sacred truths and deep meanings capable of yielding its readers to repentance and salvation. However, contemporary society has become excessively familiar with the wordings of the scriptures, and they hardly generate new meaning or understanding from the written words or spoken texts. For some others, the scripture is a compilation of esoteric messages that must be expounded into simpler contexts. Hence, in the similitude of the medieval era, dramatists have sought to dramatize the scriptures into pictures and audio-visually using the channels of adaptation to aesthetically present the gospel message without watering down its essence and sacred meaning to ensure effective communication and understanding of the scriptures. This study engages Ole Thyssen's theory of aesthetic communication as a theoretical framework which identifies aesthetics as a quintessential factor in communication with contemporary audiences. It explores the channels of adapting scriptures for today's audiences. Thus, the study recommends that aesthetics should be prioritized for biblical messages to be communicated effectively to contemporary audiences. Hence, it proposes adapting biblical stories into cultural contexts or theatrical modernization to fit into the culture or mindset of the receiving audience and enhance interpretation.

Keywords: Adaptation, Aesthetics, Audiences, Biblical Dramatization, Communication, Contemporary Theatre, Scriptures.

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Received 08 Nov. 2024; Accepted 21 Nov. 2024. Available online: 30 Nov. 2024.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

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I. INTRODUCTION

Drama functions as a tool for communication capable of conveying messages through audio-visual elements -colour, dialogue, movement, design, music and spectacle; all of which can capture the audience's attention and effectively serve as a medium of passing across messages. Audiences are attracted to drama and theatre because of its ability to bring them into an immersive theatrical experience through the performative trinity of music, dance and drama in a singular performance. This became the entry point of drama back into the church in the medieval era where drama was seen as a viable tool for communicating bible themes and proliferating the message of salvation by leveraging the elements of performance to entice the audience and then slip in the intended message. Isijola (2021) records that in the medieval era, “drama became a tool for interpreting other biblical themes, with more detailed dialogues. The priest employed drama as a means to simplify biblical teaching to illiterate congregation members. In effect, the church attendances [sic] skyrocketed as more people turned up to church services only for their interest in the drama performances (p 32). In the same vein, audiences today find it more aesthetically appealing to see a biblical story than merely listen to it. This has led to an upgrade in the mode of demand due to the development in the level of aesthetic taste and the rate at which these audiences connect with verbal communication.

This dire need for an overall change has frustrated the method of communicating biblical truths using mere words as audiences have shifted in their mode of perception to feature largely aesthetic elements. Thus, as represented in the medieval era, drama plays a significant role in the process of communicating biblical truths to contemporary audiences and this is done by extracting stories (or messages) from the bible and dramatizing them through the medium of stage or screen to paint the message vividly using audio-visual elements to aid understanding of the context.

Therefore, the adaptation of bible stories from the pages of the bible where they are originally contained into drama pieces that can be enacted becomes one of the major channels of effectively communicating scriptures to aesthetics-seeking and media-savvy audiences, who are easily attracted to glamour and audio-visuals. If done correctly, could be a viable approach to biblical storytelling rather than subjecting contemporary audiences to reading a large body of texts buried in thick cover books or audio notes and sermons which have been tagged overly monotonous and unproductive.

II. CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS

A. Adaptation

Adaptation as the name implies is the process of replicating an idea, especially in this context, a literary work, from an existing ‘original’ to fit into another form, culture or background that is different from the original. It is the process of rewriting from an existing idea to create another different work although in close connections to the already existing original. According to Adeoti (no.d), it is, therefore, “marked by sameness and difference. And because it implicates communication between two cultures and contexts” (p 5). He explains further thus:

The art of deliberate re-rendering of an already-existing work of art in a new form or shape is at the heart of adaptation. It involves the transposition of the work of another creative artist into a different medium within a specific socio-historical and cultural context. Here in lies the ambivalence of adaptation as it recalls, yet it innovates. It simultaneously calls into being, two different worlds: the world of the original and the world of its derivation, though both worlds often interact within the consciousness of the audience in a kind of complementarity... From the foregoing, adaptation clearly requires a re-visioning of the source text and charging it with a new hermeneutic responsibility which may be like or different in emphasis from the original text. (p 5-6)

In another perspective, there also exists biblical adaptations which are the creation of performance texts based on an adaptation of stories, passages and parables in the bible. Therefore, adaptation although being an original creation on its own, is usually done about another. Not a total replication of the original idea but with clear traces of connection between an already existing text or body of texts and the newly created piece.

B. Biblical Dramatisation

Biblical dramatisation as the name suggests is the dramatization of the bible. It is a specific kind of adaptation that involves the rewriting and retelling of biblical stories. This dramatisation includes the process of conveying biblical messages in a dramatic way using audio-visual elements for the benefit of a viewing and listening audience. That is, “it is the act of painting the scriptures in pictures in ways that can be relatable through the mediums of sight and sound” (Olatunji 2024, p 223). Collins sees drama as “a powerful tool that can cause people to think and feel at a very deep level... Truth can become clearer and take on more meaning when it is fleshed out through a dramatic presentation.” (“Collins”). Therefore, dramatizing the scripture involves “connecting with God’s Word through some kind of performance like an impromptu skit, sketch, rehearsed play, dramatic reading, playback theatre, street drama, dance drama, mime, monologues, or reader’s theatre... Through dramatizing scripture, we get to see ourselves in the Word, find ways to connect our lives to the Word, and learn to come alive to the Word” (“Murray”).

Thus, biblical dramatization is the visual (re)presentation of biblical stories, and the adaptation of original bible stories. The context of biblical dramatization also extends to the art and act of presenting and representing scriptures texts in audio-visual formats for easy comprehension. However, beyond mere dramatization, biblical dramatization could also be a way of presenting the bible before the modern world. Since modernity implies any recent or contemporary time,

biblical dramatization seeks to engage the vocabulary of the modern world to present the scriptures. Hence, it is the deliberate process of leveraging the aesthetic need and development of the audience to create dramatic pieces from the bible or to turn the messages of the bible into dramatic pieces that can not only be relatable to the audiences but that can sink fast better than when they are in letters and mere scripts.

The central reason for biblical dramatization is to establish that the bible in itself is more than a book but a publication of many scripts that can be explored. And since the end of every script is to be acted whether on stage, TV, film or any other audio-visual medium, the scripts in the 'scriptures' are the publication of the stories of God, stories about God, or other stories wrapped around the people of God. Hence, for these stories to live beyond the pages of the paperback book, they need to be retold and relived by existent characters that can embody those roles in flesh and blood to bring the messages of the distant past into a recent relatable experience. Many times, it could be challenging to comprehend the details of the lives, chronicles of events and many other accounts littered across the bible because they seem to be too distant in the past and are sometimes voluminous to remember and connect, however, dramatization of these events, histories, or stories as contained in the scriptures have been helpful to not only solve this problem but to also enhance people's knowledge.

III. Theoretical Framework

This is a descriptive study that seeks to explain the importance of adaptation in the process of communicating biblical stories. It identifies adaptation as a creative endeavour that will not only aid in the communication process but also enhance audiences' understanding of the biblical story when the stories are retold using audio-visual elements as against the traditional methods of telling the stories. The study examines biblical dramatization as a creative mode of adapting scriptures into pictures, traces the origin of biblical dramatization and displays the

different channels of engaging biblical dramatization as well as the essence of doing biblical dramatization.

It engages Ole Thyssen's Aesthetic Communication theory (2006) as a framework to provide an entry point into the importance of aesthetics as a quintessential element in the process of communication in the contemporary world. In the words of Ojo and Olatunji (2023), aesthetic communication exposes "the degree of curiosity present in the minds of the audience from different levels which cannot be met only by verbal words but through the creation of 'a fictional world'" (p 77). Thus, if effective communication will be prioritized, aesthetic communication emphasizes the need to communicate verbally beyond words but through every other possible means (mostly audio-visual) to satisfy the critical minds and aesthetic taste of the contemporary audience.

IV. Results and Discussion

Biblical Dramatization: Art and Origin

a. Jesus' Parables

The primary origin of biblical dramatization can be credited to Jesus' creative use of parables. At the time, parables were not acted but were used as stratagems to engage the listener's imagination, and for a moment, detach them from the scripts they are used to, to another medium, the medium of the sight which was created individually in their mind through their mind's eyes as accompanied with the sound coming from Jesus' narration. Bamiloye (2022) affirms that drama played a significant role in Jesus' earthly ministry as recorded in Matthew 9:35 where Jesus went about cities and villages, teaching, preaching and healing which involved passing of messages to the listeners. However, as he questioned, "How was He able to pass His messages across to this diverse people? Matthew 13: 2-3... Then He spoke many

things to them in parables, (Preaching) Mark 4:2... and He taught them many things in parables... (Teaching).” (p 8-9)

As Jesus narrated parables, told stories and emphasized some passages in the scriptures, the people were able to understand him and the bible explained that they flocked around him because of this. A significant truth is that the crowd were not seeking to be with Jesus just because of the miracles he did and simply because of the times he fed them with food but also because he had a good way with words. Many times, the people gathered to hear Jesus speak and teach the scriptures, and this he did with every sense of intentionality knowing that the people had yielded their attention to him. So, he engaged their minds with parables and stories while still preaching his message and exposing the scriptures -the undiluted word of God.

b. Medieval Era- Liturgical Dramas

Another significant origin of biblical dramatization is the ecclesiastical era where drama broke out in the Roman Catholic church in the form of liturgical drama pieces which were spearheaded by the priests of the church. In the Middle Ages, Liturgical dramas were plays “acted within or near the church and relating stories from the Bible and of the saints” (“Britannica”). In those times, the idea of introducing drama in the church was targeted at interpreting scriptures to the people in a way they could understand, communicating scriptures through visual means, using drama to entice people to church, bridging the dichotomy of language, giving life to the scriptures being read and mitigating the problem of monotony. The Roman Catholic Church at the time, from the 10th century began to recognize the need to dramatize the bible some of which have been identified above and thus prioritized this as a viable weapon for communication and soul-winning at the time.

Therefore, biblical dramatization is not a new nomenclature as it has been in constant practice at different times. However, in these contemporary times, special attention has been paid to

biblical dramatization by drama ministers across the globe as a conscious way of getting the scriptures through to the entire world through audio-visual mediums different from the traditional pulpit medium that the people are used to which sometimes gets ineffective and less engaging thus, losing the audience's attention.

Categories of Biblical Dramatization

From the foregoing, biblical dramatization is a viable medium for presenting and representing scriptures using audio-visual elements to enhance communication and comprehension of contemporary audiences. Therefore, there are two major tendencies of dramatizing scriptures which are; the dramatization of Jesus Parables and the dramatization of Bible Stories. That is, the parables of Jesus or general stories of the bible both can be retold using elements of sight and sound in a way that is aesthetically pleasing and captivating to contemporary audiences by leveraging the elements of drama and the elements of aesthetics. To elucidate further, this session shall discuss the channels using two critical examples.

a. Biblical Dramatization of Jesus Parables -The Zion Royal Theatre, Nigeria

Zion Royal Theatre (ZRT) is a subsidiary of the Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama, Ile-Ife which has conducted successful attempts to resuscitate gospel theatre in Nigeria with the creation of robust Christian theatre productions since 2021. Although ZRT functions both in the capacity of dramatizing Jesus' parables and bible stories, however, for the basis of precision, emphasis shall be on its dramatization of Jesus Parables. Since its inception, the ZRT has been saddled with the responsibility of painting scriptures to the contemporary audience through theatrical stage productions, and this has been done strategically too with the production of several sophisticated productions of Jesus Parables with the example of Ogbologbo (2022), an adaptation from the parable of the prodigal son; Night of Ijalo (2023), an adaptation from the parable of the ten virgins; Papa Egan- Journey to Jungle (2023), a contempo-cultural adaptation

of the parable of the prodigal son; Aiku (2024), a cultural adaptation of the story of Adam and Eve; Alapandede (2024) a dance drama adaptation of the biblical story of the good Samaritan; Arakunrin (2024), a musical drama adaptation of the story of Judas Iscariot and Proverbial Dodo (2024) a contempo-cultural drama adaptation of the parable of the lost sheep.

b. Biblical dramatization of Bible Stories -Sight and Sound Theatres, USA

Sight and Sound theatres break the cycle of monotonous telling/preaching of Bible stories by introducing a phenomenal approach to interpretation and re-interpretation of biblical stories through the application of media technologies into the creation of the dramatic story and the overall production of the theatrical interpretation. This enables them to create full-blown technological productions in alignment with the demands of the contemporary world. Olatunji (2024) describes that theatrical productions at Sight and Sound theatres are aimed at “interpreting the Bible to audiences using audio-visual elements to make the scriptures turn out in more lucid forms when biblical passages are embodied by actors using robust technologies. This is done deliberately through a seamless connection with media technologies and performance elements to achieve phenomenal and more graphic outputs.” (p 91)

The mission of Sight and Sound theatres as stipulated on the official website reads thus “Our purpose is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ and sow the Word of God into the lives of our customers, guests and fellow workers by visualizing and dramatizing the scriptures, through inspirational productions, encouraging others and seeking always to be dedicated and wise stewards of our God-given talents and resources” (“Our Story”). Therefore, since the world today is grappling with the variegated elements of media technologies, Sight and Sound theatres is particular about the (re) presentation of the bible and the proselytization of the gospel to contemporary audiences by leveraging these developments to preach the bible in simpler ways. The goal is to get the messages of the scriptures simplified and projected to as many

people as possible by infusing elements of creativity into the performances without detaching their essence or reducing their meaning. This has been displayed expressly in the productions and remains the goal of Sight and Sound productions since its evolution.

Hence, in Sight and Sound Theatres, the major concern is the contemporary production of Bible stories. A highlight of the production of bible stories at Sight and Sound Theatres include The Wonder of It All (1978); A Land of Our Own (1976); Behold the Lamb (1987–2006, 2009); The Glory of Spring (1997); Abraham and Sarah: A Journey of Love (2000–2004, 2008–2009); Psalms of David (2005–2007, 2010); The Eternal Flame (1991–1992); Noah (1995–1996); Noah - The Musical (1998–2001, 2004, 2013); The Miracle of Christmas (1998–2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019), Daniel (2002–2003, 2008); Ruth (2005–2006); In the Beginning (2007–2009); Joseph (2010-2011, 2015); Jonah (2012, 2017); Samson (2016); Jesus (2018-2019); David (2022); Moses (2014–2015, 2023); Queen Esther (2020-2021, 2023-2024); and Daniel (2024).

The Channels and Essence of Adapting Bible Stories for Contemporary Audiences

Progressively, from the two major categories highlighted above, there are four extensions through which the biblical dramatization of either the Jesus parables or bible stories can be done. As highlighted above, they include the African Cultural dramatization of Bible Stories as seen with Zion Royal Theatre's production of Olumide Oki's Arewa (2022), Samuel Obikoya's Aiku (2024), a cultural adaptation of the story of Adam and Eve; Tife Osunkorode's Alapandede (2024) a dance drama adaptation of the biblical story of the good Samaritan; and Olumide Oki's Arakunrin (2024), a musical drama adaptation of the story of Judas Iscariot. The second channel is the Theatrical Modernization of Jesus Parables using ZRT's production of Olumide Oki's Papa Egan- Journey to Jungle (2023), a contempo-cultural adaptation of the parable of the prodigal son and Dodo (2024), a musical adaptation of the parable of the lost

sheep which included elements of theatricality that can be relatable to audiences in a modern world. Hence, this qualifies it for the category of ‘theatrical modernization’. The third channel is the Theatrical Modernization of Bible Stories, like the previous, this deals majorly with bible stories. It is concerned with the use of theatrical and modern elements to present bible stories to a contemporary audience. An example of this is Olalekan Felix Olatunji’s production of Darasimi Mike-Bamiloye’s *Agonies of the Doubtful* (2021) and Festus Olalekan Dairo’s production of Mike Bamiloye’s *Darkest Night* (2022), eschatological pieces pointing at the message of the rapture and the second coming of Jesus Christ as emphasized in the scriptures. However, the theatrical production sought to present those messages with the contemporary (modern) audiences in view thereby using theatrical elements and modern gadgets to tell the story and make it relatable. The final channel is the African Cultural dramatization of Jesus Parables which is centred on engaging total theatre (the use of music, dance and drama) to retell Jesus’ parables. This ensures that the story is adapted to fit into the culture and traditions of the Africans to tell the parables to Africans and Africans in the diaspora of the word of God.

Biblical dramatization is a creative endeavour that is done concerning an original to create an audio-visual interpretation of the scriptures in a manner that is aesthetically pleasing but still in firm connection with the central idea of the theme of the original. Some of the reasons responsible for this shall be generously discussed below:

a. Effective Communication

Drama exists as a potent instrument and medium of communication. According to Sallis and Sallis (1988), communication is “the process of passing messages - ideas, information, and beliefs - from one person to another person. This can take a multiplicity of forms including signals, gestures, speech, letters, telex, telephone, morse code, fax, television and radio” (p 25). However, in drama, communication goes beyond the use of lines, dialogues, scenes and sets

but, also extends to the intentional use of aesthetics to attract the audience and engage their imagination to establish a connection and basis for communication. This is the major entry point for biblical dramatization. The example of Jesus parables has been cited multiple times to establish the foundations of biblical dramatization, however, more critically, little attention has been paid to identify communication as the major essence Jesus used parables. Jesus needed to communicate with a people who operated on a different pedestal of understanding lower than himself. Oftentimes, Jesus caught himself using high and lofty words which were natural to him. Many of those words are in the same language as the people but, Jesus was merely speaking not communicating. The people only listened to him speak (without understanding, because His level of operation was higher than theirs); enjoyed the aura of his presence; and waited for the part where a miracle (an aesthetic sight) would happen. The miracles Jesus did was the major point of attraction to the people, and they were thronging him for the sake of that:

Then Jesus took the loaves and gave thanks to God and passed them out to the people. Afterwards, he did the same with the fish. And everyone ate until full! ‘Now gather the scraps,’ Jesus told his disciples, ‘so that nothing is wasted.’ And twelve baskets were filled with the leftovers! When the people realized what a great miracle had happened, they exclaimed, ‘Surely, he is the prophet we have been expecting!’ (Emphasis added, John 6:11-14 TLB)

On realizing how great the ‘sight’ of the miracle was, the crowds desired to see more, and of course, also have their bellies filled with more bread:

The next morning, back at the lake, crowds began gathering on the shore to see Jesus. For they knew that he and his disciples had come over together and that the disciples had gone off in their boat, leaving him behind. Several small boats from Tiberias were nearby, so when the people saw that Jesus wasn’t there, nor his disciples, they got into their boats and went across to Capernaum to look for him. When they arrived and found him, they said, ‘Sir how did you get here?’ Jesus replied, ‘The truth of the matter is that you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you believe in me. (Emphasis added, John 6:22-26 TLB)

However, Jesus was quick to deduce that they were desperate to see him because of the miracles which was a major contributor to aesthetic satisfaction to their aesthetic taste. Hence, he decided to be more intentional with his interaction with them by using that same element, not only as bait to get their attention but as part of the condiments he used to communicate with them and simply his sermons, going forward. Communication with others is based on the accumulation of individual (similar) experiences. Communication becomes easy when the mind of the speaker or respondent can connect to the wide range of experiences the audiences have had and bring it into the ongoing discourse to provide interpretation.

This is relevant to biblical dramatization because the primary essence of dramatizing the scriptures and retelling the stories captured in the bible is to communicate. Many people could have read the entire bible cover to cover but still do not have a wholesome understanding of the content and the spiritual encodings embedded in the pages of the book. The Bible is open to all but, as open as it may seem, the spiritual authentic fact is that it is still locked and would require a divine interpretation to any reader. Now, how can anyone understand the bible without a preacher? The preacher in this context is a scriptwriter or director, who has received the divine interpretation and can relate the message to others. However, in the process of relating the message to the others, the ‘preacher’ in this case may be pouring water into a basket by retelling the stories in the scriptures in the exact classic and high language as contained in the Bible, which the listeners have read multiple times without understanding. There will be no communication. George Bataille believed that effective communication is predicated upon the several things that make up the experiences of individuals. Using any of these experiences in a way that can resonate with the receiver is the very first step to ‘communicating’. Auslander (2008) explains thus:

Bataille sought after human experiences that reveal the limits of thought. ‘other’ experiences beyond representation in language - the burst of laughter, erotic love, potlatch, sacrifice, mystical union. He sought to highlight those experiences that exceed independent self-existence, experiences of

disorientation and unknowing that shatter the self. Such experiences, Bataille believed, are what make communication possible, because they break open the self and put it into relation with others. The disintegration of the self is a kind of self-transcendence (transcending the self as a discreet body and mind), which opens one to the possibility of communion with others. (51-52)

With dramatization, Jesus leveraged the exposure of his audiences by engaging their imagination through parables. That way, the people were drawn into the context of what Jesus meant after they had been attracted by Jesus' use of similar experience and established a connection and allowed them to spectate on their own self-created images as they imagined the stories he narrated. That way, each audience understood the message based on the degree of his ability to imagine and create a context for the story (message) being preached – this is communication!

b. Aesthetic Communication

Aesthetic communication is another quintessential element in biblical dramatization. The essence of drama is to communicate but observably, to other elements provides communication its credibility, and such is aesthetics. Aesthetics is 'the study or philosophy of beauty'. That is, it is the deliberate identification of several things that could appeal to the senses. Ojo and Olatunji (2023) explain that the application of aesthetic communication "could be done through verbal and non-verbal means of communication. While verbal communication depends on the use of vocal words as its message-passing medium, non-verbal communication creates alternate ways to communicate beyond the use of words" (p 76). Aesthetic communication is more specific about the process of using audio-visual elements (aesthetic elements) for communication. In fact, for contemporary audiences, aesthetics is a major element of attraction. Ojo and Olatunji (2023) explain further thus:

In the world today, audiences are faced with aesthetic elements daily and this ranges from their encounter with all sorts of high-quality graphic images, videos and audio on their mobile phones, social media pages, media technologies and other digital media platforms. Therefore, this exposure necessitates the theatre to scale up its process of communication to engage these elements to be at par with the intellectual

and aesthetic level of the contemporary audience. Thus, aesthetic communication is a deliberate process of sending messages to the audience by first appealing to their sense of aesthetic taste and this becomes a need for performance interpretation in the contemporary world (Emphasis added p 75).

In this postmodern culture (contemporary world), several elements expand the level of aesthetic taste and demand of people, and this ranges from media to technology and the application of these in mundane activities has become usual routines and has set the standard for the basis of understanding. The sophistication of audio, video, and graphic quality has greatly affected what people demand and how they choose to experience it. Jean Baudrillard in explaining this with the concept of 'Hyperreality' affirms that contemporary culture is saturated with different forms of media and there are "ways in which technology and media impact how we represent our experiences and what we can know about the world...In effect, our experiences of the world are mediated through the many images that confront us every day and frame how we see the world and what we see." (Auslander 2008, p 57)

Hence, aesthetic communication in this context which refers to the deliberate method of harnessing 'aesthetics' in performance using both verbal and nonverbal mediums of communication to make statements is a reality of dramatized adaptation of bible stories as adaptations significantly leverage the use of aesthetics as a medium of communicating the extant and classic biblical stories in ways that can be well understood and to create a lasting impression.

c. Creative Storytelling

Storytelling is a creative endeavour. It is "the art of captivating people with imaginative stories using words, pictures, or other methods". ("What is Creative Storytelling"). Thus, the essence of biblical dramatization is storytelling. That is, fundamentally, biblical dramatization is centred on the dramatization of the bible. Since the Bible is a composition of stories: HIS-tory that is, the story of God, told by HIS people by divine inspiration; and the story about the lives

of HIS people. Therefore, the dramatization of the bible is a historical performance of a divinely inspired inflexible story. However, beyond the accurate narration of the historical records (the bible), creative storytelling makes it an engaging and new experience. Without ruining the sanctity of the divine message but giving allowance for believability. Admittedly, the creative additions in dramatic adaptation may not happen exactly as it is being projected but no doubt, they aid in the understanding of the context and overall message.

Contemporary faith-based scriptwriters and productions have embraced this approach to break out of the cycle of telling the gospel story in a singular pattern. Beyond doubts, the truths about circumstances have been documented in scriptures, however, creative storytelling warrants that the story is not merely presented but 're-presented' in another light not to facilitate confusion but to provide multiple interpretations to the same context. Films like Dallas Jenkins' *The Chosen*, is a masterpiece that documents the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Although the film gives accurate descriptions of the ministry of Jesus Christ as contained in the scriptures. Still, additionally, the film also created pictures that portrayed the personality and even the seemingly cognitive development of Jesus as a child which were not captured in the pages of the bible. This creative inclusion makes the movie interesting to watch. Hence, while people watch the intricacies of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, their aesthetic sense is also fed. Another phenomenal example is the contemporary theatre productions of the Sight and Sound Theatres. The theatre is saddled with the responsibility of bringing the bible to life by retelling the bible stories using audio-visual elements, imagination, and total theatre -music, dance, drama, graphics, mixed-media, etc. all of which are targeted at making the story rich, sophisticated, enjoyable and then understandable.

d. Relatability (Point-of-View Adaptation)

Another factor that makes dramatic adaptation of bible stories more acceptable is relatability. In the process of storytelling, the story is retold in a way that will establish and ensure a connection with the people, location, race, or culture to which the story is domiciled. Just as the translation of the Bible into several languages has made the gospel reach several people across several locales, similarly, a dramatic adaptation of bible stories ensures that the story being told is first of all relatable to the target audience using the elements of culture, tradition, language, music or what have you, to bring the message closer to people in the way they would better understand.

That is, biblical adaptation allows for a flexible approach that could accommodate the peculiarities of a people or a culture, if effective communication and understanding is to be prioritized.

e. Innovative Interpretation

In dramatic adaptation, innovation is a fundamental currency. Today, people have come to know scriptures by heart although not everyone genuinely understands what they read in context. In fact, without flipping through the passages of the Bible, an entire congregation can perfectly recite the book of John 3:16 due to meditation and the popularity of the verse but have no genuine understanding of the verse and what it entails. Another perspective is the parables of Jesus. Many Christians have encountered these parables and are very familiar with the storyline and can even predict the end from the beginning because of their familiarity with the story. However, an innovative interpretation of the verse or any other through biblical dramatization will bring life and enhance the understanding of the audience using audio-visual elements.

f. Theatricality and Imagination

Unlike closet dramas, dramatic adaptation of bible stories accommodates the inclusion of performance elements that makes the story stage/performance-worthy. That is, stories generated from the thorough adaptation process are usually performance-worthy, considering the way they are written. Dramatic adaptation of bible stories also requires the use of a high level of imagination to fully picture the creative world of the story and understand it in connection to the actual message being communicated.

g. Simplicity

Jesus used parables to simplify his messages and help those who are dull in hearing to understand. The Bible is a book written by divine inspiration, as such, understanding the passages of the scriptures will require some level of study, meditation and revelation. However, a dramatic adaptation of bible stories is the representation of the newly gotten revelation from scriptures in a simpler perspective. With the dramatic adaptation, the aim is to convey a message, a hidden truth in a transparent and more relatable manner. In the sense that the dramatically adapted film or stage production can serve as an alternative, commentary or explainer on a particular topic, subject or verse for the sake of accuracy, understanding and clarity.

V. Conclusion

Communication of stories especially bible stories in contemporary times requires more effort and dynamism. For many reasons which range from excessive familiarity with the scriptures to distractions among many others, verbal communication of the scriptures is not enough to communicate intended messages to contemporary audiences. However, this study identifies biblical dramatization as a viable method of enhancing effective communication by recommending the dramatization of Jesus parables and bible stories in theatre performances using audio-visual elements that can appeal to the audience's aesthetic taste.

Painting scriptures in pictures becomes necessary because it does the job of effective communication, aesthetic communication, creative storytelling, relatability, innovative interpretation, theatricality and simplicity. When scriptures are retold with these elements in mind, then efficient message communication is guaranteed.

Biblical dramatization proves to be a viable method of communicating the sacrosanct messages of the scriptures to contemporary audiences. As explained in this study, effective communication of the scriptures to contemporary audiences will involve a deliberate use of aesthetic elements to enhance the communication of biblical stories to aesthetics-savvy audiences using the channels of cultural adaptation or theatrical modernization in the dramatization of the bible stories.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge that this work is original and have not been published elsewhere. They would also like to recognize the Director of the Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama, Evangelist Mike Bamiloye for the invaluable supports received for this research to succeed.

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