

CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CUSTOMARY/CULTURAL PRACTICES

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Abstract

Christianity remains one of the most powerful religions, if not the most powerful, in Africa. Christianity has tremendous influence and impact on the African continent and what happens in it. The positions of Christians have often gravely and negatively affected African culture as it has led to the destruction of sacred groves, African cultural artefacts and heritage, destruction of traditional institutions, etc. This is what makes it imperative to study the relationship between Christianity and African customary or cultural practices. The paper theorises that fanatical and fundamentalist brands of Christianity more often than not have no place for African culture, for them African culture and customary practices are evil and Christians should not in any way partake in them. They perceive the biblical statement, "do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers," to mean total separation from all customs and traditions. This paper uses a critical, analytic, evaluative, and hermeneutic methods to argue that African culture is not evil. The bible is rooted in many traditional customary practices. It argues for Christianity to have a positive attitude towards culture. Culture and customary practices should be prophetically examined and evaluated. Negative aspects of cultural practices should be transformed, while good aspects should be adapted or inculturated into Christianity. The paper concludes that it is imperative that this be done.

Keywords: Africa, Christianity, Culture, Customs, Inculturation, Religion, Traditions.

Introduction

Right from the advent of Christianity in the land of Africa, there has always been a continuous conflict and tension. This conflict arises from the fact that there are strands of Christianity that see no place for cultural practices in Christianity. While some Christians believe that Christians can engage in practising some traditional customary practices, others believe that Christians should have nothing to do with traditional customary practices. Christians who opine that Christians should have nothing to do with traditional customary practices often quote the Pauline text that states:

Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Be'lial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." ¹⁷ Therefore come out from them, and be separate

from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you,¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6, Revised Standard Version (RSV)).

They have interpreted do not be unequally yoked or mismated with unbelievers to mean we should not participate in all traditional customary practices, which they call pagan. Does “do not be unequally yoked” mean have no relationship and dealings with non-believers? The paper will examine this issue. There is no doubt that Christianity is the most populous religion in many parts of Africa. Christian beliefs and practices matter to many Africans. The position of Christians deeply affects what happens in Africa. Fundamentalist and fanatical shades of Christianity affect African cultural heritage and matters. Narrow and parochial attitudes of some Christians have led to the burning of African sacred sites, the destruction of cultural artefacts, the rejection of African food systems, etc. It is an important issue that should be discussed and evaluated. Negative forms of Christianity always pose a danger to African cultures and societies. Anizoba & Johnson (2021), Karbon & Naira (2024), and Ikeke (2025) have all highlighted the impact of Christianity on African culture. The goal of this paper is to assert that Christianity should adopt a prophetic and dialogical attitude towards African culture. It should critique the negative aspects of African culture, while promoting the authentic values derived from African culture. African culture is not necessarily evil; there are many good things in the culture. In pursuing the goal of this paper, the paper will define some key terms, examine the actual Christian attitude to African culture, and look at the bible whether there was the existence of customary practices that informed the people of Israel. It will also highlight some African traditional customary practices and the way forward in relating to them. When that has been done, the paper will be brought to an end.

Definitions of Terms

Two key terms need to be defined in this paper: Christianity, traditional customary practices, and cultural practices. Macy (2007) writes that: “Christianity can be understood as a family of faith traditions united in their monotheism and in their belief in the central role of Jesus of Nazareth in redemption”(p. 232). Christianity is the religious tradition founded and emanating from the life and ministry of Christ. The message of Christianity is centered around Christ as the redeemer of humanity. After his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, his disciples carried on his message into the then-known world, and it has spread to our days. Christianity is not co-terminus with the church, but they are almost co-terminus. The church emanates from Christianity. It is rooted in the Judeo-Christian scriptures, the Old Testament and New Testament.

The next term requiring clarification is cultural practices. Etuk (2002) opines that culture refers to the totality of a people's way of life (their worldviews, what they think, their social organisations, institutions, educational systems, religions, etc.). There is no group of people without a culture, and every human being is embedded in a cultural system.

Whether a person is aware of it or not, the person is being influenced to a certain degree by their culture. It is human beings who create and transmit culture through their way of life. No culture can exist on its people. As people meet for trade and for other reasons, they bring their culture to bear on other cultures. Shorter (1998) writes that: "Culture is the whole way of life, material and non-material, of a human society. It is essentially social, the product of a society's traditions and its interaction with other societies. Culture is a dynamic, not a static, phenomenon. It is also the product of human history" (p. 22). Nnamani (2006) writes that culture refers to people's behaviours, their beliefs, customs, values, language, inheritance, etc. In Espin (2007), "Culture is, more fundamentally, the historically shared means and ways through which a people unveil themselves (to themselves and only secondarily to others as human)" (p.302). Cultural practices then refer to the behaviours, ways of life, customs, traditions, and even beliefs that a group of people have held probably from time immemorial and have transmitted from generation to generation.

Related to culture is custom. Custom refers to the way a people have accepted to do things, and this way has been transmitted from generation to generation. The word custom can be used synonymously with culture in some cases. A culture is made up of a people's customs and traditions regarding their religion, political settings, food systems, etc. Concerning the word, traditional practices, Fiveable (2024) states that: "Traditional practices refer to the customs, rituals, and ways of life that have been passed down through generations within a particular culture or community. These practices often embody the values, beliefs, and historical experiences of a group, playing a significant role in maintaining cultural identity, especially in a world that is increasingly globalized." There are many examples of traditional customary practices practiced in Africa. They include customary marriage, child marriage, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation, breaking of kola nuts. In this paper, when mention is made of traditional customary practices or traditional cultural practices, the paper is referring to the same phenomenon.

Christian Attitude and Response to Traditional Customary Practices

The predominant Christian attitude to the traditional customary practices (tcp) has been a hostile one. It is one that condemned TCP in its totality. Aleke (2022) writes that the Christian missionary approach to African culture was essentially a monologue and imposed a foreign ethnocentric ideology on Africa, as African culture was seen as inferior, primitive, animist, and pagan. It is painful to note further that with the emergence of state religion in Rome, Roman culture prevailed in Christianity, and in church documents such as the encyclical *Instructabili* of Pope Leo XIII, the papal bull, *Romanus Pontifex* of Pope Nicholas V, the encyclical *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV, *Rerum Ecclesiae* of Pope Pius XI, a negative image of non-Christians peoples is presented as they are seen as living in darkness, savagery and require being brought to light by the church.

The attitude of seeing African cultures as dark, evil, savagery and in need of being enlightened by Christianity prevails today in the evangelistic drive of Christians. African

culture is presented as if it has nothing to offer the Christian faith. Anything associated with African cultures, such as their kinship, chieftaincy, marital, and social institutions, is necessarily seen as evil and that Christians should not associate with them. For many Christians who participate in traditional marriage, it is merely tolerated. Okere (1988) states that the missionaries, with British traders and administrators, brought along with them European values, customs, and cultures. This implies that often the European missionaries saw African customs and values from the perspective of Europe. Many African values are akin to biblical values and do not conflict with biblical values. These values and customs include customary law, marriage institutions, inheritance and succession, kinship, land tenure system, criminal law, etc. While it is true that not all aspects of African customs and laws were in accord with the principles of human rights, natural justice, etc, so also are customs and values from Europe. The missionaries treated Africa as if all African values, customs, and institutions were bad. They saw them as evil, and if you must become a Christian, you must reject the entirety of your African customs and traditions. This is why, till today, some fanatical Christians still carry this missionary mentality. They can go on crusade and, without respect for the freedom of conscience and religious belief, tear down African sacred groves, shrines, and cultural artefacts without the permission of those in charge. Etuk (2002) notes that it is well acknowledged that early missionaries, out of extreme zeal, poor cross-cultural communication, and ethnocentric pride, castigated African values and cultures and confused the gospel with Western cultural ideals, which they imposed on Africans. One of Africa's foremost scholars of African religion, Idowu (1969), propounds that:

....evangelism in Africa was based upon the false notion that Africa has nothing to offer as a cultural or spiritual basis for the Gospel. Hastily conducted anthropological and ethnological researches have given the impression that if the European educator or evangelist came to Africa, it must be to introduce something that was completely unrelated to the ways and wisdom of her peoples” (p. 9).

In this regard, it is imperative to cite another author, Cole (1967, as cited in Okoh, 2010, p. 150) avers that:

To clear the way for Christianity, the missionaries destroyed the culture they found without stopping to examine it. There must have been some good in the old tribal ways for them to have lasted so long as they did, but the missionaries decreed that everything African was 'pagan'. An African who heard the Christian message and wished to be saved had to give up or at least appear to give up his tribal traditions and customs.

It is painful to note that much of what is taught as Christian theology in many African seminaries is western Christian theology and echo theology of western theologians. Many African ministers of the gospel continue to imbibe the western missionary theological ideology of seeing African culture as demonic and inferior. These ministers uncritically pass this on to their congregations. Someone may ask why we

always refer to the missionary era, which has long passed. The issue is that the missionaries are gone, but their effects remain. The colonial mentality they left is still with us. Their Eurocentric interpretation of the gospel is still with us. Many vibrant missionary evangelists in Europe and North America continue to export their brand of fanatical Christianity that sees African culture and customs as something to be renounced, and continue to infiltrate the African continent. And in a globalised world of the internet and massive communication technologies, they continue to broadcast into Africa through satellite television stations like TBN, Daystar, etc a version of the gospel that rejects African cultural institutions.

In church history, the Catholic Christian attitude has been a more positive one. Catholic Christianity sees a positive element in culture, though some strands of Catholic Christianity have not always been positive in this regard. It can be argued that the Fathers of Vatican II (1965) brought a great revolution to the Catholic understanding of the relationship between Christianity and culture. They affirmed that there can be rays of truth even in non-Christian religions and cultures. They saw culture as a preparation for the culture. The birth of inculturation theology brought a wide door open for Catholics to allow Christianity to be incarnated in culture, and to accept the good elements of culture. In the words of the Fathers of Vatican II (1964), "Since the kingdom of Christ is not of this world(120), the Church or people of God in establishing that kingdom takes nothing away from the temporal welfare of any people. On the contrary it fosters and takes to itself, insofar as they are good, the ability, riches, and customs in which the genius of each people expresses itself. Taking them to itself it purifies, strengthens, elevates, and ennoble them." Traditional customary practices do not equal evil or demonic. Traditional customary practices were evolved by people and societies within particular historic situations to enable them navigate through life. They should be judged for how they promote human rights, human flourishing, women's dignity, environmental well-being, and their being in tune with worship of the true God. That something is a traditional customary practise does not mean it is evil, as some fanatical and fundamentalist Christians want to make us believe. To be born again does not mean you have to renounce everything cultural. It is ironic to note that the same person who is rejecting traditional marriage is willing to get married in a modern court. That tells you how Europeanised some Christians have become. Okoh (2010) rightly notes that from current Catholic teachings, it should be understood that the missionary should respect traditional institutions such as kinship, chieftaincy, extended family systems, etc. It does not mean everything in traditional culture is acceptable. Rather, it should be critically evaluated and examined, and the good in them sifted out.

Some Traditional Customary Practices in the Bible

It is important to look at the Judeo-Christian scriptures, the bible that people often quote, to see if there were cultural practices at all in it. It will be wrong simply to condemn TCR because it is a customary practice. There is no group of people without customs. Even in the bible, the Jewish people had a lot of customary practices. What people should ask is whether TCP is enhancing life, promoting human rights, and fostering godly values. Igbo

(2013) writes that: “There is hardly any religion that has not adapted some values from its host culture or from other religions” (p. 65). Igbo (2013) takes ideas from L Magesa to give some examples of adaptation from culture as follows: (1) Israel's temple was inspired by Egypt, (2) elements of the concept of covenant are taken from Canaanite culture, (3) the Mosaic Law has similarities to the Sumerian, Babylonian, Hittite, and Assyrian Law codes. There is nothing wrong with borrowing from another human culture, but it must be adapted for a good purpose.

One area in which some of the people of Israel participated in culturally traditional practices was in political governance and cultural leadership in their days. When the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 13 that authority is of God and Christians should obey the political powers, he was speaking of traditional Roman authority. Paul asked us to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-4). He was referring to traditional Roman authority, etc. In the Bible, there were Jewish believers, Israelites, and Christians who were engaged in the traditional authority of their days. Joseph served in Egypt as Prime Minister. He bore an Egyptian name. Egypt was a “pagan” system. Joseph saved the whole world in Egypt. What if he had refused to serve because it was a traditional authority? He served without partaking in the religious rites of Egypt. Joseph, a young Israelite man becoming Prime Minister in “pagan” Egypt, is worth reflecting on over and over again. Permit citing below this passage on his becoming second in command in Egypt.

....you shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.' 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Behold, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 and he made him to ride in his second chariot; and they cried before him, 'Bow the knee!' Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaph'enath-pane'ah; and he gave him in marriage As'enath, the daughter of Poti'phera priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt (Genesis 41, RSV)

Egypt is a customary system, rooted in traditional Egyptian religion. The signet ring that Pharaoh who was revered as a manifestation of the gods, placed on Joseph's hand will not have the engraving of Egyptian gods or divinities. What of the garments he wore? What about the gold chain and the chariots on which he rode? All these will have elements depicting the religious system of Egypt. Joseph partook in the traditional marriage of Egypt. This is not to say that Joseph worshipped Egyptian gods or venerated the system. It is to bring out the fact that he inserted himself into a traditional kingship system and functioned from there to save the world from famine. The refusal of Christians to partake in traditional systems does not make the world a better place. They should participate without being idolatrous.

Daniel and the three Hebrew children served in Babylon. Daniel refused idolatry and ritual compromise (Daniel 1). Esther was married to a “pagan” king and served in Persia. She used her position to protect her people. What if she had refused to serve? The Jews would have been destroyed. David operated as a traditional monarch in the Ancient Near East (ANE). Cornelius was a Roman officer with real military power, but he was devout and God-fearing (Acts 10). He later converted to Christianity, and he remained a Roman officer. Sergius Paulus, a Roman regional governor of Cyprus believed the gospel (Acts 13:6-12). It will be wrong to say that once they converted to Christianity, they abandoned their positions. In Romans 16:23, Erastus is identified as a Roman civic officer; he was a Christian leader

Igbo (2013) notes that the apostolic church took the titles of *Kurios*, *Son of God*, *Soter*, and *Logos* from the Greco-Roman world. It should also be noted that Igbo (2013) avers that the early Christian church did not impose Jewish dietary laws and circumcision, and because of this, the church should be open to cultural values from other cultures

Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, did not found Christianity to destroy culture. Jesus was critical of the negative aspects of culture, but he upheld the good aspects of culture. Jesus followed Jewish customary feasts and festivals. He was dedicated in the temple (Luke 2:22-40). He attended a traditional Jewish marriage (John 2:1-11), and likely drank wine at the marriage feast. He used traditional methods of healing to heal people, such as using spittle (John 9:6-7), etc. What we consider to be Israel's religion today was all part of their customary tradition.

The Way Forward in Relating to African Traditional Customary Practices

In the previous section, the paper outlined that many traditional customary practices existed among biblical people. In much of biblical history, the Jewish people or people of Israel lived in foreign lands or were under the control of foreign empires. These empires had their own traditional customary practices. The Jews who lived in these empires associated with the lands in which they lived. The true Jews participated in life in these empires while abstaining from what is idolatrous and pagan. They engaged in the leadership structures of those lands. There were circumstances in which they bore names given to them by the empire. Apart from the above, much of the so-called bible culture was informed and influenced by customary practices and beliefs of the people of the Ancient Near East. The stories in Genesis 1-11 were informed by Babylonian myths of Eluma Elish, etc. Abraham's ancestry is from Ur in Mesopotamia. His wife is from there. Isaac's wife is from there. Jacob's wife is from there. They all did the traditional customary marriage of their ancestral place of origin. Joseph was married to the daughter of the wife of an Egyptian Priest, Potiphera. He likely underwent the Egyptian rite of marriage.

From what is argued in the previous section, it is important to affirm that political authority and power spoken of in most places in the bible is traditional and customary. Every society in biblical days had its political power and authority. We have been so colonised and westernised that we tend to see the system of governance brought by the British as the genuine one, and even name it biblical, and we quickly condemn our traditional one. Authority and power are good and should be used for the common good, whether traditional or modern. We Christians can partake in modern political power; there is no reason why we should not partake in traditional authority. After all, politics is filled with many risks and intrigues, but we still encourage Christians to enter.

One customary practice among Africans is the practice of taboos. Taboos are very important in every African culture. Very often many Christians have the attitude of undermining African taboos. You read in *Things Fall Apart* of how in extreme, misguided religious zeal, Enoch went to kill the sacred python. It is painful to note that while Christians want their own cultural practices, places of worship, etc to be respected and protected, some of them don't want to accord the same to people of other religions. Because you are a Christian, it does not mean you should demean and devalue the traditional taboos of Africans. Biblical cultures is filled with many taboos. The dietary laws of Moses and many other religious ritual regulations border on taboos. If you violate, then some consequences follow. Jesus respected the Jewish temple and would not allow people to turn it to a marketplace. It is a taboo to desecrate the temple. Christians should not fail to recognise that there is a fundamental and universal right to religious freedom and freedom of conscience. A disagreement with any traditional or customary practice should not lead to abusing adherents of these beliefs and practices as pagans, evil, or people living in darkness. Africa has never been a dark continent. The United Nations (1948) enunciates that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance"(art, 18).

This paper proposes that there should be mutual dialogue between Christianity and African culture following the framework of inculturation. Not everything that was brought in the name of Christianity is truly Christian. Some of the things brought in the name of Christianity are simply by-products of Greco-Roman and Latin culture. Human culture is not evil simply because it is human culture. Human beings everywhere belong to God (Exodus 19). The societies and cultures that they have evolved are inspired in some aspects. It is what runs in conflict with the worship of the true God, such as idolatry, divination, superstition, etc that should be rejected. No human culture is indeed perfect. The bible itself, though inspired, is also a product of the socio-cultural and historical circumstances of the world in which it evolved. Aleke (2022) proposes that Christianity, instead of condemning African culture, should engage in faith-culture dialectics in integrating

African wisdom, proverbs, philosophies, worldviews, and concepts in the propagation of the gospel. This integration, or what some will call inculturation, should not be superficial. African cultural institutions of governance and social management, such as the kingship, chieftaincy, marriage, age grade, etc should be critically accepted.

The question of incarnating Christianity into African culture should not be overlooked. Ekechukwu (1988) argues that:

The message of the gospel is received according to the milieu and manner of the receiver. Nobody speaks from nowhere. For it is only when the people have incarnated Christ's message in their cultural setting that it transforms them. Unless the African churches take the issue of incarnation seriously, they will continue having Christians with divided loyalties-one leg in Christian praxis and the other in traditional religious practices (p. 143).

Christianity was founded in a culture and adopted some elements of that culture. The Christian message was not communicated to humans in a heavenly language. Jesus communicated his message in Aramaic, a human language. The bible has been translated into different human languages. Christians made use of customary institutions and paraphernalia to propagate the message. Paul made use of the Roman Appian Way to move from place to place. He submitted himself to Roman authority. He declared that the gods and idols have no power, and so Christians can eat meat bought from the marketplace, even if it has been sacrificed to deities. Africans should not throw away their cultural institutions in the name of Christianity. What needs to be done is their transformation. Negative aspects of cultural institutions, such as idolatry, sacrifice to deities, human sacrifice at the death of a king, the Osu caste system, patriarchalism, and many others, should be denounced.

It is a reality that no human culture is static. Culture is dynamic. There is cultural diffusion. One culture can learn from another culture and even adopt the ways of another culture. There is nothing wrong with Africans rejecting negative aspects of their cultures and learn from other cultures, even religious cultures such as Christianity. It is in this sense that some Africans' acceptance of Christianity is not a weakness, but a strength. But this acceptance should not lead to a rejection of the entirety of African traditional cultures and customs. This paper would like to propose that the attitude of the Christian to African cultures and customs should be prophetic. Kiaziku (2009) opines that: "The prophetic function of Christ is not to be underestimated. Though born and raised in the culture of Palestine, Jesus adopted a challenging attitude towards that culture. Jesus deconstructed the dominant culture of his time. His conflicts with the scribes and Pharisees are an example of the way he confronted the traditional culture of his people (cf. mark 7:1-13)" (p. 72). Yet, it is not only African traditional customary practices that Christians should adopt a prophetic attitude towards, but this prophetic attitude should also be adopted towards Christian culture, for the bearers of Christianity have not always been faithful to the Judeo-Christian prophetic tradition of social justice and promotion of human flourishing.

The best way to evangelise is not to totally separate from people in the name of “do not be unequally yoked.” It is not to cut oneself off from all traditional customary institutions and practices. Christ went to people's homes, workplaces, and in the streets to meet with them. He reclined at the table and engaged in conversation with people. Some of his greatest sermons were preached while he was in people's houses. The Christian becomes less effective when the Christian cannot be found in the streets and byways of life. The church should not act as a fortress set apart from the city. Christians need to realise that God has made them light and salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-14). Salt becomes less effective when it is not in the midst of the food or inside the pot and plate. Christians must mingle with people. The Christian should be part of customary institutions to act as a transforming agent and catalyst. It is also important to use the image and symbol of leaven here as seen in the parable of the leaven (Matthew 13:33). Overmiller (2025) writes that:

This parable is simple. There is one character and one basic action. The character is a woman; the action is making bread dough. To make the dough, the woman mixed a small amount of leaven (or yeast) into a large amount of meal (or flour). By mixing this small amount of yeast throughout the flour, the yeast permeated the entire loaf. The amount of dough mentioned would have been enough to feed more than one hundred people (para 7).

Christians carry a very powerful influence in this world. That influence should be used to permeate all society and traditional structures and practices. Not to eliminate them but to transform them. We reduce our influence when we simply criticize traditional institutions from outside. There is a need to move away from the attitude or practice of Christ against culture, Christ above culture, etc. The best attitude that this paper proposes is that of Christ in dialogue with culture. If one were to see Christ as the redeemer of culture, that may not be wrong. But the redeemer of culture does not mean that culture is evil, and Christ destroys culture. Christ was incarnated into a culture and lived in that culture while redeeming the culture. What we truly need is an inculturated gospel, a gospel in which Christianity does not destroy good traditional customary practices but adapts them. The words of Nnamani (2006) are helpful here; he states, “Inculturation is a critical and creative exercise. By engaging in a creative criticism, it makes for the emergence of a new identity in every Christ-culture contact, an identity compatible both with the demands of the Gospel and with the positive qualities of a people's culture” (p. 352). The attitude that because we are Christians, born again, bible-believing and Holy-Spirit -filled means we have to destroy African traditional customary beliefs and practices is not acceptable. World Council of Churches, as cited by Magesa (2022) states that when the Christian gospel authentically interacts with culture, it challenges culture, critiques culture, and transforms culture. Magesa (2022) cites the World Council of Churches, further stating that aspects of culture that produce injustice, suppression of human rights, hinders sustainable relationships towards creation are challenged prophetically by the gospel. The attitude of Christianity towards traditional customary practices would be the same. It should confront idolatry, magic, charms, superstition, discrimination against women, patriarchy, and other aspects of culture that demean humans and offend true worship of the supreme being. As it

is said in popular parlance, “you do not throw away the baby with the dirty water.” Christianity destroys evil, but builds what is good.

Conclusion

The paper examined the conflictual relationship between fanatical and fundamentalist brands of Christianity and African traditional culture. It argued for a dialogical relationship between Christianity and African traditional customary practices. The paper showed that culture or tradition is not necessarily evil. Culture can be good, and there are many good aspects of culture. Just as the baby should not be thrown away with the dirty water, so also culture should not be thrown away. But can be critiqued, evaluated, deconstructed, and the good aspects of culture adapted into Christianity. There is a need to cultivate an inculturating mindset and prophetic attitude towards culture. An examination of the biblical tradition, as the paper revealed, shows that the bible is rooted in traditional culture and customary practices. The bible is filled with examples of traditional taboos in the Mosaic law, Israelites participating in traditional governance and authority in the lands in which they dwell, such as the cases of Joseph, Esther, and the three Hebrew children with Daniel. African culture is not evil, and Africa is not a dark continent. Just as Christianity has been transmitted through the vehicle of other cultures, so also it can be transmitted through African cultures and languages. The paper concludes that all Christians must develop a healthier and more positive attitude towards African culture and customary practices/traditions.

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