

**ADVOCACY FOR CONTEXTUALIZATION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN  
AFRICA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Though Christianity is the biggest religion in Africa (Johnson, 2018) its liturgy remains predominantly Western. Religion being a link between a community and its deity must be authentic and contextualized for it to have meaning. The introduction of Christianity and the damnation of the African culture by early missionaries, has contributed to the current worship style that can only truly be defined as foreign. Consequently, there has been retrogression over time of positive traditional worship practices that otherwise contribute to an authentic African liturgy. This paper seeks to demystify the notion that the African culture and its worship is entirely based on pagan practices and therefore void of emulative practices that can be used to enhance and contextualize worship. It seeks to illuminate the role that music plays in liturgy and worship within the African context. The method adopted for this study is qualitative and comparative approach. This study elucidates the fact that Africans are religious and contextualization of worship enhances and authenticates worship. It is a call on elite African musicians to educate church leaders and congregants on the need for contextualized worship based on idioms inherent within the African culture and worship. Recommendations on the incubation of contextualized African worship models; for both religious leaders and church musicians has therefore been made an integral part of this study.*

**Keywords:** Liturgy, Western, Deity, Contextualize, Authentic, Pagan

**INTRODUCTION**

Community life in Africa is all inclusive and participatory. Inculcation of societal norms and cultural beliefs are engrained from birth through daily and perennial participatory activities - that might be assigned to specialized agencies in industrialized societies - from farming, hunting, story-telling, pounding, games, herding, initiations and other ceremonies (Nketia 1974, p. 21). Clearly put by Chinua Achebe (1994), "A man who

calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so.” This spirit demonstrates that Africanism in totality is a sure confirmation of the collective spirit that identifies Africa.

The rise of Ubuntu is another indication of the participatory nature of communal living in Africa. An African is not a rugged individual, but a person living within a community. Khomba (2011) notes that in a hostile environment, it is only through such community solidarity that hunger, isolation, deprivation, poverty and any emerging challenges can be survived, because of the community’s brotherly and sisterly concern, cooperation, care, and sharing... Ubuntu is the basis of African communal cultural life. It expresses the interconnectedness, common humanity and the responsibility of individuals to each other (Koster, 1996 pp. 99-118; Nussbaum, 2003, pp. 21-26). This yearning to belong is a human need espoused within culture. Culture is the sum of the totality of the lifestyle of an African.

Johansson (1998) further illuminates that implicit in the doctrine of creation, then, is its cultural mandate and a call to a creative integration of faith within leaning and culture. It is a call...to explore the wisdom of God in every area of thought and life, and to replenish the earth with the creativity of human art and science. He adds that the capacity of culture and the desire of culture are characteristic marks of the Divine creation of humanity. Hence culture (art, education, science, etc.) is both God’s gift and man’s

appointed duty, in so far as apart from it he has no right to exist, because otherwise he does not realize his God-given purpose in creation.

Religion is a societal pillar of culture that plays a vital role in an African setup. Notably, Johnson (2018) acknowledges that Africa is the continent with the largest population of Christians. Through its introduction by the early missionaries, majority of the population in Africa have ascribed to Christianity as a religion. However, despite Christianity having found a place in the hearts of many Africans, its liturgy remains predominantly Western. The superimposition of the western style of worship in place of the inappropriate ‘paganistic’ African culture is a misnomer label propagated by some of the early missionaries. This took root through a progressive damnation of the African culture and the overlap superimposition of the ‘superior’ Western culture which has clogged the minds of many African congregations and informs every religious decision an African Christian makes individually and collectively.

### **African Religiosity**

The early European explorers and missionaries painted a picture of Africa as a totally dark continent full of satanic surprises, deadly snakes and dangerous animals. In his paper, Namawu (2007, p. 5) quotes Evans-Pritchard (1965, pp. 231-233) that two prominent explorers, Sir Samuel Baker (1867) and Sir Richard Burton contributed significantly to the propagation of African Traditional Religion as a crude/primitive religion. Baker (1867) argued that:

...without any exception, they (Africans) are without a belief in a supreme being neither have they any form of worship or idolatry; nor is darkness of their minds

enlightened by even a ray of superstition. The mind is as stagnant as the morass which forms its puny world (p.74).

Sir Richard Burton (1864) propagates a similar idea:

...the negro is still at the rude dawn of faith – fetishism - and he has barely advanced in idolatry...He has never grasped the idea of a personal Deity, a duty in life, a moral code or a shame of lying...(p. 199).

Contrary to this notion that Africans are primitive and pagan, Mbiti (1969) rightly notes that, “Africans are notoriously religious and each people have their religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it.” (p. 1). These traditional religious beliefs have an impact on the behavior of an African especially during the time of climactic episodes. The Tonga people of southern Zambia still treasure the Malende rain shrines where traditional elders go to implore the creator to cause rain to fall upon the land stricken with famine. The Nandi of the Rift Valley of Kenya do the same. Many other religious institutions of traditional Africa can be cited scattered across the continent even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We can only comment that African people are aware of God, spirits, and divinities as a part of their traditional beliefs (Mwesa, 1998).

In a striking parallelism, Christianity acknowledges the same type of spiritual beings. There are both strengths and weaknesses in the African Traditional Religion’s knowledge and worship of God ...but we can affirm that the African Traditional Religion’s notion of God in many ways form continuity with biblical Revelation...According to Gehman (1989) the following are some of the attributes of God in African Traditional Religion that are shared with Christianity and expound on continuity:

**God knows all things (He is omniscient)**

We find universal confidence in the universal Supreme being who knows everything about people and their activities and from whom we can hide nothing.

**God is present everywhere (omnipresent)**

Traditional African beliefs delineate that wherever a person maybe, he will call God in times of crisis. Man cannot wander away from God. Whether African people approached God only in time of distress and as a last resort, God could be approached anywhere when people were in desperate need. And indeed, they did approach him.

**God is almighty**

When all other assistance fails including mystical powers, ancestral spirits and divinities, men may seek God who is able to do all things.

**God is transcendent**

He is without limitation and beyond human comprehension. No one can search and understand the ways of God. He is above and beyond. God is mysterious.

**God is everlasting**

He has neither beginning nor end. Ancestral, nature spirits and divinities have all been created. They derive their existence from God.

**God is spirit**

He has no tangible body. Africa has never practiced the kind of idolatry that was common among the Europeans and Asians. God is transcendent that no attempts have been made to fashion any representation of Him out of wood or stone.

**God is kind, merciful and goo**

The giving of rain, birth of children, and the healing of the body remind the people that God is good. Whatever tragedy man may experience, it is blamed on witchcraft or the living dead. But God is seldom charged with wrong doing in Africa, though there are exemptions.

**God is holy**

He is separate from his creatures and separate from wrong doing. He is above any fault and beyond reproach of men. He never lies and can always be trusted.

**God is unique**

There is no one that can be compared to the Supreme Being in ATR. He is unlike anything or anyone that we may know. He has neither limitations nor a beginning.

**God created the world**

The names attributed to God reflect this basic understanding. He is the excavator, hewer, carver, creator, originator, inventor and architect. Many traditional stories narrate the order and procedure which God followed in placing man upon the earth (p. 3).

The above aspects of African Traditional Religious belief system, show its parallelism with Christianity and is proof that traditionally, Africans are religious. This is the same inclination that Mbiti (1969) holds:

...the old nonsense of looking at African background as devilish and fit only to be swept away by Euro-American civilization, is and should be gone by now. African religious background is not a rotten heap of superstitions, taboos, and magic; it has a great value to it. On this valuable heritage, Christianity should adopt itself and not be dependent exclusively on imported goods... (p.3).

Mbiti goes on to say that art should be considered a preparation for gospel. Traditional religion is fulfilled in Christianity. While art can only listen to the New Testament in silence with a spirit of learning, Mbiti (1969) contends that in the area of the old testament a certain amount of give- and-take or mutual enlightenment can be carried out insinuating a sort of parallelism or complimentary relationship where Biblical revelation completes that which is vaguely perceived within the African religion, correcting that which has been partially understood.

### **The Damnation**

The social stigma against African Traditional Religion in general and African music in particular was brought about by, unfortunately, the early missionaries who did not understand the African cultural and traditional values, institutions and practices. They sidelined the traditional musical practices and instead, imposed Western practices on new converts. Mindoti (2001) says that the establishment of Christianity in Africa influenced the music culture of the converted indigenous Africans. Mwesa (1998) elaborates this further when he says that when the explorers and missionaries set foot in African soil, the first task was to label African culture as being primitive and pagan. When they could not understand the melodies, harmonies, rhythms, and responsorial performance style of African music, they referred to it as heathenish noise. Richard is quoted by Jones (1969) to have recorded in his diary the following observations on the lifestyle of the Africans he saw:

neither are these drummes without daily employment, for this is their continually custom every night after it seems they have filled their bellies, they repair to this court of guard, making fires both in the middle of the house, and in the open yard, about which they do continue drumming, hooping, singing, and making a heathenish noise, most commonly until the day begins to break, when as we conceive dead' sleep take them (p. v).

It is clear from Rublowsky (1967) that this subjugation of the African culture was not only out of ignorance but a deliberate continuation of suppression by the West on Africans: “Unlike most people of the United States the negro did not come to America in search of either freedom or opportunity. He came, instead as a slave. He came as another man’s property. He came in chains, taken by force from his traditions and way of life, to work for his master. His culture was *purposefully* destroyed. Practical experience had taught the slave master the value of destroying a man’s way of life. A greater whole. If you take away the larger part of the man, what is left is the individual almost like a baby to be told what to do and how to do it”. This ‘baby’ effect has its clear manifestation in the current lifestyle of elite Africans who unquestionably hold western ideologies true and their African culture as primitive and backward. In place of the ‘primitive pagan’ African culture, the missionaries promoted a worship style that was new to the converts, while conditioning their minds to abhor anything African. New converts abandoned their cultural links and practices and clung to the *ars nova* style of the new order. Shardrack Buyanzi, a former player of *litungu* (*an indigenous violin of the Abaluhya of Kenya*), interviewed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, 2001 on the playing of *litungu* in church said... “since I am for the Lord, I cannot touch the outdated instrument. The church will not allow me to go back to my outdated behavior of playing outdated traditional instruments” (Mindoti, 2001). He also quotes a Kipsigis convert to the world gospel church regretting, “...I heard their singing and thought again what God had done to me so that I no longer sing these heathenish songs”. He was happy to have left the Kipsigis traditional songs and sympathized with those still singing them.



Generalized judgement and judgement by association has led to a biased promotion of the western music culture as superior and sometimes ‘holy’ and a consequent damnation of African music as ‘pagan’ and ‘unholy’ within worship in Africa. Nketia (1974) rightly notes that all these developments were encouraged and strengthened by the activities of the church which preached against African cultural practices while promoting western cultural values and usage. It adopted a hostile attitude to African music, especially the drumming, because this was associated with what seemed to Christian evangelists as “pagan” practice. Moreover, this music did not appear to be suitable for the form of Christian worship those westerners were accustomed to...in some areas the converts were not only prohibited from performing traditional African music but even from watching it. Hence, active participation in community events-in festivals and ceremonies-was discouraged.

This attitude has successfully been implanted in majority of elite Africans and is the basis of the identity crisis that ultimately creates a soul that is neither Western nor African. The elite African finds himself in a situation where he cannot fully identify with the western culture and at the same time, alienated from his culture. Mwesa (1998) when quoting Maquent noted too that, “...the material power the white people displayed in Africa and strong psychological pressure exercised by colonial administrations and missionaries deeply shook the view of certain Africans concerning their social heritage. They judged it from the European point of view and as it was their own, they were ashamed of it. To heal this split, many intellectuals turned to assimilation and aimed at becoming “black Europeans,” but still they were black, and their skin made a mockery on the social level of assimilation that had been fully achieved on the cultural level” (p. 7).

### **Music as an Essential tool**

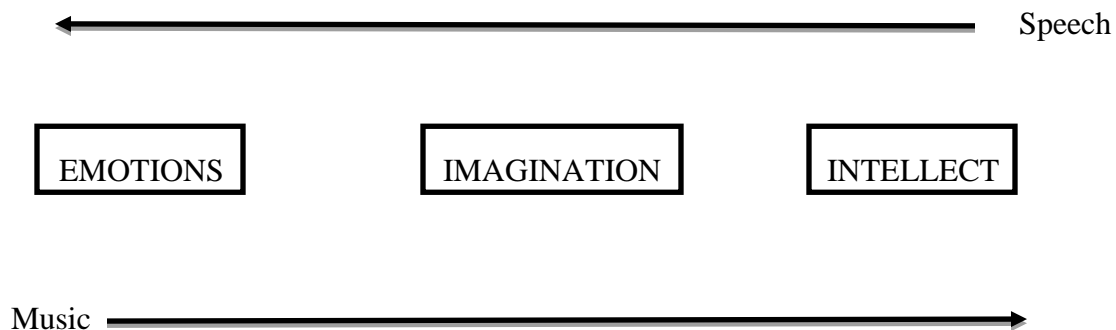
With this negative notion against traditional African music successfully implanted in the minds and hearts of African Christians, there exists a great controversy from the resistance towards the introduction of African music in the Christian worship and liturgy. This has been on for a long time as Harold (1993) points out that the church has, for centuries waged one brush war after another over the question of whether or how art and music ‘mean’- what it means to borrow styles, forms, process, tunes, techniques, texture, shapes, gestures, and instruments.....at the time of borrowing, the war rages quite bitterly and diversely. Then as time passes the war dies down.

One of the reasons why music brings controversy in our churches is that music as an art has communicative power that surpasses that of speech. “It is possible, of course, to communicate desires, longings, hopes, beliefs, joy, sorrow, and a host of other feelings by words alone. But if man needs to speak more freely concerning his personal emotions that words cannot allow, he turns to music, for often music gives him freedom that is not easily achieved in any other way” (Hamel, 1973). Music is that language in which the father says more than he can say in words and which we can respond more fully than mere words allow. However, this language, like all other languages, must be learned. The language of African music must, in a great measure as possible reflect the divine nature of the creator, redeemer and sanctifier. This means that the music must be creative, redemptive, and sanctifying.

Music is a language in its own right, and as an art, a means of communication using pitches, rhythms, harmonies, timbres, and form. It is as capable today of running the

gamut of emotions of exaltation through gaiety, joy, excitement, solemnity and fear to extreme dejection and sorrow as it was in the days of the biblical singers-Miriam, David, and Zachariah (Dong, 2012). The instruments today are only refinements of the flutes, stringed instruments, trumpets, and drums with which the children of Israel praised God with and this God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

This makes music a sensitive and a delicate topic to handle. Though music has infinity to language, the appeals of speech and music are in opposite directions. While both are dependent upon the doorway of the senses, music tends to appeal more quickly and strongly to the emotions while speech is designated to appeal more immediately to the intellect. In speech, the mind is primarily aroused by the meaning of the words; then the imagination works upon the idea and an emotional response may result. In music, the body becomes aware of some organization of sound such as a flowing melody of a martial rhythm. The emotions are immediately stirred and the imagination begins to relate the sound to some mental pictures, thus:



The need for a contextualized worship has seen the rise of alternative worship methods not only in Africa but also in the West. The rise of 'Alternative' worship for example originated primarily with the pioneering 'Nine O'clock Service' (NOS) which began in the Charismatic church of St Thomas's, Crooks, in Sheffield, in the mid-1980s. NOS advocated a radical evangelical theology and claimed to be revisiting the essence of Christianity, as lived by the early church through committed discipleship and close-knit community living. Most notably, NOS attempted to challenge the moral and religious complacency that it perceived in Western culture at large as well as in the established church (Guest, 2002). This is what Africa needs; a worship style that clothes the gospel with native idioms, a presentation that is identifiable and associable.

After having seen the root cause of the negative attitude developed by some Africans towards their music, it is important to analyze what African music is and what it entails. According to Nettl (1965), the musical creations of tribal cultures are genuine works of art; they can be analyzed, judged, and appreciated in much the same terms as can the great masterpieces and all other compositions of western music if one views them in the context of their own cultural background. This means that the interpretation of African music is contextual and can only make sense when done in the context of culture. Hamel (1973) further indicates that music publishers have found a new gold mine in the religious folk music interest. They are busily propagating the idea that folk songs used in worship spring spontaneously from the people, and are therefore an authentic expression of the religious experience of the common man.

When critiquing of African music is done out of context, misunderstanding and diminution is inevitable. Belittling of its role and importance within its natural setting is the obvious result. For one to understand a piece of African art or music one must understand and study it in its cultural context. This is what Nettl (1965) points out when he writes that the musical development of all cultures, involved mainly and consisted of music that all of the people and which many or most could participate. The reason why most of the traditional music of Africa is antiphonal or responsorial is because of the nature of societies in Africa of inclusivity. Things were done communally to promote love and support to one another and create a feeling of belonging in everybody, and this was also manifested in their style of music where music-making was done communicably; there is a call and response format (responsorial) alternating between a soloist and a chorus, or between two groups to ensure the participation of most, if not all members of the community.

Hamel (1973) says that music helps us to understand ourselves and the world. Who are we, from whence have we come and where are we going? Persistently, man seeks answers to these vital questions and music is an excellent tool for such instruction. Nettl (1965) adds that there is some validity in the notion that a tribe has a special relationship to its culture. He continues to say that an authentic song is thought to be one truly belonging to the people who sing it, one that reflects their spirit and personality. All of the kinds of music that reside within a culture are worthy of study and are important for an understanding of that culture (Nettl, 1965).

Unfortunately, folk music has at times been made the tool of aggressive and racist policies. This is because those who employ folk music for their own gains have discovered its power. But to understand folk music is not an easy task or an easy area of study. This is because music is a universal phenomenon, yet tailor made uniquely to each culture, and learning to understand a foreign culture's music is in many ways like learning a foreign language but more complex because musical sounds do not have specific references as words do.

When you analyze the music of the traditional Africa, it seems likely that the characteristics of a language- its stress, patterns of intonation, and of course the structure of its poetry- are referred in the folk music of each people. This is evidence that music plays an important role in storing and disseminating the cultural heritage of a people. Rasi (1998) asserts that culture is a gift from God and it was handed over to humanity since creation, that differentiation in culture is purposeful other than coincidental.

In Africa, music has a special place in society. In some African cultures, music is performed by professional or semi-professional musicians. But, generally—there are great differences among the world cultures- the traditional music is focused on functionality. Songs are typically referred to as “good” or “powerful”, an indication that it is not the aesthetic quality of the song that is primary but rather the manner in which it fulfills its task. In some cultures, music has essentially an acculturative function; that is, it serves to introduce members to various aspects of their culture. Elsewhere, its main function may be specifically religious in the strict sense; that is, it may be used as a language through which the supernatural or the divine is addressed. Elsewhere again, music is the tribal

“stamp approval” for an activity; the activity must be accompanied by the appropriate music in order for it to be carried out correctly or music maybe an important force for tribal unity and cohesion. In modern western culture, most of these functions are present but the fact that our most valued musical creations are intended for concerts and entertainment indicates that in our life’s music has a different role from that which it has in most tribal and folk societies (Nettl, 1965).

According to Nettl (1965) folk music is frequently associated with other activities in life, but it also serves as entertainment. Most importantly, since folk music is the musical expression of a whole people or tribe, or a significant portion of a culture, it must be performed and accepted in order to remain alive. He adds that the music of black Africa has been regarded as an essentially homogenous mass, despite the many inhabitants and the large number of distinct cultures, as well as the many contacts that Africa has had over the centuries with peoples of other continents. Nonetheless, it has become increasingly clear that the total picture of African music is a complex one, that there is a large variety of sub-styles that cultures vary greatly in the nature of their music, in its quality, and significance and in the attitudes that people hold towards music.

But there are several characteristics found in the majority of African musical cultures that give African music its distinctiveness. These include among others:

- I. Instruments are numerous: they are used individually, as accompaniment to singing and in small ensembles.
- II. A tendency to have at least two elements going on at a time: thus, polyphony is widespread; polyrhythms performed by percussion ensembles are common.
- III. The percussive sound is evidently an ideal; percussion instruments such as drums, xylophones, rattles, etc. are important.

- IV. Variation of and improvisation upon short melodic motifs dominate melodic structure.
- V. There is a close relationship between language and music.
- VI. Even more than elsewhere, music is associated with dance.
- VII. Perhaps most significant, there is tendency towards dualism: thus melodies often consist of two phrases; performance is often by a leader answered by a chorus; polyphony is usually structured so that there are two parts or two groups of vocalists and instrumentalists and in various other obvious or subtle ways, one can detect the essentially binary nature of this music. (However, almost the opposite of these characteristics is found in the northernmost part of sub-Saharan Africa, where middle eastern influences are strong) (Nettl, 1965).

### **Foreign Worship**

Through time, Christian churches in Africa have been using the western hymns introduced by early missionaries as their official hymnody. These western hymns have been translated into various indigenous languages giving rise to various hymn books like *Nyimbo za Kristo* in Swahili, *Nyimbo Cia Agendi* in Kikuyu, *Ogotero kwa Nyasaye* in Ekegusii, and *Wende Nyasaye* in Dholuo. These hymn books are perceived as African and ‘local’ and form the principle repertoire of the African Christian church today. A closer analysis of this literature will reveal a forced marriage of convenience between purely western music and African text. They are foreign to the indigenous people of Africa. The indigenous African setting cannot “truly” relate to them in sincerity because of their de-contextualization. This hymnic repertoire is a compilation of folk tunes from communities outside Africa and only relevant to those specific cultures from which this music is conceived. While most of the African languages are pitch inflected - meaning derived from direction of pitch - imposing African text on western melodies sometimes distract the speech contour of the language therefore interfering with meaning too. Words derive their meaning from tonal marking and syllabic stress. Therefore, it is



possible that one word can have several meanings depending on the intonation. For example, the kikuyu word, “iria”, may mean three different things:

The image shows three musical notations for the word "iria". Each notation consists of a sequence of notes with arrows below them indicating the intonation pattern. The first notation has a high note followed by a lower note, with an arrow labeled "I" under the first note and "ria" under the second. The second notation has a high note, a lower note, and a very low note, with an arrow labeled "I" under the first note, "ri" under the second, and "a" under the third. The third notation has a high note, a lower note, and a very low note, with an arrow labeled "I" under the first note, "ri" under the second, and "a" under the third.

means “those”

means “ocean”

means “milk”

As much as Africans adopt the western culture, there is need to evaluate and analyze the aspects of each culture (Western and African) and only adopt what is relevant and functional. Scholes, as quoted by Mindoti (2001) says that it is human instinct, when expressing the high things of human thoughts and feeling to do so with all of which humanity is capable. What this means is that as long as human beings have feelings and thoughts, there will always be an urge to express them and in the best way possible. Cultural music is an avenue that expresses what lies deep within the soul and that which words cannot express. Folk and cultural music is additionally an identity of who Africans are, what they stand for and what they believe. Genuine expression is cultural and is a within manifested without.

Just like other aspects of culture, cultural music for worship should be evaluated as Hamel (1973) puts it, "...to reject all folk music would be as unwise as to accept all of it unquestioningly. We ought to accept the finest examples of the new folk idiom that seem to speak with eloquence..." (p.75). This has been the center of controversy in the African church with the old generation clinging to the hymnic literature while others advocate for the new styles while some traditionists hold onto their African musical heritage. Folk music has been proven to be a powerful source of worship within the Christian denomination both as a means of expression and as a worship tool. Hamel (1973) indicates that "... Sankey's songs are true folk music of the people...The folk music is an effective tool in impressing the spiritual truth into the minds of the people..." (Hamel, 1973) quotes the Harvard Dictionary of Music which describes a folk song as "...the music repertory and tradition of communities" (p.72). The music develops together with the artless poems dealing with various phrases of daily life. When this music is given a religious theme, it becomes gospel folk music.

He gives an example of a contextualized present-day gospel folk music that is genuine and sincere which can be found among the Chopi people of Southern Mozambique: "Lord Jesus, we thank you for your message; it has brought a new day to all of us," they sing to the accompaniment of a hollow thud-thud of calabashes against the soft sand. The guards strike the ground with a variety of time patterns, which all blend into a lively and precise cadence.....rather than an illustration of a new type of pop music, this is a sample of genuine traditional folk music...a missionary author describing this kind of gospel music says, every time I hear this Chopi music as part of the church service, my heart beats faster and I realize how the Christian message here has been dressed in African

clothes in a most natural, spontaneous way, the guards thud the good news deeper into African hearts” (p.73). African cultural music is not evil. Just like Johannsson (1998) affirms, nothing in the material world which God created is inherently evil, the materials world is a gift from God, has potential and is fundamentally good.

The Christian church in Africa is supposed to sieve, weigh, and analyze alternatives that come their way through cultural interactions without abandoning who they are and what uniquely identifies them. Short songs popularly known as ‘pambio’ by Christian musicians in Africa that incorporate some African idioms is a step in the right direction. This has been done not as a collective effort but as individual effort. Choruses like “shetani etagwo atia” meaning “what is Satan called”, “Ngai wakwa ni munene” meaning “my God is great” and “nyoiwon gat Jesu” meaning “forgive me Jesus”, are but a few examples of syncretic gospel songs that incorporate African idioms in our Christian worship. This effort by a few church musicians has been a tough one through the years because of the negative attitude that has been developed in our churches by dogmatic church leaders.

Though through thick and thin, these choruses are now finding their way in religious settings, and gatherings like Christian seminars, youth meetings, Christian fellowships and other religious gatherings. The use of such choruses in our camp meetings in the past has been done through difficulty and strong opposition from church elders and pastors.

This is a slight change in music that has taken place so far in our church through a lot of struggle, yet one may wonder, “how sacred are Western folk tunes employed in the

hymns today over the African folk tunes? Is the western music culture sacred intrinsically? is the tune of the hymn, “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder” and “When Peace Like a River” have over “Yesu Wainyanza” or “Ni Wara Nono” whereas both were conceived as a result of a deep spiritual experience? The Holy Bible says in Romans 3:23 that “...all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and as many have received Him, he gave them power to become the children of God: and therefore, “there is no Jew nor gentile, African nor Westerner in the eyes of God but sons and daughters of God.” The following quotation by Gehman (1989) proves that the perception that the westerners and religiously superior is a fallacy and that they are not inherently ‘holy’:

...before the preaching of the gospel, the Europeans were also worshipers of many divinities. One of the oldest gods of the Tentons (a European tribal group including the Anglo- Saxons who settled in the British Isles was Ziu (or Tiu). Originally, he was the shining sky who later became the god of war. We still honor him by our day, Tuesday. The god of war was Wodin (or Odin). His spear never missed. He also became the god of prophets and poets for he knew all things and saw everyone. Wednesday honors him. The red-bearded god of thunder and rain and the god of agriculture was donor (or thor). Throughout the world of Tentons, he was pictured as a man carrying a hammer in iron gloved hands, riding a sky chariot drawn by two he goats. He was honored by Thursday. Friday was considered the luckiest day, for it commemorated the Scandinavian goddess of love known as Frigg. Saturday is the only day of the week in English named for a roman god, Saturn. The sacred day of the Tentons was Sunday, the day of the sun. Monday was reserved for the moon. Thus, the names of each day of the week in English are derived from the European divinities prior to the coming of Christianity (p. 28).

Thus, the planting of the church of Christ in Africa is to make Christ incarnate among the people to the glory of God the father.... Even so, the gospel of Jesus Christ must remain pure in every culture but at the same time clothed with indigenous garments. The gospel must be contextualized in such a manner that the eternal truths of the gospel remain unchanged. Yet the embodiment of the gospel becomes truly “native”, contextualized

fully within the cultural forms of the peoples. Gehman (1989) concludes that when Christians of one culture seek to expense the Christian faith in foreign forms, the gospel fails to become rooted and indigenously established.

Since music functions as communication, it suits best the purpose for spreading the gospel; but this gospel should be spread in an understandable way and palatable idioms to benefit the listeners". The manner of expression and communication of this gospel varies from people to people. The manner of worship, the expression of praise and gratitude, and the way of communicating the gospel will differ. The music of the church should be rooted in the traditional culture. The point of emphasis is that Africans are capable of praising God in their own cultural context and music. Africans have the potential of developing an African oriented hymnody as a supplement to the Western hymnody. As indicated earlier by Johannsson (1998), culture is a gift from God and we should use it to praise him and to reach others. As Robertson (1994) puts it, "the norm for acceptable music varies from country to country and culture to culture".

## **CONCLUSION**

African music is an establishment of the lifestyle of a people. It is an avenue of the outpouring of genuine expression. It is both a social and a spiritual tool inherent within the African culture. It is purposeful and functional with its creation an intricate process nurtured by the community. Africans are religious, and music plays an integral role in spiritual activities. The damnation of African music for worship is ignorance emanating from centuries of superiority complex and bias judgement on its role, importance and place within worship.

African musicians must take the center role in educating the congregants within which they have influence on the importance of and the role of African music in worship. They should make effort to contextualize available African literature by composing and arranging music that will fit the Christian liturgy. The study through Hamel portrays the necessity for musicians to be heard no matter the problems of which church music are of concern to everyone. While modifying the musical of the church it would seem reasonable to consult those who have studied music and are practitioners of the musical art, church musicians are not opposed to change, and because of their musical sensitivity-enhanced by years of study- they can guide the church as it expands its music practices into direction of relevance and the contemporary scene”.

Informed policy decisions by church leaders will improve the quality of worship in Africa and this will only happen if the Christian musician is given his place in worship. Tenney (1978) notes that musicians should be careful when quoting theology and the theologian should watch out when speaking musically and just like Hamel (1973) observes: “...the mess we are in is related to the fact that we have done a poor job in training the youth in what Christianity, worship, and good music are...” Church leaders and theologians in Africa should be able to accept and accommodate change. Finally, Doukhan (1996) observes that change will happen, anyway, with or without us, it is a fact. Instead of refusing change and thus provoking revolt, we should become a part of it and make it happen in a responsible manner.

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