

PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CHRISTIAN HYMNS

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Abstract

This paper seeks to interrogate the assumption that there are problems in understanding and interpreting Christian hymns if the background and contextual features are not considered. Another assumption is that the misunderstanding of the use of certain hymns which make certain denominations distinct from others, though united in the spirit of Christianity, can cause chaos if the context and background of the denomination is not considered. Pragmatic Analysis of selected Christian hymns attempts to answer these different disparities. The problematic of this paper focuses on exploring the differences in the conveyance of intended meaning of messages of the selected Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal hymns. This is hinged on the belief that the doctrinal disposition of any denomination is often expressed in the language of the hymns. Hence, the doctrinal content of a hymn and the performance acts of a hymn could differ and not mutually shared. Selected Catholic hymns for the analysis include: Sweet Sacrament Devine, The Exsultet, We Offer Thee the Holy mass. Protestant hymns include: How Great Thou Art, A Mighty Fortress, Stand Up! Stand Up! For Jesus, and selected Pentecostal hymns include: Have Faith in God, Pentecostal Power, Blessed Assurance. The hymns are categorised on the premise that the content message in each hymn is easily identifiable with the denomination in the sense that the doctrinal disposition of any of the denomination is often expressed in the hymns. The analysis of the hymns is carried out with the intent of showing further the similarities and dissimilarities in language use of the hymns. The theoretical frame work used in the research is Austin's Speech Acts theory which holds that language users make meaningful sounds in order to produce certain actions. He distinguishes five types of acts performed through speech namely; verdictive, expositive, exercitives, commissive and behabitives. The data chosen for the analysis were selected from the hymnal of the three denominations, namely; Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal. Hence, in line with Austin's Speech Acts, hymns perform various acts whose illocutionary forces and perlocutionary effects would make them more appealing. The study confirms that hymns like other

discourse events have the advantage of performing simultaneously all the components of Speech Act in one utterance. The finding show that Catholic hymns have one area of non-performance in language use, that is verdictive. It is only the hymns from the Protestant Church that have an index performance in all the five illocutionary acts. Therefore, Protestant hymns are more elaborate in content and lyrics. Pentecostal hymns rank least in the analysis because they have three areas of non-performance in language use, which include, verdictive, behabitive and expositive. This could mean that Pentecostal hymns are short, have less content, short and simple lyrics, and therefore more entertaining.

Introduction

Christian hymns have evolved over the years by their composers to basically express belief, confess, explain, exhort and so on through the use of language. However, with the advent of modern musical instruments, hymns are used not only to communicate the truths of faith but also to defend, attract, stimulate interest, persuade, arouse desire, create conviction and get action.

The study of Christian hymns is properly carried in conjunction with the language of the Bible because the ideas, lyrics and beauty of hymns are derived from the Scripture. From time immemorial, linguists and theologians have been theorizing on the role language plays in the practical understanding, expression, presentation and furtherance of any set of religious beliefs. Crystal (1989:12) establishes that the scientific study of language can be invaluable to the understanding of Biblical teachings. One of the issues handled by Crystal is that the language of religion “must be studied in its social perspective, as the most flexible and potentially subtle kind of human communicative behaviour”.

To a great extent, the sociolinguistic features of the age in which a hymn is composed have a strong bearing on the language used. This is important because people usually interpret linguistic messages in accordance with their own experience, memory, personal associations, environment etc. Therefore, the social environment in which most of the Catholic hymns were composed is different from that of the Protestant, while the Pentecostal hymns which are more recent, seem to suit the contemporary social environment with the entire angst disposition of the moment.

Besides this, when a hymn is put into music according to Lang (1989: p. 444), it “...displays a dimension of meaning and feeling that mere words cannot do....” In other words, when hymns and songs are accompanied with music, the outcome heightens the effects of words, allowing them to be rendered with a projection and passion lacking in speech alone.

According to McClelland (2002:9),

In the Christian Church, there's a hymn for every occasion, there are hymns of praise and thanksgiving; uplifting the heart. There are hymns of testimony and witness; proclaiming the truth. There are hymns which anticipate heaven and encourage the saints to press on to glory. And there are hymns for special occasions like Christmas, Easter, weddings and even funerals.

Within the Christian community, hymns go beyond entertaining the congregation because it is a biblical injunction to sing. Prophet Isaiah (12:6) says: “Sing and shout for joy for great in your midst is the Holy one of Israel.” Similarly, St. Paul says: “Address... one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart” (5:19). One of the great Saints of the Catholic Church, Augustine of Hippo encourages all Christians to sing when he says 'He who sings well prays twice' (The Catechism of the Catholic Church No.1156). In order to fulfil these injunctions, hymns are sung throughout Christian worship. Musical instruments accompany these hymns in order to produce good melodies to the hymns. Most great hymns have a story. McClelland (2002:5) further observes that:

The compositions of hymns were intensely personal, a reaction to some life experience, some have been born out of life's tragedy or trial. Others have been breathed out of a soul touched by the experience of a fleeting moment. Still others have been inspired by some lessons in scripture.

Hymns are composed and used in the Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal congregations to suit the mode of worship.

This paper “Pragmatic Analysis of selected Christian hymns” intends to bring to mind the traditions of three Christian denominations; “Catholicism”, “Protestantism” and “Pentecostalism” which lie hidden in the language of hymns. The choice of Pragmatics as a linguistic variable for this study stems from the fact that an inquiry into the aspect of meaning of hymns, lies fully within the scope of Pragmatics. According to Leech and Short (1981: 290), Pragmatics' major interest is in that aspect of meaning which is elucidated from “the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered” and the recognition of “what is meant even when it isn't actually said...” based on the “shared assumptions and expectations” (Yule 1996: 127) of the participants. Thus, Pragmatics as the study of language in use is so vast and it is “notoriously difficult to limit the field especially where Pragmatics stops and the 'beyond' begin” (Mey 2001: 3).

If understanding is the basis of communication through language, the study of what utterance means is very crucial to language study and should be made explicit as expressed in hymns. This paper intends to explore the use of language and meanings contained in the lyrics and how meaning shape what is communicated and acts performed by the roles hymns play in content exposition of the language used.

The Concept of Pragmatics

Pragmatics as a linguistic field has its origin in the philosophy of language. Its philosophical roots can be traced back to works of philosophers Charles Morris, Rudolf Carnap, and Charles Peirce in the 1930s (Seigfried:2006:730/731.Cf. Popkin and Stroll). Morris cited in Levinson (1983:2) who first introduced the term as one of the divisions of semiotics identifies rhetorical and poetic devices such as interjections, commands and phatic expressions and the conditions under which these devices and expressions are put into use as the concern of Pragmatics. Carnap, identifies “pure” Pragmatics as an investigation concerned with issues such as “belief, utterance, and intention and their logical inter-relation” (Quoted in Levinson 1983:2). According to Huang (2014:4), “The publication of Stephen Levinson's celebrated textbook *Pragmatics* (1983) systematised the field and marked the coming of Pragmatics as a linguistic discipline in its own right”.

Levinson (1983:3) defines Pragmatics as “the study of the general cognitive principles involved in the retrieval of information from an utterance”. This definition does not have any place for interlocutor and perlocutor rather, it gives priority to retrieval of data. According to Wolfgang (1995:245)

The Pragmatic analysis of language can be understood to be the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from formal properties of words and construction, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered.

This definition emphatically states that meaning differs, it is also unconventional, depending on the users and context used, and it therefore means that meaning is not static. To support this definition, Mey (2001), states that Pragmatics “is the Science of language seen in relation to its users”.

Sanchez (2009:114) cited Crystal who states that, Pragmatics is the study of the “factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others”. In other words, to be able to perform an act and for the act to have effect on the target audience, the message and the context which are used must be appropriate. This definition borders on illocution and perlocution which is the essence of Pragmatics.

Dijk (1992:46) is of the opinion that Pragmatics is concerned with certain social acts we accomplish when we speak in certain social contexts. He stresses that our intentions for such actions as well as the interpretations of the actions by other speech participants are based on a set of knowledge and beliefs. This definition gives consideration to shared knowledge as a basis for the interpretation of utterances. Adegbija (1991:189) seems to be more exhaustive when he says Pragmatics may be seen as the study of language in particular communicative context or situation of necessity. This definition takes cognisance of the message being communicated or the speech act being performed, the participants involved, their intention, knowledge of the world and impact on the interaction; what they have taken for granted as part of the context (or the presuppositions); the deductions they make on the basis of the context; what is implied by what is said or left unsaid, the impact of the non-verbal aspect of interaction on meaning). The above definition, though lengthy is all encompassing. It considers the use of language, context, message, participants, interpretations, shared knowledge, implicature among others. This forms the whole that is called Pragmatics. Therefore the analysis of the language of hymns using Pragmatics is hoped to yield a holistic result.

The application of Pragmatics in the analysis of hymns in this paper would be a useful tool in determining the language used in the hymns, meanings beyond the convention embedded in the lyrics of hymns, illocutions and inferred effect on the worshippers, as well as to present a dichotomy of the hymns of the various denominations. Since Pragmatics study meaning said and unsaid, interpretations of meaning based on the context, belief system, shared assumptions and participants involved and their intentions, the concern of Pragmatics to this study is therefore, the entire meaning of the hymns, said and inferred from the general background of the hymn, religious acts from the hymns, stressing the intentions for such actions as well as the interpretations of the actions and the religious effect on the worshippers.

The Christian Hymn

A hymn is a song of praise. The word hymn is derived from the Greek word “hymons” which means “a song of praise”. A Collection of hymns is known as hymnal or hymn book. According to Trimble (1956: 6),

The hymn-book of a Christian community, next to the Bible, is most generally read and much often read by all true Christians. It is assumed that it does, and certainly it ought, to contain the marrow and the fatness of the gospel and exercises of the Christian faith, hope and love. It is the best substitute in the world of what is

usually called a confession of faith, an exhibition of Christian doctrine and Christian instruction. It is, moreover, a sort of stereotyped preached gospel, and to unconverted persons it is the next thing to a sermon or exhortation on the great themes of Christian salvation.

In Christianity, hymns are directed to the one true God. A hymn remains a hymn even when it is not set to music. (Eskew: 1980). The basic purpose of a hymn is to express one's love and adoration for God and use it as a form of prayer, to have a direct communication with the Lord. There are also hymns containing lamentation or grief. Christian hymns are often written with special or seasonal themes and these are used on holy days such as Sundays, Christmas, Easter, or during particular seasons such as Advent and Lent for Catholics. Others are used to encourage reverence for the Holy Bible or to celebrate Christian practices such as the Eucharist. Some hymns praise or address individual saints, particularly the Blessed Virgin Mary; such hymns are particularly prevalent in Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and to some extent High Church Anglicanism.

Hymns often make references to the Bible in them. Hymns have been in vogue since ancient Romans who sang prayers for their deities. The shortest definition of a hymn would thus be a special poetry set to music and are addressed to God (Berry: 2002:239). Hymns are valuable aids to worship because they help to focus our attention on the goodness and glory of the Lord. The hymn "How Great Thou Art," for example, reminds us of God's majesty revealed in creation, His perfect sacrifice on the cross and His expected return for His own—all matters of praise.

Speech Act Theory

The framework for analysis adopted for this paper is derived from a synthesis of Speech Act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The term Speech Act refers to the utterances made by a language user in order to perform certain actions. It is the combination of three simultaneous acts in an utterance namely:

- I The Locutionary Acts (communicative words) in each of the hymns presented.
- II The illocutionary Acts (The act performed by the word e.g., worship, request etc.) in each hymn.
- III The Perlocutionary Acts (effect on the addressee)

In agreement with Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) the researcher has also adopted the five acts performed by speech to mean five acts performed via hymns as the

procedure for data analysis. Austin (1962) suggests that it is possible to distinguish a number of broad classes of speech act, classified according to their illocutionary force:

Verdictives: They are typified by the giving of a verdict as the name implies, by a jury, arbitrator, an umpire. They need not be final; they may be, for instance, an estimate, reckoning or appraisal. It is essentially giving a finding as to something; fact or value.

Exercitives: They are the exercising of powers, rights or influence. They are exemplified by ordering, voting, appointing, urging, advising, warning etc. An exercitive is also the giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it.

Commissives: The whole point of a commissive is to commit the speaker to a certain course of action. They are typified by promising or otherwise undertaking: “they commit you to doing something, but include also declarations or announcement of intention, which are not promises, and also rather vague things which we may call espousal, as for example, siding with.” Other examples are: covenant, contract, undertake, propose to, guarantee, vow, intend, swear, declare for and so on.

Behabitives: Bahabitives have to do with attitudes and social behaviour. It also includes the notion of reaction to other people's behaviour and fortunes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct. Examples are: apologizing, congratulating, commending, condoling, cursing and challenging.

Expositive: They are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of users and of references. They make plain how our utterances fit into the course of an argument or conversation. Examples are I argue, I concede, I reply, I illustrate, I assume, I postulate, I cite, I repeat that, I mention that, etc. in general, they are mainly expository.

The communication which is expressed in hymns, is made concrete by the illocutionary force (verdictive, excercitive, commissive, behabitives and expositive) of the utterance, which influence and commit the worshippers to perform certain action such as repentance, forgiveness, supplication and many others. It is therefore important to subject the hymns of the different denominations to their illocutionary force so as to draw a comparison of the language use.

Data Presentationand Analysis

Nine hymns were selected from the hymns categorised as Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal Churches and are presented here for analysis. Their illocutionary acts are

analysed based on the contexts of use. Their anticipated perlocutionary effects are inferred as could be seen in the tables below. These tables highlight data sourced and analysed based on the occurrences of five speech acts: Verdictive, Exercitive, Commissive, Behabitives and Expositive proposed as performed by the content message in the lyrics of the selected hymns to determine their pragmatic significance.

Table 1. Showing the Illocutionary Force of Catholic Hymns

	Hymn	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
1	Sweet Sacrament Divine, Sweet Sacrament of Rest, Sweet Sacrament of Peace. Jesus, to you our voice we raise	Expositive (Persuasion)	The first effect is security and shelter which is what the home gives. Another effect would be peace and calm when at last the ocean is quiet and restless yearnings cease completely. Lastly, there is also the effect of understanding of true joy symbolized by light which dispels darkness.
	Save us for still the tempest rave; save, lest we sink beneath the waves.	Exercitives (urging)	Mercy (from God), deliverance
	Therein your ear, all trustfully we tell our tale of misery.	Exercitives (urging)	Secure attention and sympathy from God deliverance from misery and pain.
	Sweet light, so shine on us, we pray	Exercitives (urging)	Release of blessings from above
2		Illocutionary Act	Perlocutionary Act
	Rejoice O Mother Church! Exult in glory. Christ has risen.	Commissive (declare)	Joy, gratitude, praise.
	Lift up your heart.	Exercitive (ordering)	Lifting up the heart
	We lift them up the Lord	Commissive (giving)	Lifting up of the heart
	That with full hearts, minds and voices we should praise the unseen God	Behabitives (singing)	Praise, thanking

3		Illocutionary Act	Perlocutionary Act
	We offer thee the Holy Mass	Commissive (declare)	The first instance of perlocutionary act that could be seen is in the second stanza expressed as the gift of unmerited favour and forgiveness.

Table 2. Showing the Illocutionary Force of Protestant Hymns

		Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
1	Sing my soul	Exercitive (ordering)	The perlocutionary acts in the hymn are expressed in the feelings of excitement. Thus, the language used there is inciting. 'What joy shall fill my heart'. The effect of this hymn is lays with the fact that God is a great artist, and all he made is beautiful, without the advice or strength of any human person. It is therefore natural that when one is praised for doing good he is encouraged to continue the good works.
	How great thou art	Commissive (declaration)	Praise, gratitude
	I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder	Expositive	Confirmation of God's greatness and manifestation
	When through the woods, and forest glades I wonder	Expositive	
	I hear the birds sings sweetly in the trees	Expositive	Relevance and show of the supremacy of God
	When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur	Expositive	Praise
	When I think that God, His son not sparing	Expositive	Trinity, praise
	I shall bow in humble adoration	Expositive	Reverence, respect, submission to God
	And then proclaim my God how great t hou art.	Commissive (declare)	Testifying God's greatness and goodness
2	A mighty Fortress	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Act

	A mighty fortress is our God	Verdictive (reckoning)	In the proper context of the hymn, the lyrics serve to prop up hearts, failing faith in the midst of great danger, persecution and violent opposition. Thus lyrics of hymn incites, comforts and reassures. And this will have the effect of encouraging endurance as the perlocutionary act performed in the hymn. This effect is expressed in the third stanza as 'His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure.'
	His craft and power are great	Verdictive (reckoning)	Testimony of God's marvelous needs
	We will not fear	Commissive (declare)	Faith and courage
	For God had willed	Exercitive (warning)	God's abundant promises
	We tremble not him	Commissive (declare)	God is the savior
	His rage we can endure	Behabitive (challenging)	Mercy from God
3	Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
	Stand up for Jesus	Exercitive (ordering)	The perlocutionary acts that could be seen are the feelings of confidence, courage, strength, determination, and tenacity. Another perlocutionary act that is felt from the lyrics of the hymn is striving and never giving up attitude. The overall language use here could be said to inspiring and inciting. God is the addressee who will lead His army <i>from victory unto victory</i> .
	Lift high his royal banner	Exercitive (ordering)	Proclamation of his reign, confidence, courage
	Till every foe is vanquished	Exercitive (advising)	Victory, salvation
	And Christ is Lord indeed	Commissive (declare)	Supremacy of God
	The trumpet call obey	Behabitive (commending)	Response to the call of God, service to God
	Forth to the might conflict	Exercitive (urging)	Secure attention
	Stand in his strength alone	Exercitive (warning)	Reconciliation, faith,
	Put on the gospel amour	Exercitive (advising)	Faith,
	Watching onto prayer	Exercitive (advising)	Release of blessing from above

Table 3. Showing the Illocutionary Force of Pentecostal Hymns

	Have faith in God	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
1	Have faith in God	Exercitive (urging)	The lyrics of hymn inspire the feelings of certainty in divine provision. This is the main effect of the hymn. There is also the effect of patient waiting as a result of what is promised. There is again, the perlocutionary act of anticipation. And there could also be the feeling of anxiety.
	Your earnest plea he will never forget	Commissive (vowing)	Plea, release of blessing from heaven
	He will answer yet	Commissive (vowing)	God's blessings, mercy from God
	He cannot fail, he must prevail	Commissive (vowing)	Supremacy of God, praise
	Cast all your cares on Him	Exercitive (advising)	Depending on God for blessings
	And leave them there	Exercitive (advising)	Depending on God for blessings, secure attention
	He provides for his own	Commissive (guaranteeing)	Release of blessings from heaven
2	Pentecostal Power	Illocutionary Act	Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
	Descend on us today	Exercitive (urging)	The perlocutionary acts that would be felt as a result of the illocutionaries of the hymn will include the feelings of anticipation. It would inspire patience and confidence. Other perlocutionary effects are believing, trusting and relying on something or someone.
	Come, take possession of thine own and never depart	Exercitive (urging)	Trust and reliance on God
	O Lord, our faiths renew!	Exercitive (urging)	Faith, courage
	O Lord, send the old - time power the Pentecost power	Exercitive (urging)	Calling on the holy spirit (Pentecost power)
	And will not let thee to until the blessing we receive.	Commissive (vowing)	Release of blessings, thanksgiving, gratitude
3	Blessed Assurance		Anticipated Perlocutionary Effect
	Jesus is mine	Commissive (declare)	The perlocutionary effects that could be inferred directly from the above identified illocutionary acts are the feelings of expectancy, certainty fearlessness and fulfillment.

	Oh what a foretaste of glory divine	Commissive (declare)	Happiness, love of God
	Praising my Saviour all the day long	Commissive (declare)	Praise, joy
	Perfect submission, perfect delight	Commissive (declare)	Submission, reverence
	I in my Saviour am happy and blest	Commissive (declare)	Blessing, joy, peace
	Watching and waiting	Commissive (declare)	Free from sins and holiness
	Looking above	Commissive (declare)	Hoping in God
	Filled with his goodness, lost in His love.	Commissive (declare)	Abundance of God's blessings, joy

Table 4.

Name of Church	Verdictives	Exercitives	Commissives	Behabitives	Expositives
Catholic Church	0	6	5	2	1
Protestant Church	2	9	5	2	5
Pentecostal Church	0	7	13	0	0

Findings

Following a content analysis of the pragmatic features of the message contents in the selected hymns, the following are the findings of the study:

- I. It is found that differences exist in language use and content message that express expositive and commissive acts. Therefore different acts are performed by different hymns with regard to the origin and use. According to this study, the Protestant hymns have the highest expositives. It can also be inferred that protestant hymns have more power to inform and educate.
- ii. The findings of this paper also indicate that the lyrics of the hymns of Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal denominations manifest extensive use of persuasion, urging, ordering reckoning, commanding and declarative language, for example, the hymn blessed Assurance. These lyrics, with the use of such forms or language as shown above spur or

instigate the users or listeners to perform diverse or similar acts through the meanings conveyed by the words. One can therefore say that the literal meaning these words convey differ from the underlying or deeper meaning they connote. Arguably, it is the opinion of this research that the hymns of these denominations have both connotative and denotative meanings. In sum, different or similar acts are performed by the listeners through language. Again, since individuals see things differently, interpretations also vary accordingly. Consider the hymn Stand up! Stand up for Jesus. The connotative meaning of this hymn is quite beyond the physical act of standing. The hymn is a call to identify and be firm in Jesus. It connotes the act of striving and never giving up attitude. This hymn can also inspire people to embrace God.

- iii. Doctrinal dispositions are expressed in the language of the hymns of the three denominations. From The Catholic hymns, the use of “Sweet Sacrament”, 'Holy Mass', “Mother Church” etc are all attributed to Catholics. For instance, Catholics claim that there are seven Sacraments in the Church and the one that is expressed in one of the hymns analysed is the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. This is referred to as “Sweet Sacrament”. In addition Catholics all over the world lay claim that “Holy Mass” is exclusively for Catholics. However, other denominations such as Pentecostals and Protestants perform Church “Service” on the holy day of worship. Furthermore, Protestant hymns lay more emphasis on “God” other than any other name; for instance, the use of “stand in HIS strength alone” in one of the hymns. In the hymn “Pentecostal Power”, one can say that the Pentecostal denomination believe so much in the activities of the Holy Spirit.
- iv. The need for the hymns in consideration to suit the doctrinal and theological predisposition of the denominations is largely responsible for the difference in the content message of hymns and the different percentage scored in relation to the different speech acts performed in the lyrics of the hymns. The findings also show that the collective thoughts, moods, emotions and experiences of each denomination are captured and conveyed/communicated easily and even far better in hymns than in mere prose.

- v. Based on the analysis, it can be inferred that different shades or interpretations of meanings are attributed by the various acts performed by the hymns. For example, Pentecostal hymns have three inactive areas of language use (verdictive, behabitve and expositive) therefore it can be inferred that Pentecostal hymns have less content, short and simple lyrics and are more entertaining.
- vi. Protestant hymns have more excercitive acts in language compared with Catholic and Pentecostal hymns. Therefore the languages used in protestant hymns have more powers, rights or influence. The analysis shows that Protestant hymns have the highest frequency count in expressing verdictive acts. This implies that protestant hymns give verdict while Catholic and Pentecostal hymns do not.
- vii. The expositive acts are expressed more in the lyrics of Protestant hymns in comparison with the Catholic and Pentecostal hymns. It can be inferred that they convey doctrinal teaching of the Church to the audience more, compared with the hymns of Catholic and Pentecostal.

The findings show that lyrics of hymns play five pragmatic roles (verdictive, excercitive, commissive, behabitives and expositive) which agree with Austin (1962) who says that utterances play in any form of discourse. However, the performance of the roles the three denominations differ significantly in comparison as shown in tables 1, 2,3 and 4, in the analysis carried out in this research work. This indicates areas of strength and weakness in the content message of the hymns of the three denominations.

The findings also show that it is possible to “do things with hymns” just as prose or any form of discourse. Following J. L. Austin's (1962) the same theory was applied on hymns and it reveals that out of the five acts, hymns can perform all, although under varying frequency counts. This is an indication that hymns perform several acts simultaneously like prose and other forms of discourse.

Conclusion

From the analysis of language use in the hymns of Catholic, Protestant Pentecostal Churches, this paper concludes that hymns perform speech acts. This is in agreement with Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969). Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal are Christian denominations in which differences and similarities are notable in their choice of hymns arising from their doctrinal heritage. Although the hymns analysed

are mutually intelligible, they however, show notable differences and similarities in language use because some of these denominations have similar doctrine while some have an entirely different structures. The hymns from the Catholic Church have one area of non-performance in language use, which is verdictive. It is only the hymns from the protestant Church that have an index performance in all the five illocutionary acts. Therefore, this study concludes that Protestant hymns are more elaborate in content and lyrics. Another conclusion is that Pentecostal hymns rank least because they have three areas of non-performance in language use, these are: verdictive, behabitive and expositive. This could mean that Pentecostal hymns have less content, short and simple lyrics and more entertaining. Hymns from the Catholic denomination generally tend to be expository and more sober. One the other hand, hymns from the Protestant denomination tend to be exhortative, while most hymns from the Pentecostal faith tend to be persuasive, entertaining, rapturous and “psychedelic” given their forcefulness. Despite the differences in language use, this study concludes that the hymns are mutually intelligible and meaningful to be recognized as Christian hymns.

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