

## CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT

### **MUSIC AND SPIRITUAL UPLIFTMENT: THE EXPERIENCE OF ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ASABA, DELTA STATE**

Peter O. Onyemaechi Okojih

#### Abstract

Music as a spiritual upliftment has been in existence since ancient times. It is an art form and a universal gift. It is credited to Jubal the father of musical instruments. As a necessary aspect of worship, the Anglican Diocese of Asaba has experienced unprecedented growth both in spiritual and numerical strength. As the power of music remains irresistible in soul winning, this article is to emphasize the importance of music in the uplifting of souls of worshipers within the study area. This publication made use of the qualitative research approach and content analysis is used throughout this article. The means or method of data collection made use of one on one oral interviews and focus group discussions. The findings were drawn from the analysis of resource materials and the discussion of participants. The result of the research finding indicated that music is a branch of Christian Worship that influences the lives of the congregation of the children of God. The conclusion and recommendation are made based on the research findings.

**Keywords:** Music, Worship, Spiritual upliftment, Anglican Diocese of Asaba.

#### Introduction

Music is an art form, a universal gift, created by organizing pitch, rhythm, and a collection of sounds made using musical instruments and sometimes singing, is usually pleasing and interesting to hear or listen to. It is interesting; most importantly to note that music did not start in the present age. It has been in existence since ancient times. Its power to connect people is without question. In the book of Genesis, Jubal is credited with being the father of musical instruments. He achieved this position through King David, who is said to be the sole initiator of orchestration. In the early days of the prophets, music was also very crucial and instrumental to the prophetic ministry. It is, therefore, given this assertion that Pinmiloye (2018) asserts that “the music institution and performances were further developed with the three Levites leaders: Herman, Asaph and Ethan/Jeduthun alongside Clenaniah one of their students” (p. 2). All these were well understood and articulated in the Old Testament times.

In a similar line of thought, Daw (2020) opines that music may be part and parcel of God's existence since theologically; it has been proven that music is part of God's worship. It is as a result of the above assertion that Still (2022) declares that the purpose of church worship would be defeated if the music does not form part of worship in any congregational gathering of the children of God. Brewer (2016) further stresses that the centrality and importance of music in church worship cannot be underestimated as music forms, and remains an integral part of worship. He concludes that majorly, there exists, four purposes of music in any form of worship and these include, the role of music in teaching humankind more about the scripture; the role of

music in connecting humankind to the Supreme Being; the role of music in enabling humankind to express love to the Almighty who is the Ultimate Being; and the role of music in helping humanity to fulfil the Supreme Being's commandment.

The United Methodist Church (2007) in its annual report, also affirms the importance of music in worship. The report asserts that music makes a worshipper feels very much at home during church worship. Adarkwa (2015), also states that music always penetrates the soul of human beings and touches the core of the human religious experience. He, however, stresses that it could be a source of division in any congregation if it is not properly organized and managed by those who are involved in music-making.

The main purpose of this study is to emphasize the importance of music in uplifting the souls of the 21st-century worshippers during service in the Anglican Diocese of Asaba, Delta State of Nigeria and to find out from participants, the role music plays in the spiritual upliftment of the human soul. The qualitative research approach and content analysis are used throughout this article. The means or method of data collection will be one on one oral interviews and focus group discussions. Thus, participants or discussants within the study area will be engaged in oral discussions of the role music plays in the spiritual upliftment of worshippers within the Diocese of Asaba, Delta State. The findings will be drawn from the analysis of resource materials and discussion of participants and the conclusion and recommendations will be made based on the research findings.

### **The Historical Antecedence of Music in Christian Worship**

As stated earlier, Jubal, the son of Lamech is said to be the father of all those who play musical instruments. Majorly instruments such as Lyre and Pipe were the earliest musical instruments. In Genesis chapter four verse twenty-one (Gen. 4:21), one is made to understand that scripturally, Jubal was the inventor of music. Much later in the history of the Israelites, one sees the role David, the king of Israel played in developing music as well. He was not only seen as a great king but also as a great musician. He wrote most of the psalms which mainly hymns and songs were of praises that endeared him to God. Adarkwa (2015) notes that historically, “the close of the Old Testament era was characterized by apostasy, idolatry, and unbelief. This apostasy was evidenced in their singing. The joyful songs of Moses and Miriam, Deborah, David, Asaph, Chenaniah and Solomon were heard no more. Musical instruments were seldom used in synagogue worship” (p. 2). He further notes that during this era, there was decreased spirituality and musical instruments were not used in most religious gatherings and the synagogue. Only priests were using music at the time. This further reduced spirituality and religious commitment by the lay Faithful.

Aason (2021) states that the centrality of music in the history of Christianity is of utmost importance as well. He avers that “Christian singing was part of religious worship that was experienced in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. (Mark, 14:26)”(p.27). Much later, Paul and Silas sang and worship God while they were jailed in Acts 16:25. Other passages that showed that Paul saw music as a part of religious worship were: first Cor. 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; and Col. 3:16. This shows that historically, the first century Christians used many hymns and songs during religious worship.

Adarkwa (2015) and Aason (2021) all agree that the second and third centuries witnessed a sharp decline as there was a reduced and decreased application of the use of music during worship in this era. Both scholars affirm the fact that this decreased worship cum the usage of music in these

ages, that is, the second and third centuries were basically because of cultural hostilities toward the Christian faith. The duo also declares that when Emperor Constantine made Christianity a general religion of the empire, there was a resurgence and rebirth of the use of music again in Christian worship. Adarkwa (2015) notes that “the medieval church produced songs that are still in use today; nevertheless, the freedom of corporate singing in the church was short-lived” (p.5).

Webber (2013) writing on music and its impact during the Byzantine tradition was “thought to be a direct descendant of the music used in the synagogue during the life of Jesus Christ. The orthodox have a very high, almost sacramental view of music, believing that it is a window to heaven” (p.3). Music is, therefore, intrinsic and crucial to the liturgy of the church, since it is usually used to express the liturgical text. This was the reason why the Greek Orthodox church adopted music in its worship as well.

Furthermore, music again had another drawback. Thus, was, according to Adarkwa (2015) by the turn of the fifteenth century. By this time, the use of music, that is, either hymns or songs as it were by the laity in the church was banned. Adarkwa avers thus: “The council of Constance in A.D. 1415 ordered the burning of John Huss at the stake also decreed: 'if laymen are forbidden to preach and interpret the scripture, much more are they forbidden to sing publicly in the church'” (p.7). It was, however, until the Reformation period organized by the Protestants that music was restored to congregational worship. It is on records, according to Adarkwa that “the earliest Protestant Hymn Books were published by the Bohemian Brethren, (who later came to be known as the Moravian Brethren) in 1501 and 1505 respectively” (p.8).

One of the lasting legacies of the Reformation was that Martin Luther loved music and everything about the Reformation was a liberation that includes music and liturgy as well. In this era, Martin Luther's influence on songs/hymns was remarkable, since he had good training in music quite early in his life. Jover (2019) writes:

Luther was well trained in music. He wrote and composed music that was the favourite of the common people of his day. His works were so effective that one of his enemies wrote that Luther's songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches. Luther was a specialist in choral music (p.87).

Hergess (2020) adds that Martin Luther's hymns “were marked by a simple melody, a strong harmony and a stately rhythm” (p.14). Another force to reckon with during the Reformation period was John Calvin. Zooms (2014) opines that singing psalms and not hymns are more appealing to God. He was of the view that hymns are manmade and hence artificial, but psalms are God's inspiration and uplift the soul of humankind unto the divine. As time passed, music was perceived differently. In contemporary times, for instance, music, especially from or within the Christian fold, has been challenged as a result of changing cultural values and systems. Thomas (2020) argues that there is nothing wrong with those remarkable changes as some people would have us criticize them. He, therefore, argues thus:

What some of the critics are not aware is that Luther, Calvin, Bach, Charles Wesley, and Isaac Watts songs which have become traditional today used to be contemporary in their time. They also received similar criticism; but they did not give up, because they wanted to reach the unchurched people in their culture. (p.31).

Despite these changes in music in the contemporary time, here in Africa, especially after Vatican II, much of the church also changed after the missionaries brought Christianity to Africa by the Europeans and North Americans. This western form of music was welcomed but later changed to suit the Africans. Webber (2013) argues that the missionaries brought music and other forms of church worship, but sooner or later, this was changed to reflect indigenous approaches and practices Africans gradually developed their forms of music and worship. He further emphasizes that the instruments used by Africans were unique and quite different as compared to their European counterparts. This is most especially conspicuous in many Independent African Churches. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries African Churches, therefore, new forms were also noticed. Webber writes: "Along with a return to biblical authority, we have seen a revival of Reformation worship forms and practices, including even neo-baroque organ design" (p.52).

### **The Centrality of Music and Church Worship**

Music in any Christian worship remains an integral and instrumental aspect of devotion. The instrumentality and centrality of music during worship cannot, therefore, be underestimated. In Christian worship, music helps worshippers to fulfill their commitments to God. It is in music that humankind fulfills its divine command to obey God. Brewer (2016) writes, "Throughout scripture, we are commanded to sing. Within the Psalms, we read, "I...go around your altar, O Lord, proclaiming thanksgiving aloud". Psalm 26:6-7 reads, 'Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre and the sound of melody" 98:5, and serve the Lord with gladness come into his presence with singing, psalm 100:2 (p.2). Moreover, he declares that God calls us to sing praises to the Lord and to sing in His presence. In the New Testament, St. Paul urges all Ephesians' Christians and other Christian brethren to be filled with the spirit of God and address one another in psalms and hymns. If we do this, Paul says that we would be doing God's command.

Given this, many discussants in one focus group discussion conducted on the (22nd of March, 2022) agree that music is a commandment by God. They all accepted the fact if the music was not commanded by God, He would not have allowed it to form part of worship. Some of the participants who were individually interviewed also believed that music is a command given by God and which must be obeyed by human beings. Some elders of the Anglican Church, who were interviewed in Asaba, wholeheartedly agreed that without music in religious worship, the service would be as boring as a graveyard.

In another focus group discussion, selected 100 men leaders were asked about the relevance of the centrality of music in Christian worship. They all responded by saying that church service would be without spirituality and divinity if music is taken away from the church service. It is in line with this assertion that Jordan (2017) argues that for one to experience fully, the divine presence of God and the essence of true religious worship, music should form 40% or 50% of the congregational worship. Hawett (2018), however, argues that if worship forms forty per cent of church service, then the believers will experience the flow of the spirit of God in their midst.

In another focus group discussion conducted (21st March 2022) discussants, all agreed that for one to fully experience the grace of God and His power during service, then music is as important as the scripture since both go hand-in-hand. Music during church service elevates and uplifts one into the next realm, they said. They also express their views on the centrality and instrumentality of music during worship, saying that music helps us to be united with God in worship. Music, they said liberates the hearts and takes away all the burdens of human suffering, sickness, tiredness and stress of life. Music in any church worship raises our hopes in God and strengthens

our faith in God and His capacity to intervene in all human inadequacies.

### **Music and Divine Connection**

Right from the time of the Old Testament, prophets and other people of God use music to connect with the divine being. Music is a unique means of connecting with the divine being. Brewer (2016) argues that one of the reasons why people believe that music connects people with the divine being is because music purifies the soul of humankind. Kirkhegaard (2018) further declares that music does not only purify one's soul, it unites one's soul with the Supreme Being. Participants in another focus group discussion also affirm the fact that music lessons one's worldly entanglement and takes away worries, thereby, exposing people and allowing their minds and spirit to connect and unite with God in another realm.

In another focus group discussion conducted on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, 2022, participants also affirm that music connects people to God in a special way. Some of them said that they feel unconnected whenever the service is conducted without music. Emphasizing that some parts of the service, for example, a long and boring sermon could make people or parishioners interested. They further stated that when such boring sessions of the service are experienced, people usually turn on their mobile telephones and would start chatting on various social media platforms and/or playing games with their phones. From the foregoing, it is therefore obvious that at moments like this, the pastor/priest just has to do something to change the mood or atmosphere. It is, therefore, music that can connect people back to God, especially during church worship or service. The participants also said that over 70% of parishioners love music and affirm that music connects them to the Divine Being.

### **The Revelation of the Supreme Being through Music**

People often ask if God reveals Himself to humankind through music. Yes, He does. Otherwise, there would be no mention of songs or music in the Holy Bible. There are over twenty-seven, if not more scriptural passages on music. According to the Bible Study Too (2021), carnal Christians do not experience the presence of God through any means including music. It further states that God made humankind in such a manner that He endowed us with the ability to sing and make music. If God did not reveal Himself to humankind through music, there would not have been any mention of music in the sacred text. Some of these passages reveal the Supremacy of God as the rock of our salvation (psalm 95:1). Some reveal how His subjects sing his praises with psalms and song (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 2:12; Ps. 71:23). Some reveal how God has saved His people in times of danger or bondage (Exo. 15:1; Psalm. 105:2; Psalm 49:4; Psalm 101:1; Psalm 150:1-5 and many more). All these passages reveal one quality or the other about God that makes His subjects render praises to Him.

### **Music and Prayer Life**

Music forms an integral part of worship. In my local parish, for example, it was during the pandemic that one would better understand and appreciate the role of music in church worship. During that, the sale of local music CDs surged greatly because many people were not allowed to gather, since the government prohibits social gatherings at that time because of the rapid spread of the pandemic. Music became an alternative form of private worship. Whenever put calls across most of our parishioners, they acknowledged the fact that they were Christian music most time at home and in their ships and workplaces. They also acknowledged that Christian music has helped them in their prayer lives. Little wonder it is often said that he that sings, prays twice.

Shirely (2019) affirms that music is a wonderful spice to boost our prayer life. If you feel distressed or unable to pray, Music is the solution, because when you start singing, your spirit

will be uplifted to another level, thereby helping you to pray better. In psalm 96:1, music is seen as a prayer in that passage of the scripture. Songs work a lot of wonders because (song) breaks many yolks. The experience of Paul and Silas in the prison and the experiences of other prisoners in the cell is a case in point (Acts 16: 25). She further states that “music has an amazing ability to speak to our hearts and minds like no other communication” (p. 2). More so, “it has been shown to help create new pathways in the brain for communication for those left without speech after illness or injury; it becomes deeply linked to memory and emotion” (p.2).

Jude (2009) adds that music communicates with our divine Being in such a way that one's mind would not. He avers that he loves music because it helps one communicate freely with God and opens up one's spirit. Wittenberg (2016) in a similar line of thought declares that music enhances one's prayer life. He agrees that while prayer is a necessary part of worship, music is certainly an indispensable and distinct element of the worship of God that cannot be ignored or neglected during worship. Moen (2020) in a YouTube video released two years ago says that music helps one in his/her quiet time. It boosts meditation says the songwriter and endears God to us when we sing praises to Him. It increases the span of our prayer and according to some discussants who were interviewed on the 22nd of March, 2022, they opine that music helps one to stay more and spend more time in the presence of God. A good example is during our Annual Open Heaven Conference, Monthly Diocesan Prayer Assembly, Youth Organization Conference and numerous events, organized within the Diocese.

In another focus group discussion, participants all agreed that music unites one with the Divine Being and it attracts divine mercy from God. It brings about divine healing during service. Music also brings about corporate spiritual upliftment and testimonies among parishioners in the Anglican Diocese of Asaba, Delta State. It also helps in the fulfilment of God's command. Music brings about an understanding of God's word. Participants also agreed that music helps to expand the church.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has examined the role and instrumentality of music in spiritual upliftment among parishioners in the Anglican Diocese of Asaba, Delta State. The meaning of music has been examined and its history has been carefully traced from Jubal, who is said to be the father of musical instruments as far back as found in the book of Genesis. Scholars who have stated the various stages of the growth of music have been cited adequately, tracing the historical antecedence of music from antiquity to the present day style of music. Results of findings from the available literature and participants who were interviewed showed that music remains an integral part of church worship among parishioners of the Anglican Diocese of Asaba Delta State, Nigeria.

One major recommendation among others is that parishioners should endeavour to make use of music during their personal and corporate worship. Since music has been affirmed to work wonders, Christians are encouraged to use it in difficult times since it brings miracles and endears us to God and vice versa.

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