

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE**

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### **CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS MUSIC: A BALM TO THE MEMBERS**

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#### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the religious music as being medicinal and having the same root with religion. It can unleash feelings that are so difficult to capture in words. It discusses music as being part of man's life and as an art that is deeply rooted in human nature. The paper also looked at religion as an integral system of value-oriented, beliefs and ritual practices which play a very important role in man's life in the society. Religion has the basic characteristics of creed, code, ritual, myth and symbol. It also discusses the link between Christian worship and music, that before any proper worship begins, praise, worship, singing of songs/hymns are the preliminary steps often which one can go into other areas of worship. It, therefore, concludes that music and Christianity/Christian worship are inseparable friends that go hand in hand as music is an enhancer to any religion.*

**Keywords:** Music, religion, Christian religious worship and healing

#### **Introduction**

Music and religion have the same root and they are medicinal; they can unleash feelings that are difficult to capture in words. When singing, one may feel like he/she is in a trance. Music can exercise a kind of magnetic pull, with its notes taking root in the subconscious experiences of man. Music and religion go beyond man's every day spiritual running through the course of human history. Religious music serves as a language for giving expression to sorrow, and jubilation, meditation and ecstasy. It touches in such a way that makes people feel the momentary presence of something that transcends the boundaries of captivity in the world. Music and religion have a great significance in which many people draw meaning and purpose from. Some people do satisfy religious urges through the medium of music. Music and religion are means of accessing the invisible, unseen and untouchable what is beyond what man can comprehend. They both refer to the Almighty God, the divine, one which is called holy. Music has been men's medium of communication with its divinity/divinities. The origin of both music and religion swing between two poles: the belief in a reality that is essential and independent of an observer and a view that neither music nor religion exists on its own.

#### **The Concept of Music**

Music is derived from man's ingenious creativity and the essence of it is to express his feelings to his fellow man in society. The purpose of music is to enable him (men) understand his past and contribute to the shaping of the present and the future; he expresses and documents himself, his feelings, hopes, aspirations, disappointments, sufferings and joys through the various media of the arts, such as music. This means that in the community where a man belongs, man uses music to relate with the different group members of that community. Music arouses, reinforces, stimulates, and commemorates social commitment

to a cause as well as individual commitment to the general good, (Agu, 2006). Such music inspires or erupts from the emotions or was generated by the moment. According to Adesokan (2001), music is a connecting line between cultural value and political life. That is to say that music is a vital medium of communication that contributes immensely to the retaining and persistence of the political system. To Adesokan, music is thus an indispensable medium for achieving societal change or social reconstruction in Nigeria: Otite and Ogionwu (1979) refers to social reconstruction as social change which is the alteration, rearrangement or total replacement of a phenomenon, activity, value or process through a succession of events. Agu, (2006) has it that, "music is part of life, and that it is an art that is deeply rooted in human nature" (p.169). According to him, Music is the art of combining vocal or instrumental sound or tone in various melodious harmony, rhythm to form structurally complete and emotionally expressive compositions. Music according to Sofola (1984) acts as a stimulant or tranquillizer for a people to harness their potentials towards a collective social development. As a tranquillizer, music can function to bring about peace and calm in conflict. Music, according to Apel (1973) is derived from the Greek word music which originally means the art or technique of all cultural endeavours. Music raises many issues of social importance within society. Schwarts (1990) affirms music to be the art of combining and arranging tones or sounds together in orderly manners to make a complete unit which has the beauty of form intending to communicate some emotions. It is seen as one of the most needed means of spreading information on humans thought, norms and values, traditions, emotions and ideas.

Willoughby (2007), opines that all music includes the elements of sound and time, but the nature of music involves much more. He considers the following three ways we can think about the nature of music: "Music is sound that is pleasing to the ear". Most of us respond well to sounds that we like. But if pleasing means only "pretty or beautiful", then this definition excludes a great deal of music. Music can be noisy, loud. Music can be pleasing to you but not to others. "Music is sound and silence organized in time". This is objected because it includes all music from any place at any time, but it avoids the subjective. Someone listening to music that may seem noisy, displeasing and ugly may think: "To my ear, this is not music". Subjective in the sense of taste, judgment and personal education. "Music is sound that you want to hear as music" sound that is not organized in some fashion typically cannot be called music. The chirping of birds can be music cause the sound is pleasing.

### **The Concept of Religion**

According to Kanu (2006), religion is an integral system of value-oriented, beliefs and ritual practices which play a very important role in any given society. This is to say that every society (community builds up its religion). The aspect of these religions include belief in God belief about God's relationship with the world, and holy places of the community dedicated to God Nmah (2012) says that "Religion provides mankind with moral values by which to live. No society can exist without morale. Every religion whether Christianity Islam, African Traditional Religion or any other has moral values which regulate and

harmonize human life” (p.176).

According to Yinger (1969) in Obiefuna (2018), he affirms that all religions have the basic characteristics of creed, Code virtual, myth, symbol and community which are in the main, operationalized by humans. These three components of religion, creed, code and ritual authenticate every religion or make every religion what it is in nature. Religion according to Obiefuna (2018) emanates from the uncertainties associated with existence. The origin, existence (sustenance) of humans and the rest of creation has been mind-bugging. The only explanation appears to be anchored in the belief and understanding that there must be a being other than humans, transcendent, responsible for all that exists.

### **Music and Religion**

The first thing to note is that music and religion are inseparable. Both music and religion co-exist. There is music in every religion and every religion co-exist with music. In religion, prayer has been present in our singing all along. Kroeker (2005) taught that the sheer number of words and the stanzas of ordered thought tend to obscure the recognition that while we are singing, we are also praying. Music in religion can be in the form of hymns, worship and praises which every religion cannot do without. Kroeker also maintains that it is the hymns, repeated over and over again that form the container of much of our faith. In every religion, singing in the style of one culture, raising voices in sung prayer creates a parable of oneness. Music pose is part and parcel of worship in a religion. Many times, worship does not begin without praising the person you want to commune with, you know who God is and that He likes and enjoys being worshipped and praised, so most times, before any worship proper begins, praise worshipping and singing of songs are the first steps after which one can go into other areas of worship. Religious music is written for liturgical worship in church services. Religion has had a significant impact on singing and worshipping. It has caused religions to give more careful consideration to how much of their music in worship methodology has been shaped by culture rather than scripture and how they can recover believers' worship that had been lost in many religions.

In the early Christian tradition, as with many other religions, one had to be careful with their use of music. If early Christians considered music a pleasure capable of distracting them from their relationship with God, then the impact music had in people of this time must have been significant. Many religions agreed that the sin of music is taken away when it is used for worship putting religious text to music allows for a more involved worship experience, incorporation song performance skills that give the performer and the listener a heightened sense of praise. In this way, music can be used as a tool for praise that is appealing to the worshiper. Music has a way of filling in the gaps in thought, feeling and emotion that words cannot do justice, which can be incredibly powerful when accompanied by a spiritual belief. Using music for religious reasons also gave early humans the ability to experience and explore the tantalizing effects of music without sinning. In the present day, music is used much widely and for purposes other than worship which has allowed religious music to grow

and expand into many types of praises that have a wider impact on many people. Music is a nearly universal part of the religion because it appeals to and heightens human senses in a pleasurable way which, in turn, allows human to praise through a medium that makes worship more enjoyable. The use of music in religion or as an adherent of religion makes one feel an inner joy and relief which in worshipping praising or singing hymns. Agu (1990) observes that:

Among the Igbo, music and religion go hand in hand. The power of music was fully recognized by the people and they never failed to utilize this effectively. In society, there was a strong belief in the use of songs in achieving control of powers. Songs of supplications, songs of spirits, melodic innovations, magic songs, songs for curing and in fact, songs for every aspect of life. These songs often used to achieve various desires (p.50).

This is not limited to traditional religion but also extends to other religious worship. Music in religion can also come in various forms; it may appear in the form of hymns, anthems, choruses or canticles as the case may be. The basic fact is that it must be liturgical or sacred in the sense that the words must be drawn from the religious sacred book.

### **Conclusion**

Music and religion are inseparable friends that go hand in hand and music is an enhancer to religion. The power of music in worship transports people's spiritual state beyond expectation, especially with the current trend of free expression in worship. Religious gospel music has intermingled so much with other genres that one cannot draw an appropriate line of a difference anymore. Many pop musicians have been forced to go gospel as a result of the patronage it enjoys. The intermingling of all other genres with music is what Okafor (2002) has astutely titled "Vintage in new bottles, packaging, and repacking our musical culture" (p. 38). Music dishes out incisive comments ranging from praises and criticisms, innovation and incantation, to satirize and laments about the good, the bad and the ugly events in the society. And most often, messages conveyed in music have made serious impacts on the lives of the people. It is no secret that music exalts the human spirit and calms down frayed nerves.

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