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THE USE OF CREATIVE RHYTHMS  
IN THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM

By

NORMA LEE COOK

B.A. Eastern Washington College of Education

B.A. in Education, Eastern Washington College of Education

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## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Statement of Problem

Creative rhythms are being utilized increasingly in the curriculum of secular education. The values that are derived from the use of this medium of expression for the individual and the group are generally recognized by educators, but in the field of Christian education these values are only beginning to be recognized. For that reason the medium has not been used to the greatest extent in the Christian education program. The problem of this thesis, therefore, will be to consider the factors involved in creative rhythms and survey the values derived through them in secular education and compare them with the factors and values of the use in Christian education and thus seek to discover if and how creative rhythms may be used more extensively in the Christian education program.

### B. Delimitation of the Problem

Creative rhythms are composed of several art media. Christian education has adopted an extensive use of most of these media such as clay modeling, finger painting, and art work. The only area that has not been recognized and used fully is that of rhythmic movement. Therefore in this thesis the consideration of this area of creative rhythms will be dealt with most extensively and the other areas only mentioned when they will aid in clarifying some aspect of rhythmic movement.



### C. Method of Procedure

In the first chapter a survey of creative rhythms in secular education will be made to discover in detail all the factors involved in and the values obtained from the art medium. Then in the second chapter a historical survey of the use of the medium in Christian education will be made, followed by a comparison of the factors and values of creative rhythms in Christian and secular education. Lastly in the third chapter practical suggestions will be given, also concrete examples of its use at the various age levels in the Christian education program will be illustrated.

### D. Sources of Study

The material in the first chapter of this thesis will be primarily based on main source books in the field of creative rhythms. Most of the text books used for reference are primary sources since the authors have written about their own experiences or those of the children with whom they have worked. These authors are considered to be the leading authorities and their names will be seen included in the content or bibliography of nearly all books dealing with creative rhythms or creative arts.

In the section of the first chapter dealing with bodily movement, Elizabeth Waterman and John Martin will be the main references cited. Other authors, since they deal with the subject of creative rhythms in more general terms, merely include bodily movement in their books while the two authors mentioned stress mainly the bodily movement aspect of creative rhythms.

At the present time the only available book concerning creative rhythms in Christian education is Margaret Fisk's The Art of the Rhythmic Choir. In her book, however, Mrs. Fisk quotes many of the authorities in the field of secular education which will be used for reference. In addition to the book she has contributed magazine articles on the same subject. Loomis mentions Mrs. Fisk as giving worthwhile contributions in the field of dance in the church. She is the only Christian leader she mentions in this art area. Mrs. Fisk has been trained for her choreographic work in secular education. Her career dates from her senior year at Oberlin College where she had opportunity to use the dance as religious expression. Then she continued her training in dance at the University of Chicago and at the Wigman School located in Germany. Now she is training leaders in this aspect of religious education. Mrs. Fisk has lectured and taught in many parts of the country. She was on the faculty of the Religious Drama Workshop held at Green Lake, Wisconsin in 1951 ... In her husband's church she is active in directing rhythmic choir groups. Thus it can be seen she is well qualified to be considered an authority in this field.

. . . . .

1. Amy Goodhue Loomis, "The Arts in Religious Education," in Philip Henry Lotz, *Orientation in Religious Education*, p. 147.
2. *The Rhythmic Choir*, The First Congregational Church, Tacoma, Washington. (folder)
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, p.8.

CHAPTER I

CREATIVE RHYTHMS IN SECULAR EDUCATION

CHAPTER I  
CREATIVE RHYTHMS IN SECULAR EDUCATION

A. Introduction

In order that the reader may understand what creative rhythms are and how this medium of expression is used in the field of education, the use of creative rhythms in secular education will be investigated. This study will serve as an orientation to the use and values of creative rhythms in general.

The method employed in this chapter will be that of analyzing and comparing the writings of leading authorities in the field to discover the various elements of creative rhythms and the values obtained through the use of them as indicated in the introduction. The area of bodily movement will be dealt with most extensively because it is the area of greatest concern in this project and other areas will be included only in those instances in which their inclusion would enhance the understanding of bodily movement.

It is expected that the contents of this chapter, together with that of the second chapter, will form a basis for suggesting further use of creative rhythms in the Christian education program.

B. Factors Involved in Creative Rhythms

1. Clarification of Terms

Many authorities agree that the phase of creative rhythms comprising bodily movement is variously termed. Terms which are used

interchangeably by authorities in the field in referring to bodily movement are: "symbolic movement," "basic dance," "interpretive or modern dance," "rhythmic movement," and "bodily expression."<sup>1</sup> These terms when used in this thesis are synonomous in meaning.

Although this phase of rhythm does stand alone, yet bodily movement, which is new in the curriculum of secular schools today, is seldom a separate creative subject, but is usually interwoven with the other creative rhythms, such as painting, music, clay work, and other art forms.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Medium of Expression

In this phase of creative rhythm, the medium of expression is the body. This differentiates it from the other phases of rhythm in that the medium of expression of the latter is an external one, such as paint, clay, or sound, whereas in the former the human body itself is the medium; an internal expression. In other words, the feeling for rhythm as expressed in those external media is conveyed in a material separate and apart from the individual person. In the art of dance the feeling of rhythm is given immediate tangible form through the medium of the movement of the body.

In order to produce symbolic movements the person uses the

. . . . .

1. Cf. Agnes De Lima: *The Little Red School House*, p. 174.  
Cf. C. Madeleine Dixon: *The Power of Dance*, pp. xi, 7.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: *The Art of the Rhythmic Choir*, pp.3-4.  
Cf. John Martin: *The Dance*, p. 9, 24.  
Cf. Elizabeth Waterman: *The Rhythm Book*, p. 8.
2. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 8, 174, 188.  
Cf. Victor D'Amico: *Creative Teaching in Art*, Seventh Edition, p. 5.

integrated whole of mind, body, and emotions and thus the form of rhythmic movement produced comes from the total being. This integration formerly was not recognized in the history of dance. Since it is so often combined with the other arts it has been named Dance Arts.<sup>1</sup>

The instructor's real concern is to aid the individual in resolving meaningless associations which he has with dance, so that he may henceforth rely upon impressions from his own environment and from the condition in which he finds himself. In this manner one may learn that bodily movement requires the clearest and most straightforward use of the body. The emotions and ideas must be unrestricted, and used simply and without compromise. Hence the body which is a good instrument of expression must have something clear to say and then the emphasis comes on the movement, that is, the saying of it in a convincing manner.<sup>2</sup>

The easiest and perhaps the most complete experience in rhythm that may be given is that of bodily movement. The reason is that to master bodily movement one does not need to learn the mastery of a new instrument, for the instrument used is the body. The experience is active rather than passive because the body enters completely into it. This affords opportunity for the great amount of the motor memory upon which a sense of rhythm is built.<sup>3</sup>

. . . . .

1. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 8, 129, 174.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., pp.7-8.
2. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., p. 185.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 8.
3. Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 8

### 3. Basic Forms of Rhythmic Movement

Rhythm is everywhere. Awareness of rhythm generally comes so unnoticeably, however, that it is difficult to discern any conscious process of developing a sense of rhythm. For instance, a baby's waving and batting of hands and feet, as well as the noises of the voice, are a rhythmic play and anyone seeing such has seen rhythm in the making. If one traces the movements of this baby after a year's time, one notes the baby has coordinated these seemingly uncoordinated movements into locomotion and the voice noises have developed into speech. At this time it is far easier to see and hear the child's rhythmic unity expressed in the body. During the first few years of life the processes of locomotion and speech begin, an awareness of rhythm begins to develop, and a sense of rhythm begins to function. Occasionally an adult can remember some early awareness of rhythmic expression.<sup>1</sup>

Everyone experiences movement such as swinging the foot when in pain or walking on the cracks in the sidewalks. Sound experiences may also be transformed into movement as in walking to band music, breathing to the ticking of the clock, or going to sleep to the beating of rain drops on the roof. Movement experiences may also be translated into sound, as when one swings to hear the squeaking of the porch swing, or runs through tall grass to hear it rustle. Visual experiences also may be put into movement. The push-pull

. . . . .

1. Cf. Bernard S. Mason: Drums, Tomtoms, and Rattles, p. 16.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 1.

movement seen as one scrubs clothes, or the swing and sway of the broom seen in sweeping may be imitated.<sup>1</sup>

Movement is the medium in which one lives one's life both in internal physiological mechanisms and in outward behavior. For it is by movement that one dresses, eats a meal, catches a bus, and goes about the daily tasks of living. Most of these movements are so habitual that one is hardly aware of them. There is something to be done and the logical steps are taken to do it. The body is equipped with a nervous system which functions solely for conveying reports of the senses about surrounding objects and conditions to the proper set of muscles so that suitable action can be taken for these circumstances. These processes do not always operate in so orderly a manner. For example, when one hears a strange or sudden noise one may react with a combination of completely irrelevant movements, such as jumping up or grabbing one's head, or flapping one's arms in the air. A similar process of irrational movement may result when sudden good news is received and one "jumps for joy". One may hug himself or skip around the room, or hop up and down even though these movements have actually no bearing whatsoever upon the news. What is the cause of this type of movement? The keyed up emotional state causes the nervous system to charge the muscles with impulses to move and with no time for deciding upon a particular movement they must burst forth. These motor impulses

. . . . .

1. Cf. Waterman, op. cit., pp. 1-2.



break through without having any planned direction just like the flood water breaking through a dam. There is a consistency in these movements, however, in that even though they are irrational they fit the emotional states that prompt them. One does not walk the floor holding his head when very happy nor does one hop around when very worried. The movements have in them the essential nature of the emotional state even though they are not rationally directed and mean nothing specific.<sup>1</sup>

The natural grouping of rhythm is in two categories, activity and inactivity, or release of energy and recovery of it for further release. Practiced rhythmic movements are by far the most understood and comprehended of the rhythmic forms. For example, when a march tune is played, there will soon follow the stamping of feet, with faces illumined with awareness of it, because walking is certainly one of the most practiced rhythmic movements. Poetry and music both have the same beat as there is in walking. With this as a common pulse, it is easily seen how the walk or even beat forms a background for other types of movement experiences which have a different time or intensity. The understanding, or grasp of this core of rhythmic experience, the walking beat or even beat, largely determines the understanding of rhythmic experience a person may be able to develop. The more readily familiar elements can be related in a rhythmic grouping, the more readily more and more of these

. . . . .

1. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., pp. 3-5.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., pp. 7-9.

elements can be added or included within the span of attention.<sup>1</sup>  
The other basic forms that comprise rhythmic experiences, besides the walk or the even beat, are the run, jump, hop, and leap. The uneven beat includes the gallop, slide, and skip. These all form the locomotor movements of rhythmic movement and they may be used alone or in combinations for variation. The body movements include bending, stretching, swinging, swaying, turning, twisting, rising, falling, shaking, and beating. These movements may be used individually<sup>2</sup> or in combination.

#### 4. Variations of Rhythmic Movement

When the individual has an understanding of the aforementioned rhythmic patterns, then his comprehension of rhythm becomes clarified. Following this one must be made aware of the rhythmic variations that are in the most familiar everyday movements. The next step is to comprehend movements that are not familiar, thus giving one an awareness of greater rhythmic variation. Then one needs to apply rhythmic movement to the materials of the various media of expression; that is, these basic rhythmic movements may be used in the external media of expression such as clay, wood, paper and paint.<sup>3</sup> When the individual applies his understanding of rhythmic movement to other media of expression he increases his own sense of timing and intensity in rhythm. This is made possible through

. . . . .

1. Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 6.
2. Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 9.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 106
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

integration of the arts because things that have potentiality for becoming powerful in expression will not become monotonous but will have a richness of rhythmic variation.<sup>1</sup>

Since consciousness or awareness of the moving body is the primary source of information concerning rhythm, then the rhythmic movements become the foundation upon which one may build and deepen his understanding, appreciation, and experience in rhythm. They become useful in the proportion to which one is aware of them, able to distinguish them, and also know them by their individual names. When each basic movement is connected with the name for the movement from the start then this is a great step toward the motor learning of it. All of the various rhythmic elements may be experimented with in order for the greatest scope of variation in the timing and intensity of movement to be comprehended. The best way for children to learn this is by experiencing it for themselves.<sup>2</sup>

As the separate units become understood and somewhat mastered, they should then be combined constructively to make patterns. One of the general aims of physical education should be kept in mind at all times. That aim is to make it a habit to produce the kind of movement which is well coordinated well-extended, and free and natural.<sup>3</sup>

Three factors enter into variations in movement. The first factor is the timing variation, which includes tempo and duration.

. . . . .

1. Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 21.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 7.
2. Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 9
3. Cf. Ibid.

The second factor is the intensity variation, which includes the states of intensity from relaxation to tension, and the employment of those states in expression. The third factor in variations of movement is spacial variation, or pattern making. When one combines various locomotor movements, bodily movements, timing variations, intensity variations, and spacial variations, then numerous possibilities may result in the making of patterns or creation of rhythmic movements. These numerous possibilities for variation are a factor in the popular use of the body as a means of art expression<sup>1</sup> in secular education.

#### 5. Rhythm Raised to Art Form

Any emotional state such as joy, worry or fear tends to be expressed in movements which may not be particularly useful, but nevertheless do reflect the specific character and quality of the emotional state.<sup>2</sup>

When rhythmic movements become raised to an art form they become the art of dance. The use of the word "dance," however, is often avoided because of the connotation it might have. The use of the term rhythm is more effective because it does not have the same taboos and does actually describe what is taking place far more

. . . . .

1. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 174, 186-188.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., pp. 3-4, 13.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., pp. 6, 21.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., pp. 9-14.
2. Cf. Martin, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

accurately.<sup>1</sup> Either word will be used here, however.

This rhythm or dance divides into two natural major categories. The first category is the dance which is done for the emotional release of the individual dancer without any regard to the possible interest of the spectator. Then the second category, which is largely an outgrowth of the first, is the rhythm which is done for the enjoyment of the spectator. It may be done as an exhibition of skill, as a means of telling a story, as the presenting of pleasurable designs, or as the communication of an emotional experience. Both of these categories have an important place in the whole picture of rhythm.<sup>2</sup>

## 6. Accompaniment to Rhythmic Movement

### a. The Voice

Since the voice is the natural accompaniment to the movements of the body it is held to be the best source for transmitting the inner rhythm of expression. The reason for this is that both speech and movement are motivated from the same source and at the same time, thus yielding a more common unity of worker and medium. "Scientific studies of speech show decided tendencies toward unconscious individual, racial, and emotional rhythms."<sup>3</sup> When speech accompanies any other part of the body there exists a basic rhythmic

. . . . .

1. Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 105.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 9.
2. Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 24.
3. Waterman, op. cit., p. 50.

correlation that makes each movement become almost an audible dance.

The voice affords wide range for accompaniment to body movement because of the variety of sounds that it can make. Some variations are the high-pitched falsetto, a throaty guttural, a twangy nasal, a clear heady oral tone, or a resonant deep pectoral quality. Although the same words are uttered, for example one's name, yet the various sounds will produce varying bodily movements.<sup>1</sup>

This is true because there is a close relationship between music and movement. It is but a common tendency for dynamic movement to produce sound, and for emotional intensity to produce vocalization. An illustration of this is found, for example, in a person waiting for a letter containing special news. When he receives it he naturally releases some squeal or sound of joy and at the same time he may jump or make some other bodily movement to release this inner intensity of emotion.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this, music probably evolved from the increasing awareness of the percussive and melodic possibilities within man and within the animals about him. Existing in time and motion as music does, it is always an adventure into the unforeseen of sound and silence. It can never be encompassed like a spatial whole but lives only in successive moments of awareness.<sup>3</sup>

This is true also of movement. Therefore it is perhaps one of the reasons why music and movement go together to form a deeper and more lasting rhythmic expression and experience.

. . . . .

1. Cf. Ibid., p. 51
2. Cf. Martin, op. cit., pp. 8-9.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 55.
3. Waterman, op cit., p. 55.

b. Other Instruments

The voice is the best accompaniment because of the unity of relationship between the voice and the body movement; however, a far greater variety of instruments certainly may and can be used. The types of instruments are varied, such as the percussion instruments, wind instruments, stringed instruments, and metal instruments. Percussion instruments are the type that are closest to movement. The rattles are the first in this group.<sup>1</sup>

C. Values of Creative Rhythms

1. Values for the Group

a. Vicarious Experiences

According to Dixon and Martin the group may vicariously experience the emotional experiences of the individual(s) performing. As the individual expresses every emotional state in movement the inherent contagion of bodily movement automatically makes the onlooker feel sympathetically in his own musculature the exertions he sees in the other. Thus one may, through the group, vicariously experience things that one would never know otherwise.<sup>2</sup>

b. Group Consciousness

Authorities in the field, Dixon, De Lima, and Mason, point out the value of group consciousness. An individual who does not necessarily feel a part of the group, may through

. . . . .

1. Cf. Ibid., pp. 55-56.  
2. Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 3.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 105.

creative rhythms experience more of a sense of belonging to that group. He loses his self consciousness and takes on a group consciousness. At this time real creative power usually becomes evident as he becomes adjusted to the group.<sup>1</sup> Mason states that dance fulfilled a community function of unsurpassed importance in that "It seemed to unite the people to develop a feeling of group strength and solidarity."<sup>2</sup>

c. Sharing of Experiences

A conclusion held by nearly all of the authors in this field is that bodily movement is a means of sharing one's deepest inner experiences with one's contemporaries.<sup>3</sup> Martin explains that the individual is able to convey to others through body movement "something of his own intuitive reaction which is too deep for words."<sup>4</sup> In some cases children who may never excel in language expression may, through bodily movement express their complete personalities; when this expression is appreciated by the group the consequent growth of the children indirectly strengthens the group.<sup>5</sup>

. . . . .

1. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., p. 131.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 4.  
Cf. Mason, op. cit., pp. 16-17.
2. Mason, op. cit., p. 17.
3. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., p. 187.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 11.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 10.  
Cf. Mason, op. cit., p. 17.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 6.
4. Martin, op. cit., p. 10.
5. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., p. 187.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 11.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 10.  
Cf. Mason, op. cit., p. 17.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 6.



d. Sharing of Emotional Capacities

The sharing of emotional capacities is a definite benefit to the group. Through such sharing, whether as performers or spectators, all of the members of the group gain increased ability for emotional expression. Thus the group's emotional capacity for ex-  
1  
pression is enlarged and enriched.

e. Lessening of Differences

Two other group values of creative rhythms which are mentioned by Madeleine Dixon are: (1) individual differences are lessened or bridged through bodily movement; (2) bodily movement is a means of lessening biases towards "minority groups" in America. The dance arts provide opportunity for analysis and understanding of differences which the children experience themselves in doing  
2  
bodily movement.

2. Values for the Teacher

Nearly all of the leading authorities in the field stress the opportunity which the teacher has to know the individual through  
3  
this medium of self expression. When the teacher observes her pupils in creative bodily expression she can see the capacities the child possesses for responding to happiness, sorrow, and sharing.

. . . . .

1. Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 5.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 24.
2. Cf. Dixon, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
3. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., p. 1.  
Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 129, 187.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. xi.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 105.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., pp. xi, 27.

Personality disturbances are also evidenced through this expression. This is due not necessarily to the teacher's ability to draw out expressiveness, but rather to the pressure of inner feelings which will not be repressed when aroused by the subject being studied by the pupil. The teacher is also made aware of the fact that the pupils need to and can resolve some of their own disturbances through bodily movement.<sup>1</sup>

The teacher can learn from her pupils. The teaching of bodily movement is not only a "giving out" but also a "taking in" experience. The things which the teacher learns from her pupils may be adapted to later use in teaching.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Values for the Individual

#### a. Crystallization of Learning

The interpretive dance is an effective means of crystallizing learning. It actually supports or carries out the theory that one learns by doing rather than by purely intellectual processes. Things which the children have experienced or expressed in the other art media may be expressed in body movement in a manner which fixes the learning. From this viewpoint creative rhythms are not only a form of expression but also a method of learning.

It is often said there is no actual learning until some form of expression has been attained.<sup>3</sup> Even concepts intellectually

. . . . .

1. Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. xi.
2. Cf. Ibid. p. 11.
3. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 185-186.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 8.

apprehended by the child become much more meaningful when he has had an opportunity for overt expression. The more totally information can be experienced through bodily movement, the more completely it becomes knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

In learning one progresses from the known to the unknown; therefore, ideas, facts, or concepts which are not relevant to the child's experience, have little or no meaning for him. Bodily movement is an area in which the new material under skillful direction by the teacher may become crystallized in the child's intellectual understanding.<sup>2</sup>

b. Understanding of Self

One of the outstanding individual values of creative rhythms is that of self-revelation. Through bodily movement one may be made aware of one's own personality disturbances.<sup>3</sup> Another value of creative rhythms is not only the revelation to the child of his personality disturbances but also the assistance it gives him in solving these disturbances. Sometimes minor personality problems not evident to the child are negated through the medium of bodily expression without his knowledge of the fact. Creative rhythms not only aid one in developing good mental health, but may also be a

. . . . .

1. Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 8.
2. Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. 148.
3. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 129, 183.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. xi.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 105.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. xi.

means of maintaining his present mental health.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the innate capacities of a child as well as his disturbances, are thus often brought to his own consciousness in creative rhythms.<sup>2</sup> Through bodily movement the emotional capacities of the child may become evident. The dance is a means or channel by which the child learns to develop his own capacity for intrinsic emotional experiencing and for external comprehension. After the child has become aware of his capacities he may then develop them more fully in expressing them to others. The teacher generally is not concerned with the child's ability to perform for others at first; his interest is the child's freedom of expression of feelings, ideas, and impressions through creative rhythms.<sup>3</sup>

c. Enrichment of Self

The leading authorities in the field of creative rhythms all stress the fact that self-enrichment of the individual is experienced through bodily movement.<sup>4</sup> Imaginations are developed as children

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1. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., p. 3.  
Cf. De Lima, op. cit., p. 193.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., pp. xi, 105.
2. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., pp. 129, 187.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. xi.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. x.
3. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., p. 15.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., pp. 5,7.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. xii.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 9.
4. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., p. 1.  
Cf. De Lima, op. cit., p. 187.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 5.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 24.  
Cf. Mason, op. cit., p. 17.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. xii.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 9.

seek to express feelings in various ways, or as they strive to convert<sup>1</sup> their inner ideas and concepts into aesthetic expression.

Bodily movement develops the mind, the body, and the emotions. This total development enriches the child's life and enables him to<sup>2</sup> live his acquired knowledge more fully.

The capacity to experience emotional content by participation or observation in creative rhythms is also acquired through creative rhythms. The individual's own growth in ability to express himself creatively is a result of constant exercising of this medium<sup>3</sup> of expression.

Another value to the individual that comes through bodily movement is that of self-confidence. As the child becomes more adjusted to the group his self-confidence increases and the group develops more confidence in him as well. Bodily movement is effective in developing self-confidence because so many children see what the others are doing and in their desire to do the same things become a part of the group. As participation increases self-confidence<sup>4</sup> increases.

The element of joy or pleasure that the children experience

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1. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., p. 14.
2. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 187-188.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., pp. 3, 8.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. 14.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., pp. 6, 8, 50.
3. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., p. 131  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 3.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. xii.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., pp. 24, 105.
4. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 131, 187.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. 131.

while doing bodily movement is a value that contributes to their personal enrichment.<sup>1</sup> One of the laws of learning, the law of effect, is instrumental here. The pleasantness of the experience increases the desire to learn and makes the learning easier and more enjoyable,<sup>2</sup> thus contributing greatly to the child's enrichment.

d. Expressing of Self

The value of self expression is constantly emphasized by the leading authorities; bodily movement is a way in which children naturally express their experiences. Such movement is a channel for more complete expression of self because it involves the whole of the person; there is a freedom of expression in the body that the child may not be able to experience as readily in the other media.<sup>3</sup>

Bodily movement is a medium of expressing one's inner thoughts to others as the mind is revealed through the muscles.<sup>4</sup>

As the child participates in creative rhythms directly, or indirectly, he develops a means of communication.

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1. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 131, 187.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. 131.
2. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., p. 1.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 24.  
Cf. Mason, op. cit., pp. 16, 164.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., pp. xi-xii.
3. Cf. D'Amico, op. cit., p. 2.  
Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 129, 187.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., pp. xi, 7.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., pp. 9-10, 106.  
Cf. Mason, op. cit., p. 18.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., pp. x-xi.  
Cf. Waterman, op. cit., p. 1.
4. Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 5.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., pp. 10, 105.  
Cf. Shaw, op. cit., p. 28.

Furthermore, the individual has the opportunity to share with the group his appreciation of emotional capacity which is probably quite varied from the rest. The value here is that it is an outlet for his emotional capacity.<sup>1</sup>

Through interrelation of the arts the child is also aided in expressing himself. When bodily movement is related to the other arts media, the child's self-expression is clarified.<sup>2</sup>

#### D. Summary

In this chapter on creative rhythms in secular education the general phases of creative rhythms and the values derived through creative rhythms have been investigated and the findings from leading authorities recorded.

First the factors involved in creative rhythms were noted. Within this category was found the clarification of terms such as interpretive dance, symbolic movement, and bodily expression. Next the body was shown to be the medium of expression for rhythmic movement. Another factor disclosed was the basic forms of movement. These forms were seen to be locomotor movements of even and uneven beat, such as the walk, the run, the hop, and other bodily movements, such as the twist, the bend, the stretch. Variations of rhythmic movement were found to consist of combinations of basic forms of

. . . . .

1. Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 5  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 24.
2. Cf. De Lima, op. cit., pp. 185-186, 188.  
Cf. Dixon, op. cit., p. 11.  
Cf. Martin, op. cit., p. 24.

rhythmic movements, timing variations, intensity variations, spatial variations and pattern variations. Authorities stressed that rhythmic movement when raised to an art form becomes dance. The last factor found emphasized was that of accompaniment to rhythmic movement, namely, the voice and musical instruments.

The opinions of the leading authorities, it was discovered, were in general agreement concerning the many values in creative rhythms. The values emphasized for the group comprised vicarious experiences, group consciousness, sharing of experiences, sharing of emotional capacities, and lessening of differences. Values for the teacher stressed by most writers centered especially in the elements concerned in understanding of the pupils. Lastly, authors were seen to agree that the values for the individual include crystalization of learning, understanding of self, enrichment of self, and expressing of self.



CHAPTER II

CREATIVE RHYTHMS IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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CREATIVE RHYTHMS IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A. Introduction

With the use of creative rhythms in secular education as a background, this chapter on creative rhythms will seek to discover the use of creative rhythms in the Christian education program.

The procedure for this chapter will be first to find out the use of creative rhythms in the past in the church; then to find out what factors are involved in the use of creative rhythms in Christian education and to compare them with those found in secular education; and finally to discover the values that may result through the use of creative rhythms in Christian education and again to compare them with those found in secular education.

As indicated in the general introduction the only available sources for reference in Christian education are material written by Fisk. Therefore, the contents of this chapter will be obtained from her works.

B. A Brief History of the Use of Creative  
Rhythms in Christian Education

A brief survey of the use of creative rhythms and specifically, bodily movement in the Christian education program is difficult to undertake since the history dates back as far as Old Testament times. The word dance is referred to seventeen times in the Old Testament and always favorably, dance being considered a definite part of

worship. In Exodus 25<sup>1</sup> Miriam and the women danced and in II Samuel 6 David led a dancing procession. As the Jewish people make pilgrimages to David's tomb in Jerusalem, even today they have dancing.

Of the place of dance in the early Christian church, Fisk says:

During the first five centuries of the Christian era, we see that dance was recognized by the church as a natural way of expressing joy, a way of salvation and a way of adoration, as illustrated by the references to the dances of the holy ones, the martyrs, and the angels. The early Christians expressed in symbolic movement the deep joy that they felt in the coming of Christ, in the close spiritual bond between heaven and earth.<sup>2</sup>

During the early middle ages the people appreciated the sacred dance as a means of expressing their religion because the general culture was not stimulating. Therefore, the religious arts were kept and fostered by the church at that time. As the sacred dance continued in the eighth and ninth centuries efforts were made to arrest the degenerate forms that were being manifested.<sup>3</sup>

The later medieval period was a period of dramatic and emotional expression. Since the church had outlawed the degenerate secular forms of the dance, the church then decided to create its own dramatic portrayals. The introduction of choral songs, picturesque processions and ceremonial dances became a means of influencing people to participate in the church.<sup>4</sup>

During the Renaissance religious dance continued to prosper, although factors such as intellectualism had crippling effects upon

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1. Cf. Fisk, op. cit., pp. 22-23.
2. Ibid., p. 105.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 106-107.
4. Cf. Ibid., pp. 108-109.

the art.<sup>1</sup> These factors later resulted in the complete prohibition of the use of the sacred dance in either Roman Catholic or Protestant churches. The Protestant churches were concerned with the Reformation which had put an end to the functioning of the arts of painting, sculpture, and drama in churches. Thus the door was also closed to any use of religious dancing.<sup>2</sup>

Gradually, however, the use of the sacred dance is being revived in the church. Missionaries often experience difficulty in trying to give a mental, philosophical religion, which lacks physical expression, to people of those countries which have dance as a basic part of their cultural pattern. The nationals on becoming Christian often express in movement their praise to God.<sup>3</sup> Even in the United States the modern dancers, or professional artists, pick religious themes for dancing because of the depth in the content.<sup>4</sup> Fisk states:

The art of the dance which was born in religion, but which went through a period of spiritual mediocrity, has achieved a new personal impact, a wide horizon and a philosophical depth. This art has a message for the people of this day because it speaks directly from the spirit of the dancer to the spirit of the observer.<sup>5</sup>

This art is now being experimented with in the religious area as colleges, camps, schools, youth organizations and summer conferences have it as an integral part of their program. In America creative movement was first introduced by William Norman Guthrie in

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 122.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 133, 135.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 143-145.
4. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 146-167.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

1918 at St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery, an Episcopal church in New York City.<sup>1</sup>

The art has been increasingly used here since then but is still only in the first stage of growth. The most prominent use of creative rhythmic movement is that of the rhythmic choir which has<sup>2</sup> been developing only in the past twenty years.

### C. Factors Involved in Creative Rhythms in Christian Education as Compared with Secular Education

#### 1. Clarification of Terms

Christian education has adopted the terms used by secular education but also has some terms of its own. The term "rhythmic" is often combined with other words to express the same thought in varying ways. One finds "rhythmic movement," "rhythmic expression," "rhythmic design," "rhythmic patterns" and "rhythmic interpretation" all used throughout the book to refer to the bodily movement aspect of creative rhythms. However, "symbolic movement," "religious expression," "interpretive movement," "interpretive variations," "religious dance," "sacred dance," and "symbolic interpretive movement" are also used synonymously with reference to this art. "Rhythmic choir" is used often but generally refers to a group taking<sup>3</sup> part in a worship service of one kind or another.

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 168-178.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 178-187.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, pp. 8,9.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1953 pp. 13,14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," *Children's Religion*, June 1952, p. 16.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song," *Children's Religion*, April 1952, pp. 16,17.

Religious dance is based on the technique of modern dance and thus centered in the use of the whole body for expression.<sup>1</sup> In explaining the use of the term dance Fisk says:

Christians are accustomed to using for spiritual purposes a word which to many people may have a distorted connotation. Take the discipline, creative power, and sacrifice in the term "love." Christians know that "love" is surrounded with radiant and constructive meanings. But to many people "love" seems sentimentally weak, selfishly possessive, and especially sex-centered. Yet we hold to the term "love," as in First Corinthians 13, because neither "charity," "concern," nor "good will" adequately convey its fuller meaning. If the reader finds himself thinking of superficial or exhibitional movements when the word "dance" is used, he is urged to consider that this word has a long history of disciplined and consecrated use, and to accept a broad definition of dancing: rhythmic movement with a pattern of expression.<sup>2</sup>

Fisk further states that at present, because of the public's limited idea of "dance," the reference should usually be avoided for it could possibly destroy the chance for developing this art, which is the oldest art in the world.<sup>3</sup> This sacred dance or expressive dance is that which is a revival of interest in the classical Greek dancing and which by free creative movement has gradually developed into a new, disciplined choreographic art. It is not like the classical ballet technique with all its prescribed, stylized, periphery - conscious movements but it is a free creative art that has vision and conviction to combine with the total body movements.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Medium of Expression

In Christian education just as in secular education the body

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 37.
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Cf. ibid., pp. 18,30.
4. Cf. ibid., p. 28.

is used as the medium of expression for this art. However, in Christian education the human body is disciplined and spiritually well trained. It is advocated that the bodily movement be noble, reverently solemn and full of holy grace. Therefore, although the body is the accepted medium of the art, the body is secondary to the spiritual purpose of rhythmic movement. The primary factor is the selfless giving of all the body to God.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Basic Forms of Rhythmic Movement

In secular and Christian education the basic forms of rhythmic movement are fundamentally the same.<sup>2</sup> In Christian education, however, one always guards against nonessential or exhibitional types of movements and because of this there is a slight change in some of the basic forms. For example, the walk is done smoothly, with chest and head up, hands and face relaxed, and the weight forward. The walk is extensively used in processions but is also utilized in numerous religious dances. The nature of this walk produces an atmosphere of assurance, dignity, and peace. Closely related to the walk is the smooth run which is often employed in rhythmic expression.<sup>3</sup>

In a worshipful rhythmic interpretation the leap, as used in secular education, is rarely utilized. Christian education has modified the leap to a "lift." The movements of exaltation are

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 8-11, 35-36.
2. Ante., pp. 4-7.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 38.

vital in a religious dance as nearly all dances have a high moment.

Thus the lift is described as follows by Fisk:

The uplifting movement of the body starts from the center of the body, proceeding into a projected release of the chest, as the back arches, causing the upward tilt of the head. Then as the extension of the arms through to the finger tips is being reached, the dancer rises to the ball of the feet or onto toes. To accentuate such a "lift" there may be preceding movements such as a wide swing from an opposite position or a turning of the body that starts low and spirals upward into a "lift."<sup>1</sup>

The kneel, as it is termed, is another basic form that is not commonly used in secular education. The kneel may be controlled by keeping the back straight and upright as one goes down slowly. The bowing of the head follows the bending of the knee. When rising from the kneeling position the first muscular impulse should start at the center of the lower back; then the shoulders gradually straighten, followed by the neck's being raised until the head is upright again. With focal attention fixed high one may then rise from the knees vertically while the arms project indicating the final outlet of the upward impulse. The kneel has several ranges. There is the high kneel of meditation in which the head is slightly bent, the lower body kneel expressing humility, contrition, and sorrow, and the prostrate position of restless agony of repentance.<sup>2</sup>

The movements of the hands are important in the rhythms used in Christian education. These movements should have simplicity because such simplicity brings unity of movements to the group and also because it leads the group to express a disciplined selflessness

. . . . .

1. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 38-40.



that points beyond the person to God. The fingers should be together extended to direct attention to outward movement. The curled fingers would draw attention to the individual. Extension of the middle finger lengthens the hands while they move through space and thus sustains the outward flow of expression.<sup>1</sup>

The eyes also play a prominent part in projecting feeling beyond the individual to God. The eyes should not wander or shift meaninglessly; attention should be centered on a cross or some focal point that is above the group. If there is not a specific focal point the eyes should be seen gazing beyond and a little above the finger tips of the hand that is at the time the dominant expressive factor.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Variations in Rhythmic Movement

The variations in rhythmic movement in Christian education are based on exactly the same factors as those in secular education, namely, basic forms of rhythmic movement, timing variation, intensity variation, and spacial variation.<sup>3</sup>

#### 5. Rhythm Raised to Art Form

The interpretations involved in forming patterns and designs come through the elements comprising rhythmic variations and when they are well coordinated they become the art of dance. This factor in Christian education is the same as that in secular

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 40
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 41.
3. *Ante*, pp. 7-9.

education except that the dance produced is generally of one type:  
worship of God.<sup>1</sup>

## 6. Accompaniment to Rhythmic Movement

### a. The Voice

As in secular education the voice is a good source of accompaniment to the moving body in rhythmic interpretation in Christian education. However, in Christian education, when the rhythmic choir execute their movements, the voice accompaniment is rarely the individual's own voice, as in secular education, but is generally the voice of another who may be reading or the many voices of a singing or speaking choir.<sup>2</sup>

When creative rhythms are used in classes or groups principally as an aid to learning the voice may be used just as it is in secular education.<sup>3</sup>

### b. Other Instruments

Christian education just as secular education uses all types of musical instruments in accompanying symbolic movement.<sup>4</sup>

The religious dance is generally accompanied by music. The music usually is that which has already been written; however special new tunes may be created for a certain rhythmic design. The piano and organ are the instruments used most often in Christian education and to either or both of these a choral singing group is sometimes added.

String and woodwind instruments are effectively used as well. Records

. . . . .

1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 19.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 45, 53.
3. *Ante*, p. 10-11
4. *Ante*, p. 12.

sometimes are used as accompaniment to movement. Then too, as in secular education, the percussive instruments, particularly the drum or gong, are very effective.<sup>1</sup>

D. Values of Creative Rhythms in Christian Education  
as Compared with Secular Education

The values inherent in the use of creative rhythms in Christian education which are similar to those in secular education are generally not stated and discussed but merely implied because Fisk is more concerned with presenting the spiritual aspects of the use of rhythmic movement in the Christian education program. In the realm of group values, however, the similarity is more evident.

1. Group Values

a. Social Growth

Through group creative activity there is the opportunity for social growth and development. When children or young people or even adults enter into the freedom of movement provided by this art medium they lose self-consciousness and enter into a deeper fellowship with fellow participants. Friendliness among children is experienced through the outgoing gestures that they execute. By taking part in a group there is a development of an awareness of a growing Christian fellowship. Thus the participants are able to experience that deep fellowship that comes through membership in a group that is sincerely seeking the highest. Thus they know

. . . . .

1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 42-43, 53.

the reality of the bond that unites them.<sup>1</sup>

b. Therapeutic Aid

For youth particularly, with their many emotional problems, group symbolic movement has proved to be a means of providing therapeutic power. Through this medium of expression there is a deeper union with God and by His grace personality problems are either solved or transcended.<sup>2</sup>

c. Sharing of Creations

In the group which can and may often be divided into smaller groups all enjoy and are greatly absorbed in the sharing of their creations. Smaller groups may work on an interpretation of a particular idea, and at the same time another small group may be developing movements for their thought and then they may all come together and share the creations of their particular group with all the other members of the large group.<sup>3</sup>

d. Group Cooperation

Fisk stresses the value of group cooperation that grows out of participation in a rhythmic choir. Each member of the group has a specific place to work in and actions must be worked out

. . . . .

1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.  
 Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, p. 8.  
 Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," Children's Religion, June 1952, pp. 16-17.  
 Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 12-13, 17.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 51.

to form a design for the rhythmic interpretation of the whole.  
This requires group cooperation.<sup>1</sup> The same thing is true with children and young people when the art is used for class or group work which will not be used for a public worship service.

e. Vicarious Spiritual Experiences

Creative rhythms are helpful not only for those participating but also for those watching, who vicariously experience spiritual realities.

The observers all respond to the use of this rhythmic expression more than to any other of the religious arts. From the youngest to the oldest and from those keenly sensitive spiritually to those seemingly insensitive, creative expression evokes a response.

The observers unconsciously identify themselves with those participating in the symbolic movement.<sup>2</sup> Of this Fisk says:

The experience of religious insight that the congregation feels in the interpretations of a rhythmic choir has a spiritual reality like a new clear light that diffuses itself through the souls of each of the worshipers and draws them together into a mystic union.<sup>3</sup>

2. Individual Values

a. Personal Enrichment

There are several ways in which the individual is personally enriched through participation in creative rhythms. By experiencing the highest in the arts one is aided in enlarging one's standards

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 17.  
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.  
3. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

of evaluation; hence the low and vulgar forms of the arts will be  
unattractive.<sup>1</sup> Through participating in this art medium the  
individual receives training in the creative technique of body-  
soul growth and health; the body and spirit are mutually helpful.<sup>2</sup>  
As one takes part in rhythmic interpretation one is encouraged to  
have a creative attitude toward life.<sup>3</sup> Further, there is an  
awareness of God's continuous presence within one which gives an  
inner peace.<sup>4</sup> A feeling of self assurance is often experienced  
when creating symbolic movements because there is a lessening of  
self-consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

The individual experiences joy in creative expression.  
Fisk puts a great deal of stress on this point as she refers to  
the joy derived through rhythmic movement in nearly all of her  
articles.<sup>6</sup> One child received great joy in the dance experience  
and said, "I love to dance because it makes my mind and body strong and

. . . . .

1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 10.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, p. 8.
4. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," *Advance*, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: *The Art of the Rhythmic Choir*, p. 11.
5. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, p. 9.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song," *Children's Religion*, April, 1952, p. 16.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," *Advance*, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 14.
6. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, pp. 8-9.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song," *Children's Religion*, April 1952, p. 17.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," *Children's Religion*, June 1952, p. 16.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," *Advance*, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: *The Art of the Rhythmic Choir*, p. 11.

I am able to express my soul."<sup>1</sup>

There is enrichment for the individual in physical<sup>2</sup>  
growth through training in posture and body coordination.

Through the planning and understanding that one experiences<sup>3</sup>  
in rhythmic expression there is mental growth and development.

Moreover, the individual experiences a unity of heart,  
mind, body, and soul through creative expression. There is the  
feeling of giving all and thus meeting life with a new spirit.  
The individual is enriched by this complete expression of the<sup>4</sup>  
whole person.

b. Adjustment to Personal Problems

One of the outstanding values in both secular and Christian  
education is found in the way creative rhythms aid one in adjusting  
to personal problems and difficulties. Psychological growth  
results as one practices the exercises that release tensions

. . . . .

1. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 56.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 10,11,16.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 11.
4. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 13.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 10,11, 13,14,27,55,56.

and express faith and joy. Not only is there the release of tension but also a sense of accomplishment and a fostering of emotional stability because of the emotional release that takes place as one participates.<sup>1</sup>

Everyone has needs and creative rhythms in addition to deepening the spiritual experience, offer therapeutic help.<sup>2</sup> One girl who wandered into the woods and was found dancing answered the inquiring counselor:

..."but I was praying. Only who'd ever believe it? But I was! I just knew God would be listening and I thought, 'If I dance real well, maybe He'll see me and listen.' Because I just have to control my temper and dancing always helps me to do that. I feel good when I'm dancing. I don't feel mean at all then."<sup>3</sup>

Thus creative expression through bodily movement aids one in facing reality.<sup>4</sup> Creative rhythms also aid one in relaxing and so are a cure to the disease of inability to relax.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, pp.8,34.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, pp. 14,15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 8, 11,14,55.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, pp. 14,15.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 13.
4. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 14,15.
5. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 10,11.



To illustrate this Mrs. Fisk states:

In the realm of physical healing, Ted Shawn testifies that his "Dance that Heals" has been a medium for better health and release of tension for the observers.<sup>1</sup>

This art medium brings constructive techniques and visions for meeting life's problems, as the experience of union with God either aids the individual in solving the problem or if the problem is unsolvable enables the person to transcend it because grace<sup>2</sup> gives the victory.

c. Spiritual Growth

(1) Learning of Bible Content and Hymns

In creative expression opportunity is provided for interpretation of Bible stories such as those of David, the baby Moses, Job, and the experiences of the people of Israel and such interpretation gives life to the Bible content.<sup>3</sup>

The hymns of the church also take on a new meaning for the individual when they are interpreted for religious expression.<sup>4</sup>

Fisk lays much stress on the use of creative rhythmic movement as a teaching aid. Through this medium of expression

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1. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 19.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, pp. 13,14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song" Children's Religion, April, 1952, p. 16.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, pp. 14,15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir pp. 13,14,19.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, p. 8.
4. Cf. ibid., p. 9.

the children learn Bible stories more readily. Interpretive movement is a means of teaching many areas of the Christian life, as found in hymns, in the Psalms, in history, in the parables, and in prayer.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Development of Selflessness

When one participates in rhythmic expression one's mind is taken off self and one's attention is focused on God.<sup>2</sup> In a letter to the writer Fisk says of differing values in Christian and secular education:

I would say that it has more depth and more height and more selflessness than an art used in secular education. Its depth because people express deep concerns with an awareness of a strength beyond themselves. Its height comes from the aspiration and vision that go beyond secular vision. In secular art too often the artist is exhibitional - but in a spiritually disciplined art - the artist forgets himself and is selfless as a channel.<sup>3</sup>

With awareness of God comes humility or awareness of it in the individual.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education Feb. 1953, p. 14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, p. 8.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song," Children's Religion, April 1952, pp. 16-17.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," Children's Religion, June 1952, pp. 16-17.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 1ff.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 4-17, 35.
3. Margaret Palmer Fisk: Personal Letter, March 15, 1953.
4. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 1, 4.

(3) Fellowship with God

Creative rhythms afford the participant of direct religious experience.<sup>1</sup> Fisk says: "The intellectual emphasis has been necessary but too often it has deprived the ordinary man of direct religious experience."<sup>2</sup> The art medium aids one in finding a union with God, then growth in the union with God develops into a trust and confidence in Him.<sup>3</sup>

The individual is made aware of the body-soul unity of response towards God.<sup>4</sup> Further, creative rhythms provide a means of worship and enjoyment of it.<sup>5</sup> Through rhythmic expression the individual may glorify God in body and soul as is suggested in I Corinthians 6:19,20.<sup>6</sup>

By symbolic movement one may learn to pray with one's

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax, Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 14, 25, 28.
2. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 25.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 1, 2, 4, 8-10.
4. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 25.
5. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, pp. 8, 9.
6. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, pp. 8, 9.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 8.

whole self and then one's whole self has a new released energy.<sup>1</sup>

Glen Clark, one of the leaders of Camps Farthest Out, has said:

Until we provide people with a technique for praying with their bodies as well as with their minds and souls, we are not going to draw the world singing and crowding into our churches.<sup>2</sup>

Through creative rhythms the individual has a means by which to practice the presence of God just as Brother Lawrence did in his work in the kitchen.<sup>3</sup>

#### (4) Deepened Spiritual Insight

Creative rhythms provide a means of emotional expression which deepens one's Christian experience.<sup>4</sup> One of the areas in which this is done is in the identification of the individual with the one who is being portrayed such as David, Moses, or Job. Christian experience is deepened by identity with the one the individual is portraying in the creative expression.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the individual by participating in rhythmic movement is aided in realizing his Christian experience in a new dimension. Then there is a lessening of intellectual attacks on his faith because he has not only

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, pp. 14,15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 13.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 4,8,12.
2. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 4, Clark quoted.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 11,16.
4. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 12.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, pp. 14,15.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 13.
5. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p. 14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, p. 8.

heard it in word but has experienced it in life.<sup>1</sup> Hence his Christian convictions become grounded through participation in symbolic movement.<sup>2</sup> Therefore through the art medium a spiritual growth can and may result because of the spiritual expression the individual has been able to experience. The individual receives spiritual strength, enrichment, and serenity through creative rhythms.<sup>3</sup>

(5) Stimulus to Christian Living

Fisk points out that through creative expression and interpretation there is a stimulus to Christian living. This art medium is good basic training for Christian citizenship.<sup>4</sup> When one participates in creative rhythms and in a rhythmic choir, especially, there is an avenue for one to be of service in the church.<sup>5</sup> Thus a strong basis for church loyalty results from this art medium because it provides an active participation in the church fellowship.<sup>6</sup>

E. Summary

In this study of the use of creative rhythms in Christian education the first step was to view its use in the church throughout

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 12.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," Internat'l Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p.13.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp.3,16.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," Internat'l Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, p.12.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp.3,4,25.
4. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 17.
5. Cf. ibid., p. 12.
6. Cf. ibid..

history. This revealed that religious dance has existed since the founding of the church. However, due to the rise of intellectualism and pagan influences sacred dance was prohibited in the church for a long time and is just now beginning to take its place again in the church along with the other arts.

In comparing the factors involved in creative rhythms in secular education with those in Christian education several differences and many similarities were found to exist. The terms in Christian education are more varied, such as, religious and sacred dance, symbolic movement and many combinations of terms using "rhythmic" in some form or another.

As in secular education, the body is the medium of expression but in Christian education the body is secondary to the spirit which motivates the movement of the body. Hence, the medium of expression was found to be called the body-soul technique of expression. The basic forms of rhythmic movement are primarily the same in both secular and Christian education. However the lift replaces the leap and many movements are done to exalt God, therefore, the movements of the hands, the eyes, the kneel, and the walk all have a particular form that is different from that used in secular education.

Variations in rhythmic movement in Christian education were found to be evolved from the same principles used in secular education. Likewise, rhythm when raised to an art form in secular and Christian education alike is then called dance.

In Christian education, it was noted, the voice is used for accompaniment to rhythmic movement the same as in secular education, except that generally the voice is used in reading scripture or singing hymns. Instruments are used for accompaniment to rhythmic movement in Christian education as in secular education; the piano, organ and percussion instruments are most frequently used.

Further study revealed that the values of creative rhythms found in secular education also exist in Christian education; Fisk, however, emphasizes the spiritual aspects of the use of the art medium. The values found to exist for the group are social growth, therapeutic aid, sharing of creations, group cooperation and vicarious spiritual experiences, while individual values disclosed personal enrichment, adjustment to personal problems and spiritual growth. There were several emphases noted under spiritual growth: through the use of creative rhythms the individual's spiritual growth increases in the learning of Bible content and hymns, in the development of selflessness, in fellowship with God, in deepening of spiritual insight and in the stimulus to Christian living.

CHAPTER III  
PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF CREATIVE RHYTHMS  
IN THE  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM



### CHAPTER III

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF CREATIVE RHYTHMS IN THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM

### A. Introduction

Chapter one of the thesis presents the findings on creative rhythms in secular education. Then chapter two is a comparison of the use of creative rhythms in Christian and secular education. Now in this chapter concrete suggestions will be given for the use of creative rhythms in Christian education. These suggestions may help one who is interested in using the art medium in Christian education to gain an understanding of how to start using creative rhythms.

First the qualifications of the leader will be discussed. This will enable those interested to have standards for discernment in securing a well-qualified leader. Following this a presentation on selection of materials for creative rhythmic interpretation will be undertaken, and lastly examples of creative rhythms at the various age levels will be disclosed.

As has been previously stated in the introduction to the thesis the works by Fisk will be the source for this chapter because she is the only recognized authority in the field.

B. Securing Leadership

1. Qualifications

a. Spirituality

The leader who is in charge of rhythmic movement in the Christian education program, particularly when the interpretation will be used for a worship service, has a great responsibility to those with whom he works. This is so because the leader teaches more through his own inner feeling than through any exact planned movements of worship. Characteristics of serenity, assurance, joy, outgoing concern, awareness, and devotion are all observed by the members of the group who have a sensitivity to the instructor's true inner spirit which is unconsciously revealed by the movement of the relaxed hands, the relaxed mouth, and the confiding tone of voice.<sup>1</sup>

A leader can not be chosen primarily because of technical talent and ability because he may lack insight to discern the art medium as an instrument of religious experience. Therefore the spiritual qualification is extremely important; that is, the leader needs to be sensitive to the need for dignity and beauty in a church. The leader should also understand the objectives of Christian education and thus endeavor to supply a spiritual ministry through the participating group which should sense the leader's religious concern

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, pp. 9,34.

in both the practice time and performance time.<sup>1</sup>

It is essential for the leader to have a dedicated soul in order that Christian creations may be produced for one can not produce what one does not feel. When Christ is in the soul of the leader by love and the individual lives with Christ then his work has all the potentialities to radiate true Christian beauty and truth.<sup>2</sup> Since it is difficult to be both an artist and a Christian a real Christian discipline confronts the leader in order to reconcile these two absolutes. The discipline, however, is obtainable when the leader does not try to sever his artistic life from his Christian life but rather unites them in the one purpose to glorify God.<sup>3</sup>

b. Creativeness

Since the sacred dance cannot be reproduced satisfactorily from a form already composed it should be choreographed by the group. However, to accomplish a choreographed dance, creativity on the part of the leader is especially essential. The leader should enjoy creating and experimenting with various movements and patterns so that the group too will be challenged to do likewise.<sup>4</sup> The leader should especially enjoy the creative work that goes into spiritual interpretation.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 31.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, p. 34.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 32.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp.31,32.
4. Cf. ibid., pp. 32,33.
5. Cf. ibid., p. 34

c. Enthusiasm

The leader must have enthusiasm for creative rhythms so that the group from him may also develop a deep interest and enthusiasm for it. He needs to be enthusiastic about all the details of a creative interpretation so that the finished result may be the very best.<sup>1</sup>

d. Training in Technical Matters

In selecting a leader to do creative rhythms in the vacation church school, for example, a person home from college or a mother who may have had some dance training would be advisable.<sup>2</sup> This is suggested because technical training is an essential requirement for the creative rhythms teacher so that the leadership will be of good quality. Because so many universities and colleges and even some large high schools offer courses in modern dance, the technique upon which rhythmic interpretation is built, it will not be too difficult to locate a person who has had some training in modern dance. There may even be a recent college graduate who is attending the church and would be willing to help out in this capacity of service, either for some special event, such as at Christmas time, or perhaps for an extended period of time.<sup>3</sup>

There is a great need for technically trained church workers in the art medium of rhythmic movement. It has even been

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," *Children's Religion*, June 1952, p. 17.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: *The Art of the Rhythmic Choir*, p. 33.

said that Schools of Religious Education and Theological Seminaries need to introduce courses in sacred dancing in their religious drama or music departments so that church leaders may be equipped with all the necessary techniques and may thus be able to produce<sup>1</sup> rhythmic creations.

## 2. Possibility of Co-operative leadership

Because of the need for more trained leaders in the field of religious dancing, and until this need can be supplied, Mrs. Fisk suggests: "it might be wiser to have a co-operative leader."<sup>2</sup> A leader in the church must admit that the art will be experimental, and that someone will be needed to help. Perhaps a college person or mother who has had a little training in dancing may not be the ideal instructor but her ideas, along with those of the participants and of the leader in charge will all be united into a worthwhile piece of work.<sup>3</sup> A step beyond this would be to have someone closely connected with the Christian education program who has an inner Christian experience work with a person skilled in the technique of modern dance. By a co-operative leadership of this type they could together present religious numbers that would not be possible otherwise. This type of leadership, of course, would be suggested only for directing a rhythmic choir which participates primarily in

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 33,34.

2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 33.

3. Cf. *ibid.*

Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," *Children's Religion*, June 1952, p. 17.

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worship services.

C. Selection of Materials for Use in Creative  
Rhythmic Interpretation

1. Hymns and Songs

Since Mrs. Fisk has worked principally with a rhythmic choir the greatest amount of suggestions for interpretation come in the area of hymns and songs because they are most often used for interpretation by the choir.

a. Hymn and Song Suggestions for Primaries

The hymns and songs for primary age children are of a simple nature and of course should be those from their own background in the church school. One useful song at Easter time is "Nature's Easter Song" which may also be used in the summer too by inserting that word in the refrain. Other suggested selections are "All Happy Birds of Spring," "Sleep, Little Seed," "'Tis Happy Easter Day," "The Seeds and Flowers are Sleeping Sound 'Till Easter Time," "Gracious Spirit, Dwell with Me," "For the Beauty of the Earth," and<sup>2</sup> "This is my Father's World."

b. Hymn and Song Suggestions for Juniors

Juniors can do interpretive movements to many of the selections suggested for primaries and then also for a great number of songs for just their own age group. "There's a Wideness in God's

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 33.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song," Children's Religion, April 1952, pp. 16,17.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 50,51.

Mercy" readily suggests stretching beyond their own finite confines into an awareness of the Infinite, and of stretching upward beyond earthly existence. Another one along that line is "In Christ There is No East or West." Further suggested hymns or songs for use with juniors are: "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," "A Day in the Temple," using Cesar Franck's music for Psalm 150, "Joy to the World," "Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness," "Gracious Spirit, dwell with me," and "ALL Creatures of our God and King."<sup>1</sup>

c. Hymn and Song Suggestions for Youth

The youth in their interpretation may use such numbers as "Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness," "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley," "The Lord's Prayer" by Malotte, "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind," "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me," "Take My Life and Let It Be," "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," and "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" Bach chorale. "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley" and "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" are particularly helpful in learning the worshipful walk and run respectively.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 51,52.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, pp. 8,9.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," Children's Religion, June 1952, pp. 16,17.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 8,11,14,16,38.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, pp. 12-14.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," Advance, Feb. 16, 1953, p. 14.

d. Hymn and Song Suggestions for the Rhythmic Choir

The rhythmic choir uses varying numbers. Such selections as "Holy Art Thou" by Handel; "O Holy Night" by Adolphe Adam; "Sanctus" by Gounod; "Worship the Lord" by Monsell; and "Psalm 150" by Cesar Franck are adaptable for processions.<sup>1</sup> Numbers that are slow and readily interpreted by the choir are as follows: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," Gregorian - Mason; "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" by Lowell Mason; "Ave Maria" by Schubert; "The Lord's Prayer" by Malotte; "Now Let Every Tongue Adore Thee" by Bach; "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" by Bach; "Agnus Dei" by Bizet; and "I Wonder as I Wander,"<sup>2</sup> Appalachian carol.

Numbers that have more musical variation and thus present more variation in rhythmic movement for the choir are as follows: "Cherubim Song" by Bortniansky; "Angels We Have Heard on High," carol; "Russian Easter Alleluia" by A. R. Gaul; "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" and "Alleluia" by Mozart; and "We Will be Merry - Alleluia" by Praetorius -<sup>3</sup> Marryott.

Music for dance - dramas from which the choir may interpret parts are: "Seven Last Words" by Theodore Dubois; "Ruth" by Cesar Franck; "The Planets" by Gustav Holst; "In the Beginning" by Aaron Copland; "Jeremiah Symphony" by Leonard Bernstein; and "Job" by<sup>4</sup> Roberta Bitgood.

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 43.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 43,44.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 44.
4. Cf. *ibid.*



The choir may during their practice sessions interpret many of the hymns that were suggested for youth, juniors, and primaries. Christmas carols are also readily interpreted by the choir and also by all age groups.

2. Psalms

The Psalms are a good source for interpretation by all age groups. Psalm 22 has a Polish-Jewish selection Eli, Eli based on it that is useful for children. Mrs. Fisk also suggests Psalms 23, 27, 100, 149, and 150 as being easy to use for interpretation.

3. Parables

The parables of the Bible take on new life when they are experienced through creative rhythmic movement. The parable of the Good Samaritan is easily interpreted even by primaries. The Lost Sheep, The Prodigal Son, and The Wise and Foolish Virgins all lend themselves to interpretation.

4. People of the Bible.

There are people in the Bible that may readily be used

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1. Cf. *ibid.*
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1953, p. 13.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, p. 8.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: *The Art of the Rhythmic Choir*, p. 45.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, p. 8.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: *The Art of the Rhythmic Choir*, pp. 53, 54.

for interpretation in creative rhythms. Scenes from the stories of Joseph, Daniel, and Ruth, are natural material for use and when interpreted these people take on new life for the performer. The lives of prophets also may be used in creative movement. Likewise the book of Job has been adapted for use and the writing about Boaz and David's life all have been used in rhythmic design.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. Other Bible Material

The Beatitudes are another source for use in rhythmic expression.<sup>2</sup> Then the love chapter, I Corinthians 13, may also be used for interpretation.<sup>3</sup> The creation narrative in Genesis provides material that may be used in symbolic movement.<sup>4</sup> Another interpretation may be worked about "The Three Marys" based on John 19:25.<sup>5</sup>

#### 6. Elements of Nature

For pre-school age children particularly the elements of nature are principally used for their rhythmic expressions. These are generally first talked about in the group to relate their creation to God. Then the children create their dances using them. Such things as raindrops, snowflakes, clouds, and sunbeams are used to portray weather. Then seeds, flowers, worms, cocoons or moths,

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, pp. 54, 76, 102, 103, 104.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, p. 8.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, p. 45.
4. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 53.
5. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.

butterflies, caterpillars, and birds of different types like the bluebird, robin, and cardinal are interpreted and used along with those things pertaining to weather to form a pattern or design by the children.<sup>1</sup>

#### D. Suggestions for Costumes

Children especially need something to aid them in their interpretations because it helps them to get over being self-conscious. Pre-school age children like to hold something in their hands. Crepe paper of varying colors may be used to help portray rain, snow, or wind. Or the crepe paper may represent streams of water from the rain or snow.<sup>2</sup> Bird wings may be made of cloth of the appropriate color for the birds being portrayed.<sup>3</sup> Colorful scarfs may be pinned on the children's collars in back to aid them in comprehending the change from cocoon to butterfly. The children hang on to the ends of the scarfs while portraying cocoons and let the scarfs trail behind them when they are portraying butterflies.<sup>4</sup> Long sticks may be used to symbolize trumpets when interpreting "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho."<sup>5</sup>

For the rhythmic choir of any age level Fisk recommends

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song," Children's Religion, April 1952, pp. 16,17.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1952, p. 9.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song," Children's Religion, April 1952, p. 16.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 17.
4. Cf. *ibid.*
5. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," Children's Religion, June 1952, p. 17.

the use of gowns or some uniform type of costume which gives the participants a feeling of self assurance.<sup>1</sup> The design of the costume should be that which will add to the simplicity, grace, and dignity of the members of the choir. The skirt of the costumes should be quite long and have enough fullness to add grace to the dancer's movements. The costumes may be made out of such materials as sateen, unbleached muslin, and poplin. For most worship numbers white is a practical color to use, and overdrapes of varying colors may be added to change the color effect and the design of the costume as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Costumes of blue and gold are also effective for worship numbers.<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Fisk describes the typical costume used by one of her choirs as having "a fitted waist, flared skirt, and long sleeves that are either wide at the wrist or gathered."<sup>4</sup>

#### E. Examples of Creative Rhythms at Various Age Levels

##### 1. Pre-school

Since a child's grasp of a thing comes through what he experiences in some form or another, it is possible to use this to teach them to know God who seemingly appears to be beyond their comprehension. As the children study God's creation they experience a joy which they associate with God.<sup>5</sup> The children in the spring start thinking about seeds in the ground so they curl up on the floor

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, p. 9.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: *The Art of the Rhythmic Choir*, p. 46.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 47.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
5. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Nature's Easter Song," *Children's Religion*, April 1952, p. 16.

to be seeds. Then on a rainy day they take turns being seeds and raindrops, the raindrops of course help the seeds to grow, thus the children that are seeds stretch out a little on the floor. The children that are raindrops may have crepe paper streamers to trail along to give the effect of rivulets or streams. Then some of the children may take yellow crepe paper and be sunbeams which also cause the seeds to grow, so the children that are interpreting the seeds begin to grow up into a plant above the ground. All the time the children are doing their interpretations they are singing or music appropriate for the mood is being played, thus aiding the children in creating movements that are harmonious. Birds may be added to the pattern; worms may come crawling out among the flowers; and some children may be caterpillars that break forth from their cocoons to become butterflies.

After the children have interpreted these various elements of God's creation then they may be seated and have prayer to thank Him for all He has made for them. Fisk writes regarding an experience of this sort: "Those brief moments when the child senses a wonder or fellowship beyond himself are the beginnings of worship experience."

## 2. Primary

Some of the younger primaries may enjoy doing creative

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1. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 16,17.
2. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, p. 9.

rhythms about elements of nature. Psalm 100 is appropriate to use with this age group.<sup>1</sup> The hymn "Gracious Spirit, dwell with me" has a stanza that is appropriate for symbolic expression. On the words "Silent Spirit, dwell with me I myself would silent be," the primary children may kneel or sit in their chairs with hands together and heads bowed. Then on the line "Quiet as the growing blade" they commence to reach up with their hands together in prayer position, as they think how quietly all plants grow. "Which through earth its way has made," leads them to continue raising their hands to eye level, and if in a sitting kneel to rise to a high kneel. Then "Silently as morning light" motivates the primaries to rise to a standing position with their arms lifted high up above their heads. Lastly "Putting mists and chills to flight" the children slowly let their arms down as they think of the wonder of dawn and sunlight.<sup>2</sup> Thus by this experience, without any theological discussion, the children have been refreshed by the time of quietness, of centering their thoughts on mystery, of reaching up in wonder, and of returning to their present day experiences.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Junior

In all the interpretations given, Mrs. Fisk stresses that they are only suggestions for a starting point and no matter what age, preschool or high school, the individual should be encouraged

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 9.
3. Cf. *ibid.*

continually to do his own interpretations. <sup>1</sup> Juniors especially enjoy interpreting Psalm 150 to Cesar Franck's music for the Psalm. The 23rd Psalm has also been interpreted by juniors, and this age group has done an interpretation of the Beatitudes. <sup>2</sup> "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" is a favorite of the children for doing creative movement. The group is divided in half. One half of the group form the battlemented wall of Jericho by stretching their arms out vertically at shoulder level and touch forearms of the ones on either side. The other half of the group are the trumpeters who blow their trumpets as they circle around the wall. For the first and second refrain "came tumbling down" is changed to "come tumbling down" and this allows a greater amount of interpretation by the children as the wall cracks, shakes, and begins falling apart. The trumpeters have more time for circling too, and then they stand victorious as the wall has collapsed at the close of the song. <sup>3</sup>

One suggestion Fisk makes for a group interpretation of "This Is My Father's World" is that the group move slowly in a circle as follows:

"and round me rings The music of the spheres" - those in the circle break into turning planets.  
"This is my Father's world" - circle design repeated  
"I rest me in the thought" - group kneels  
"Of rocks" - reach out widely as if encircling a rock  
"and trees" - look up, reach up, and rise  
"of skies - reach high, heads back

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1. Cf. *ibid.*
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8.
3. Cf. *ibid.*

Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," *Children's Religion*, June 1952, p. 17.

"and seas" - lower arms, hands turned down  
"His hand the wonders wrought" - look up, hands turned up, then  
lowered again on "wrought."<sup>1</sup>

In interpreting the "Good Samaritan" it should be kept in mind that time must be allowed for creating rhythmic patterns so that it will not be merely pantomime. There should be a special rhythm for the beating of the man and the man should have time for reactions of writhing and tossing in a rhythmic pattern. Then each of the three men who approach the wounded man should have distinctive walks. The wounded man should writhe in the intervals between the approach of each man who comes along. As the good Samaritan brings the wounded man to the inn the mood is set for a climax which automatically impels the children to identify themselves with the character and actions of the Samaritan.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Youth

Mrs. Fisk's suggestions for interpretation for youth deal mostly with presentations by a rhythmic choir. In interpreting the Polish-Jewish "Eli, Eli" which is based on Psalm 22 the group may start as a deep well of discouragement. This is done by being close together in a group, all reaching up, then lowering their arms into a pit of their own making. One person interprets the showing of the Torah and the salute to the Torah. Another interprets Christ on the

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Fellowship, Fun, and Freedom in Creative Movement," *Children's Religion*, June 1952, p. 17.
2. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk: *The Art of the Rhythmic Choir*, pp. 53, 54.  
Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Religious Expression Through Rhythm," *International Journal of Religious Education*, Feb. 1952, p. 8.



cross as he stands with arms extended while the rest of the group crouch low as he cries out "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Then the group continues to portray their growing faith which they know comes from God alone. They may sing a closing hymn like "Yea, the Lord is One" while they stand in a circle with arms raised and faces turned upward.<sup>1</sup> Youth enjoy interpreting "Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness," "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley," and "The Lord's Prayer" because these hymns have such a depth of feeling. Young people can enter into hymns such as these and thereby express their deepest feelings and desires.<sup>2</sup> The hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" has a stanza that is appropriate for rhythmic movement.<sup>3</sup> First, one is told to think of a concern they have and to place it imaginatively on their palms which are turned upward before them. Then to the words "Drop thy still dews of quietness" the head is slowly bent down and the arms are lowered as one commences to kneel and then on "'Till all our strivings cease." the individual lets go every tense muscle of neck, back, and arms and sinks to a low kneel with hands resting on the floor. Following this the line, "Take from our souls the strain and stress," suggests a movement of straightening up and the next line, "And let our ordered lives confess," brings on a movement of greater height so that one rises from a kneeling position

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1. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Spiritual Therapy Through Symbolic Movement," International Journal of Religious Education, Feb. 1953, pp. 13, 14.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 12, 13.
3. Cf. Margaret Palmer Fisk, "Let Your Faith Help You Relax," *Advance*, Feb. 16, 1953, pp. 14, 15.

to a standing position with arms raised upward. Lastly on "The beauty of thy peace." One just lets the arms down slowly until they rest at one's sides while one continues to have one's vision focused high.

#### F. Summary

This chapter purposed to present practical suggestions for a program of creative rhythms in Christian education. In order to use creative rhythms effectively in the Christian education program it was found that qualified leadership is essential. One of the leading qualifications for effective leadership is found to be spirituality. This is important so that the leader may project to the group that attitude of worship and adoration of God that is so necessary in the art. The leader must have a personal relationship to Christ. Other suggested qualifications were creativeness and enthusiasm. These are necessary on the part of the leader so that he may elicit from the group these same characteristics which are so essential if a truly original rhythmic design is to be produced. Lastly it was noted that the leader needs to be qualified in technical training. That is, the leader should know modern dance technique because creative rhythms are based on it. However, there are few people in the church who are technically trained in this field. Religious education schools are only beginning to offer religious dance in their curriculum. Thus, an alternate plan has been suggested by Mrs. Fisk. The plan is to use a technically trained

trained person along with a church leader. This combination is called co-operative leadership.

The greatest amount of material that was suggested for rhythmic interpretation was found to be hymns or songs. Specific suggestions were given for primaries, juniors, youth, and the rhythmic choir. The Psalms were noted to be another source of useful material for creative interpretation, also the parables. It was disclosed that people of the Bible take on real life for children as they interpret such characters as David, Joseph, Daniel, and Job, as well as others. Furthermore it was disclosed that the Beatitudes, the Creation narrative, the love chapter, I Corinthians 13, and the "Three Marys" based on John 19:25 are other Bible materials that are adaptable for rhythmic expression. Lastly it was found that for pre-school age children the elements of nature are most appropriate for them to use in creating patterns.

Several examples were found for varying age levels. An account was given of pre-school age children interpreting in detail the weather elements combined with growing flowers, flying birds, crawling worms, and shedding cocoons. For the primaries an illustration of the hymn "Gracious Spirit, dwell with me" was given in full. For the juniors an example of how to interpret "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" was given. Another illustration for junior level was the portrayal of "This Is My Father's World." The parable of the "Good Samaritan" was another illustration found to be applicable for juniors. Then for youth an interpretation of Psalm 22 was given.

Lastly, the hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" was found to have movement suggestions that would be useful for youth.

CHAPTER IV  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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A. Summary

In this study a survey was made of the factors and values in creative rhythms in secular education. These were compared with those in Christian education. This was done to discover how the medium of expression could more fully be used in the Christian education program. Since the main concern for the thesis was in the area of bodily movement the main leading secular authorities consulted for that area were Waterman, Martin, Dixon and DeLima, while Fisk was the only authority to consult in Christian education.

A survey of the primary sources of creative rhythms in secular education was made as a background for the study in Christian education. In secular education the art was found to be relatively new and was generally combined with the other arts in the curriculum for the teaching of it. Secular education has defined the terms for the art, which is most generally referred to as rhythmic movement. Next in the study basic forms of movement were noted and following this, combinations of rhythmic movement were disclosed. It was found that the voice and instruments of all kinds are used for accompaniment to the movements. In secular education the values found for the group were: vicarious experiences, group consciousness, sharing of experiences, sharing of emotional capacities, and lessening of differences. The principal value for the teacher

was noted to be the insight and understanding acquired about the pupils. Lastly the individual values of crystallization of learning, understanding of self, enrichment of self, and expressing of self were revealed.

With this established, a survey of the book and magazine articles on the use of creative rhythms in Christian education was undertaken. The findings in Christian education were compared with those in secular education. In the survey it was disclosed that religious dance has existed since the Church began and even before that in Old Testament times. Christian education has more terms than secular education because of the religious element. The basic forms of movement in Christian education are similar to those in secular education. The movements of the hands, the eyes, the kneel, the lift, and the walk are all added or changed from secular education so that a feeling of exaltation may be produced. The study found that the rhythmic variations in Christian education are formed on the same basis as those in secular education. That is, rhythmic variations are produced by variation in time, variation in intensity, and variation in space pattern. The accompaniment in secular and Christian education is the same, except that the voice is generally used for reading scripture or singing in Christian education, whereas in secular education it may be used to produce any audible sound. The values for creative rhythms in Christian education are the same as those in secular education besides all the many spiritual types of values. For the group the values are social growth, therapeutic aid, sharing of creations, group

cooperation, and vicarious spiritual experiences. The individual values are personal enrichment; adjustment to personal problems; and spiritual growth which consists of learning of Bible content and hymns, development of selflessness, fellowship with God, deepened spiritual insight, and stimulus to Christian living.

On the basis of these two surveys, and their comparison, the third chapter of the thesis gave practical suggestions for use of creative rhythms. First the necessary leadership qualifications were found to be spirituality, creativeness, enthusiasm, and training in technical matters. Co-operative leadership was discussed as a possible alternative plan if no trained leader were available in the church. For material for use in creative interpretation, it was noted that Mrs. Fisk depended most on hymns and songs for nearly all of the age groups. The Psalms, the parables, the people of the Bible, and elements of nature were also found to be adaptable for interpretation in creative rhythms. Several suggestions were noted for use in costuming. Lastly, examples of creative rhythms at various age levels were discussed.

#### B. Conclusion

From the study it was noted that creative rhythms are an effective art medium to be used in the church program. The values for the use of it in Christian education far exceed those in secular education. However, by comparing the use of the art in Christian education with that in secular education it was revealed that all the areas for its use have not begun to be utilized by



Christian education. At present the greatest development for the use of rhythmic interpretation in the church has been in the area of the rhythmic choir, while classroom use of it has been almost totally ignored.

The medium may be readily used in vacation Bible school where the children are present for a much longer period of time than for the Sunday morning classes. Then in day camps and regular camps creative rhythms may be used extensively to enrich the program. Youth greatly enjoy expressing themselves more completely through this medium. Therefore the use of it could be adapted for youth meetings or a special creative rhythms group could be organized for those interested in learning and developing this art.

Creative rhythms very definitely afford opportunity for learning by doing, thus may be used to impart many of the facts the teacher all too often labors to put across by verbal teaching only. More Old Testament and New Testament character portrayals, missionary experiences, and incidents from church history may be used as content for interpretation. Christian education needs to acknowledge the many values for the individual and group that may be derived through the use of this medium. Although Christian education has been slow in acknowledging the values in the past, only when the art is encouraged and tried by the key leaders in each church will this awareness to its values be completely awakened.

These facts are borne out by statements by authorities in the field of religious education or theology regarding the work of Mrs. Fisk with the rhythmic choir. Ralph Douglas Hyslop, Professor

of Historical Theology, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California  
says:

A new understanding of freedom of worship is imparted by Margaret Fisk and the Rhythmic Choir. More important than any words about worship is the experience of this freedom and its fruits. I have seen no experience comparable to that gained through participation in this program.<sup>1</sup>

"I rejoice in Margaret Fisk's portrayal of worship through body, mind<sup>2</sup> and spirit. It projects grace, reverence and joy." was said by Margaret Applegarth. Likewise Roy Burkhart has commented, it "...is especially important today when people are reached more by what they see than by what they hear."<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion one finds that creative rhythms are worthy of further experimentation in the Christian education program. Through a broader use of the art in the Christian education program the medium of expression will prove itself.

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1. The Rhythmic Choir, The First Congregational Church, Tacoma Washington, (folder).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

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