

# CHORAL EVENSONG AMONG THE YORUBA ANGLICAN CHURCHES: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF MUSIC IN ITS ORDER AND LITURGY

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## **Introduction**

John McManners sees Christianity in his book as a way of life. The seed sown by our Lord Jesus Christ grew like a grain of mustard seed, germinated and spread with amazing rapidity through the Apostolic age to Rome, Britain, Europe, North America, South America, Africa, India and the far East and the Orthodox Churches or Eastern Europe. The prophecy in Acts 1:8 has been fulfilled. "Christianity is a religion of the word – the word made flesh, the word preached, the word written to record the story of God's intervention in history." The word therefore was preached, and is being preached and will be preached throughout the world. As a result of this:

*For nearly two thousand years, the Christian Church has exercised a profound influence upon the western world. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, its moral and spiritual influence has spread in greater degree . . . to almost all parts of the globe. No one, therefore ought to be indifferent to the story of the Church of Christ.*

Coming closer home, Edward Smith who wrote the book, *The Christian mission in Africa* observes that from the earliest period, the Church has never been absent from Africa. Christian communities existed in Africa before they were found in the British-Isles and Northern Europe. Omoyajowo observes: "By the fourth century A.D. Christianity has been firmly established in North Africa. Church leaders like Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine among others made substantial contribution to

O. A. Asaolu & T. O. Daramola: *Choral Evensong Among the Yoruba Anglican...* the shaping of Christian theology. But this North African Church did not survive the Arab invasion in the seventh century just as was in Benin and Warri Churches later: This was because the Church was not truly an African Church. Etok in his article argued that:

*For Christianity to be truly African, it must be a Christianity in which the African must be able to worship God as an African: A Christianity in which African feels very much at home. This of course does not rule out making room for cross pollination of cultures. For culture is something dynamic, living and never static.*

Therefore, there must be room for cultural growth. The growth will be brought about by cultural mobility, hence cultural borrowing, cultural change and cultural metamorphosis. G.C. Oosthuizen in his book, *post Christianity in Africa* quoted ID Westerman, C.P. Grays, K. S. Latourette that the Church had existed in Africa as far back as the fourth century:

*In the early part of the fourth century, Christianity was firmly rooted in North Africa. By the middle of the fifth century, Egypt was a Christian country. But the Church in North Africa had an inherent meekness, it was not a truly African Church, its members were from the Roman and Greek middle classes, the colonists, who lived apart from the indigenous peoples.*

As a result of a Latinized Christianity, the Punic and Berber populations were only partially or superficially Christianized. They became Christian only to the degree that they became Latinized and that the Latin language was the sole vehicle of Christian preaching. The Nubians were the first people of Niger descent to adopt Christianity. Nubian also known as Ethiopia in those days, came in contact with Christianity very early. Origen (AD 185-253) in his commentary on Matthew 24:14, maintains that "it is now claimed the Gospel has been preached to all the Ethiopians." The first missionary enterprise of which there is specific knowledge was during the sixth century. This North African Church failed to be a missionary Church and could not penetrate the life of the indigenous people.

Modupe Oduyoye in his book, *planting of Christianity in Yorubaland* edited by Ogbu Kalu, put the arrival of the missionaries at 1842. But J.F. Ade Ajayi put the

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arrival of the missionaries at 1841. Igenzoza in his scholarly work on Polygamy also agrees with Ajayi thus:

*The Terminus ad quem of the history of Christianity in Nigeria could be put at 1841. This was when the first Niger expedition took place which marked the beginning of the movement to re-establish Christianity in the Country following the failure of the earlier Catholic mission in Benin and Warri.*

## **Methods and Materials**

The research adopted a study approach of both quantitative and qualitative research design. The study has been approached through a Grounded Theory, the tenets of which is anchored on testing ideas, concepts “emerged” from data theories. These data were collected through interviews granted by purposively selected respondents and other relevant documents. The population of the study comprised all the music actors in the Anglican Church setting like the members of the house of Clergy of the Church ranging from Bishops, both active and retired, to the Deacons, Organists and Choirmasters, Choristers and other Church music enthusiasts in the Anglican setting.

It employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary sources included in-depth interview with 10 each of the purposively selected organists, choirmasters and clergymen in the 15 purposively selected Dioceses within the study area. In addition, the participant observation method was employed by watching divine services and Holy Eucharist services of 30 purposively selected churches within the study area with audio-visual and still cameras. Secondary sources included books, journal articles, magazines, newspaper and the Internet. Data collected were analysed within the musicological framework.

## **Evensong**

Evensong is a short (40-45 minutes) service of choral music, chant and prayers sung by the choristers at the last watch of the day. It is in turn the evening sacrifice of the established churches like the Anglicans etc. Evensong is based on the medieval monastic offices of the Roman Church (the English Book of Common Prayer combined the multiple hours of observance for the medieval monks into two: i.e. Mattins and Evensong), and at its simplest level marks the passing of another day. Evensong is a church service traditionally held near sunset focused on singing

O. A. Asaolu & T. O. Daramola: *Choral Evensong Among the Yoruba Anglican...* of psalms and other biblical canticles. This form is stylized ritual, a way of singing and a canon repertoire all operating in the framework of rich historical heritage, expressed in a variety of ways from architecture to social structure. Evensong is an Anglican phenomenon and has been exported through the Anglican community worldwide. Introducing this multifaceted service into a new context with different languages, performance spaces, theology and culture has necessitated alterations and modifications in order to harmonize the service into its new situation and the people who practice it.

The popularity of choral evensong has grown less in the recent times as members of the Church no longer attend the service as they do not take to the saying that: "when you eat breakfast, you must eat dinner"...breakfast in that context means Mattins and Dinner there in refers to evensong. The observation on the dwindling attendance at evensong has led to the investigation aimed at understanding the motivations behind attendance. Kathryn King of Oxford University in a research study he initiated investigated many speculations through empirical research with the topic "Experiences of Choral Evensong." King has this to say:

*Many theories have been put forward about the reasons for contemporary choral evensong attendance, musical and non-musical: a desire to go to 'a concert of fine music performed to a high standard, for free, to hear favorite pieces of music seldom performed otherwise; for peace and serenity at the end of the day, nostalgia; to find out about worship in a setting that provides anonymity and freedom from the perceived commitment of attending a parish church; to see the Cathedral building and artefacts without paying an entrance fee; or, as 'the atheist's favorite service,' to enjoy an aesthetic and or atmospheric experience without the requirement to participate in any religious ritual. There are many more (King, 2018)*

This paper is geared at understanding the idea that choral evensong is a form of worship which may serve as a means of amalgamating various interests in a Parish community in one service. For example, regular churchgoers and concert audiences may find choral evensong attractive for different reasons. The abilities and collective nature of the parish church choir might enable it to be integrated into the regular worship.

## **Choral or Speaking Evensong**

Music is an integral and functioning part of African cultures and religious, in religion the function of music and musical instruments is well known. According to Joy Ubahakwe, Glennon sees music as:

*A part of living that has the power to awaken in us sensation and emotions of spiritual kind. "Yes indeed music in worship transports our minds to the spiritual real. Music in the Church worship helps in the spiritual upliftment and edification of the congregation. The African and Western music tradition clearly show that these difficulties did not become a deterrent to musical growth in the Church rather it musical growth in the church rather its musical growth in the church rather if inspired our pioneers in the Anglican Church and this led to extensive compositions. These early composers which freely exploring and making use of African idiomatic expressions, also made extensive use of African idiomatic expressions, also made extensive use of western harmonic style. Rev. J.J. Ransome Kuti's appendix to the Yoruba Hymn Book of the Anglican Church contains fifty-seven songs. In some of the songs, Kuti made extensive use of existing Yoruba traditional melodies. The songs in this book include "E t'Olorun la wa o se o."*

Initially, many early Christian converts rejected any form of music apart from the European hymns because of the way Christianity was introduced to them. Even when the early missionaries tried not to encourage the use of traditional melodies for evangelical purpose, some early Yoruba converts vehemently opposed the use of non-traditional materials in their music simply because they still want to have an identity. T.K.E. Phillips in his book *Yoruba Music (Fusion of Speech and Music)* while commenting on the "Broadcast Talk on African Music of the 6th November, 1941, said:

*"We must develop our music if we want it to be fit to take its place in our regular worship, but we must be careful to see that we are proceeding on right lines. We should in this respect learn some lessons from European musical history which shows that development had more than once gone on wrong lines. From time immemorial, it has been the practice for a new faith or rather adherents of it to draw inspiration for their music and forms of worship from the old faith. This was exactly the practice In the early*

O. A. Asaolu & T. O. Daramola: *Choral Evensong Among the Yoruba Anglican... centuries of the Christian era when secular and common folk tunes were so generally introduced into music worship that the practice became a real menace – a profanation. This happened first in about the fourth and fifth centuries when it fell to the lot of St. Ambrose and later to St. Gregory to check it” (1953)*

From the above statement, we could make a deduction that the effect of European musical style was evident in liturgy, order of service and worship in the Anglican Church in Yorubaland. The order of service which happens to be an import from the western tradition with a processional hymn starting the service, the collect/prayer and then to the reading of the Psalm or a times chanted, then and then the Gloria would be played, there would be the first lesson, then a hymn and then the second lesson, there would be creed, then the hymn before sermon and after the sermon, there would be another hymn for Sunday collection. There would be announcement and notices, then prayer and benediction and then the recessional hymn.

### **A Typical Anglican Order of Morning and Evening Services**

- Processional Hymn
- Collect to Prayer
- Psalm (to be read or chanted)
- First Lesson
- Hymn/Canticles
- Second Lesson
- Creed – Prayers (Grace)
- Hymn before Sermon
- Sermon
- Hymn for Collection/offering
- Notices and Announcement
- Prayer and Benediction
- Withdrawal Hymn

Above is a typical example of the order of service in the Anglican Church. Sometimes the psalm would be chanted as well as the creed and for the lack of a good Church choir, or an Organist to accompany the choir and the congregation,

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 most Churches had to be doing a speaking evensong instead of choral evensong. When the European brought Christianity to Nigeria and it was embraced by our people, services were held in the morning and in the evening and the turnout at both services were always impressive however at the turn event, people no longer attend evensong and there are factors that caused this. The evensong is always a shorter version of the morning service with the exclusion of the thanksgiving and other forms of celebrations that would attract beating of drums as well as dancing to the altar for prayers.

### **Evening Hymns**

The Yoruba Hymn Book (YHB) of the Anglican Church contains hymns that are segmented and put under different headings for the use of the Church. There are morning hymns, evening hymns for Sunday service, harvest time, advent, birth of Jesus Christ, Epiphany, lent, and crucifixion etc. One would observe that hymns classified under the evening hymns in the popular *Iwe Orin Mimo* (A Yoruba Hymnal) are hymns that depicts the time of the day and there are examples in:

#### IOM 17

*L'aju ale gba t'orun wo  
 Won gba b'irun wa s'odo re  
 Oniruru ni aisan won  
 Sugbon won f'ayo lo 'le won*

At even, ere the sun was set  
 The sick, O Lord, around The lay,  
 Oh, in what diverse pains they met  
 Oh, which what joy they went away.

#### IOM 20

*Wo imole larin okun aye  
 Ma sin mi lo  
 Okunkun su, mo si jina s' ile  
 Ma sin mi lo  
 To sise mi: ohun ehin ola  
 Emi ko bere; sise kan to fun mi*

LEAD, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom  
 Lead Thou me on  
 The night is dark, and I am far from home  
 Lead Thou me on  
 Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
 The distant scene, one step enough for me.

#### IOM 14

*Ife re da wa si l'oni  
 L'are a si du bule  
 Maa so wa ni d'ake oru*

Thy love has spared our lives today  
 Weary we are kneeling down  
 Guide us throughout the still of night

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*L'apa re ni ka sun si  
Jesu se olutoju wa  
Iwo lo dun gbe 'ke le  
Jesu se Olutoju wa  
Iwo lo dun gbe ke 'le*

Let our foes disturb us not  
Jesus, guide and take care of us  
It is sweet to trust in Thee.  
Jesus, guide and take care of us  
It is sweet to trust in Thee.

### IOM 12

*A gb'aju s'oke si o  
A t'owo ati okan  
T'ewo gba, adura wa  
Boo ti le se ailera*

We lift our eyes up to Thee  
With our hands and all our minds  
Then accept all our prayers  
Although they may not be strong

### IOM 21

*K'a to sun, Olugbala wa,  
Fun wa n' Ibukun ale:  
A jewo ese wa fu O,  
Iwo l'o le gba wa la.*

Father, breathe an evening blessing  
Ere repose our spirits seal  
Sin and want we come confessing  
Thou canst save, and Thou canst heal.

### IOM 23

*Oluwa, ojo to fun wa pin  
Okunkun so de l'ase Re  
Wo l'akorin owuro wa si  
Iyin Re y'o m'ale wa dun*

The day Thou gavest Lord is ended  
The darkness falls at Thy behest,  
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,  
Thy praise shall hallow now our rest.

The hymns prepare adherents for a beautiful night rest with the texts that says a whole lot about God's protection and care during the night.

## **Bane of the Sustenance of Choral Evensong**

In the last few decades, what used to be the pride of evening worship on Sundays in the Anglican setting began to dwindle as a result of many factors, some of which are discussed here. Interests were undermined and attendance became greatly depleted without measure for that matter.

Advent of Pentecostalism as factor: The birth of Pentecostalism changed the narrative about worship in the mainline Churches. Members who wants to be seen



to be faithful to their denomination would attend services in the morning and they would go elsewhere for the evening service. The founders of those new generation churches were smart to work on the psyche of the members of the mainline Churches by attracting them with all sort of power packed programs and with that, so many of them jettisoned the attendance at evensong in their mainline churches. It was also observed that the way and manner in which such services (evensong) were been held or conducted made most members of the mainline Churches to abandon attending evensong. The age long tradition of singing the canticles and the creed made a whole lot of people to be so uncomfortable attending choral evensong. The call to prayer to the Lord's Prayer was parodied in such a ridicule way to make members who are attending mainline churches to feel that they do not have business being there. The parodied prayers is:

<b>Priest:</b> The Lord be with you	<i>Ki Oluwa ki o pelu yin</i>
<b>All:</b> And also with you	<i>Ki o si pelu emi re</i>
<b>Priest:</b> Let us pray	<i>E je ki a gbadura (E je ki a sun die)</i>
<b>Priest:</b> Lord have mercy on us	<i>Oluwa saanu fun wa (Oluwa kun wa loorun)</i>
<b>All:</b> Christ have mercy on us	<i>Kristi saanu fun wa (Kristi kun wa loorun)</i>
<b>Priest:</b> Lord have mercy on us	<i>Oluwa saanu fun wa (Oluwa kun wa loorun)</i>
<b>All:</b> Lord's prayer Our father <i>etal.</i>	<i>Baba wa ti n be li orun etal.</i>

Having to deal with this type of ridicule all the time made some priests who were members of the Evangelical Fellowship of Anglican Communion (EFAC) to change the mode of prayer from those read from the book of common prayer to the prayer of revival as it's being done in the new generation churches which now saw them abandoning the age long tradition of having to sing the collect, the call to worship together with prayer and the creed. The liturgy itself paved way for the new adjustments.

Furthermore, much more can still be said under this division of the bane of sustenance. Choral Evensong is totally solemn by its nature and in all intents and purposes was arranged to reveal a retiring mode from the rather active service mode of the morning matins. But . . . , it's been so eroded, giving way to the noisy new bride of gospel music mode which came with heavy instrumentation (heavily amplified guitar, trap set, *gangan* to mention a few) and loud expressions of worship. So the solemnity was completely thrown out and those who believe so

much in that mode of worship that would be present at those times began to draw back since what they wanted for a church service could no longer be achieved.

Bastardization of the Anglican hymn where people want to add drums to it even at the service. This was an offshoot of the introduction of electronic keyboard which in turn began to take the place of the original church organs. To the organ purists, it became a deliberate attempt to undermine them and their interests in church music. This was the foundation to the general downturn of the musical standards of Hymn singing in the Anglican Church because it permeates all facets of the church life. It was a moment of an indiscriminate liberalization of all music and worship standards. It was really devastating to the known church life to many.

Timing factor: The issue of timing may have been caused by the priests (primarily) who through the charismatic and evangelical consciousness grew to be unmindful of time as they could no longer sustain the discipline of a strict adherence to the perceived concise two hour Mattins at 10:00am on Sundays particularly in the mainline Churches. It takes so much longer time when services were held in the morning and the service which should end by 12:00noon is recklessly prolonged till late hours of afternoon thereby making it totally unreasonable, unrealistic and impossible for a repeat return at 5:00 or 6:00pm for the Evensong when they a times, just left some two (2) hours earlier. That definitely will be too strenuous for a one who probably will have to attend his/her society meeting before travelling a considerable long distance back home. All the above are completely out of the congregations' need to rest and probably prepare for their week's occupational pursuits. The outcome of that is that there has been no time to rest at all in-between the past and the coming work days.

When the priests are not conscious of the time to get things done within the ambit of time so that parishioners leave on time home so they can return for the evening service, it will result to nothing but such situations of loss of interest. In some mainline churches, services are unnecessarily long and winding going on for endless hours for 4/5 hours as the preaching alone may consume 1hr 20mins (or more) of the time and then thanksgiving with offering of different shades would now make the service to be long. Anytime the service becomes that long, boredom sets

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in and people tune off from such services. As time goes on if care is not taking, attendance at even the morning services would start to dwindle.

New Tide factor: Another factor that is affecting the attendance at the evensong is the new tide of worship happening all around members of the mainline churches. Getting stuck to the old ways of doing things has not helped in any way and this is what the advocate of Pentecostalism have capitalized on to win more members of the mainline Churches to their side. A good and enjoyable worship service should be a result of the ingenuity of priest in charge and when complacency takes hold of the character of the leader in a way to sniff life out of his worship approach and so full of the feeling of the salary is assured irrespective of laziness or hard work.

## **Conclusion**

The Paper concludes that for worship to be enhanced, there is an absolute need to revisit the ancient landmarks in church liturgical music practice especially in the areas of hymn singing and chanting in mattins and evensongs. Revisiting these landmarks will be possible through the following;

1. revitalization of the spirit of developing personnel who will consequently ensure good singing in the church services as it had been in times past when well-trained organists and singers mount the music podium of the church,
2. The priesthood of the church must be part of this scheme of re-evaluation, re-orientation on service timing and administration. Priests should understand that hymn singing is not a sin as recommended in the book of Colosians 3:16 of the Bible.
3. Anglican Church should work out a sure means of reviving the choral evensong with the right purpose of a purely solemn worship of God at the close of a day especially from the seminaries. Evensong should be considered reverential, penitential and thoughtful.
4. Modesty in the expression of the newly introduced flavors of percussion and dances that are attractive or captivating particularly before the present generation of worshipers, and in which the liturgy remains intact.

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### List of Oral Interviewees

S/N	Name	Age Yrs	Address	Date Of Interview
1.	Pa. Adedotun Olubi	81	An Octogenarian Chorister at St. David's Cathedral Kudeti, Ibadan and grandson to Late Revd Daniel Olubi (1st indigenous priest of St. David's Church Kudeti)	05/04/2014 10/09/2015
2.	Pa. T.A. Olawuwo (Late)	83	St. Micheal's Cathedral, Oke-Oyinbo, Oyo.	28/06/2013
3.	Mr. Bayo Kongi (Late)	74	Christ Anglican Church, Mapo, Ibadan.	20/11/2012
4.	Most. Revd. J.O. Akinfewa	63	Former Archbishop of Ibadan Province and Incumbent Bishop of Ibadan Diocese.	20/08/2017
5.	Rt. Revd. T.O.B. Fajemirokun (Rtd.)	70	Bishop of Ijesha North Diocese	24/05/2015
6.	Rt. Revd. Samuel Olakunle Egbeunmi	61	Bishop of Ilesa Southwest	15/06/2016
7.	Mr. Kayode Oni (Late)	70	Former Organist - St. James Cathedral, Oke-Bola, St. Peter's Cathedral, Aremo Ibadan and Hoare's Methodist Cathedral Yaba, Lagos.	18/12/2017
8.	Very Revd. A. Adebiji	52	The Provost - Cathedral Church of St. Peter's, Aremo, Ibadan.	23/05/2015