




Exploring the Interplay between Biblical Culture and African Traditional Customs: A Contextual Investigation

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 <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.107.234>

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between biblical culture (Old Testament) and African traditional customs to identify similarities, differences, and contextual integration in modern Christian expression. The biblical culture depicted the marriage ceremonies, rituals, community frameworks, and theological concepts that serve as a basis for comprehending divine-human relationships, collective identity, and spiritual expression. Conversely, African traditional customs marked by communal values, honour for ancestors, oral traditions, and Indigenous rituals, portray a rich spirituality shaped by historical and sociocultural contexts. This study employs a contextual method to evaluate how African traditional customs correspond with or contradict biblical standards. The research investigates how biblical principles have been adapted to African contexts without losing their scriptural integrity. Findings indicate that while some African customs align with biblical values, others pose theological challenges. Thus, the study, therefore, advocates for a thoughtful engagement that transforms cultural expressions while maintaining biblical truths

Keywords: Exploring, Interplay, Biblical Culture, African, Traditional Practices, Analytical Investigation.



Introduction

The advent of Christianity, introduced by the British colonialists, brought many cultural changes, which banished the culture and traditions of African peoples. Modernization had negative impacts. Some cultural practices considered barbaric were discarded, and some were reviewed, while others were replaced (Ayemya, 2019, 51). Today, Many Christians believe that it is outrageous and even blasphemous to compare African traditional customs with biblical culture. This is based on the understanding that Christianity is a superior religion to African Traditional Religion. Thus, African customs (Religions, beliefs, and cultural practices) are described with derogatory terms such as paganism, fetishism, heathenism, animism, polytheism, and idolatry (Osa, 2011, 177-188). Raz (2004) opines that Value is the great uniter and the common bond of mankind. However, as the Bible spread across Africa, its teachings intersected with existing traditions, creating fusions. This study explores how biblical culture, norms, values, and worldview represented in the scripture (Old Testament), interact with African traditional customs to identify areas of convergence and divergence, and assess the theological and practical implications for African Christians.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive and contextual approach, aimed at carefully examining the interaction between biblical culture and African traditional customs within their historical, theological, and socio-cultural contexts. The descriptive approach is appropriate because the study does not seek to test hypotheses or measure variables statistically, but rather to interpret meanings, practices, symbols, and values embedded in both biblical and African traditional worldviews. By describing and analysing these cultural elements, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how both traditions converge, diverge, and influence contemporary Christian life in Africa.

The research relied primarily on secondary data, drawn from both biblical and scholarly sources. Biblical texts from the Old and New Testaments serve as the foundational sources, especially passages that reflect cultural practices such as kinship, marriage, leadership, worship, sacrifice, hospitality, and communal life. These texts were examined within their original Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman cultural settings. In addition, the study engaged a wide range of academic literature, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and conference papers in biblical studies, theology, anthropology, African traditional religion, and cultural studies. African traditional customs were explored through ethnographic writings, historical accounts, and documented oral traditions from various African societies. This combination of sources enabled a balanced and informed comparative analysis.

Data was thus analysed using a contextual and comparative method. First, selected biblical cultural practices were interpreted using historical-critical and socio-cultural approaches, paying attention to the original audience, cultural norms, and theological intentions of the biblical texts. This helped to avoid anachronistic interpretations and ensured faithful engagement with Scripture. Second, African traditional customs were described within their indigenous contexts, highlighting their social functions, symbolic meanings, and ethical values. The study then undertook a comparative analysis, identifying areas of continuity, similarity, tension, and divergence between biblical culture and African traditional practices. This process allowed the research to demonstrate how certain African customs resonate with biblical values, while others may require reinterpretation or theological critique.



Culture

Culture is a concept that crosses all boundaries. It represents the refined understanding and various expressions that define a particular nation, community, or historical era manifested through literature, art, traditional practices, social institutions, naming systems, marriage customs, moral codes, and music. The roots of culture extend back to humanity's very origins. In effect, culture and humankind emerged together. In this sense, culture or what we might call civilization appears as a mythical figure in the religious stories of many ancient societies, establishing social frameworks and cultural goods while teaching people the arts of civilized life (Abe, 2008). More broadly, culture refers to how particular groups of people live: their socio-political and economic activities, their everyday practices, all passed down from one generation to the next (Oyewole, 2022, 1-8). Causadias (2020, 310-322), Overton (2010), and Triandis (2007) suggest that culture works as an integrated system, its parts are inseparable and mutually influencing. The whole shapes the parts, just as the parts shape the whole. People create culture through shared activities in physical spaces, while culture, in turn, influences how people engage in those activities and shape those spaces.

Anthropologists and other scholars have long disagreed about whether cultures are coherent or fragmented. Taylor offered one extreme view, characterizing culture as "shreds and patches," essentially a jumbled collection of religion, philosophy, technology, customs, and artifacts with no real organizing principle holding them together (1920). Durkheim presented another form of incoherence in his work on anomie, which he described as a state of "normlessness." In this condition, society fails to set limits on individual desires or provide any systematic expectations to guide behavior. Under such circumstances, there seems to be no basis for cultural order at all. Durkheim believed that anomie would likely lead to both social breakdown and individual pathology (1950).

However, Morgan (1963) and Engels (1964), who built on Morgan's ideas, found a definite organizing principle within cultures at different stages of development. Their materialist approach suggested that a society's level of technology shapes its religion, family structure, social stratification, and other customs. Benedict (1934), often seen as a champion of cultural integration, actually took a more nuanced position. She argued that any given culture is infused with a "permeated dominating idea." This integration happens through a complex process of selection and exclusion.

Consider Gothic architecture: what started as little more than a preference for height and light gradually became, through evolving standards of taste, the unique and unified art form of the thirteenth century. It discarded elements that didn't fit, modified others for its own purposes, and invented new ones that matched its aesthetic vision. p. 47.

Yet Benedict also noticed extreme fragmentation in some cultures. Like certain individuals, some societies don't organize their activities around a central motivation; they scatter. They may appear to be pursuing certain goals at one moment, then veer off in a completely different direction that seems inconsistent with everything that came before, leaving no clue about what might come next (Benedict, 1934, 223). In Benedict's view, the difference between coherent and fragmented cultures mapped onto the difference between simpler societies like the Zuñi and Kwakiutl and modern Western cultures. She went so far as to describe "our own society" as "an extreme example of lack of integration" (Benedict, 1934, 229).



Theoretical Framework

Cultural Studies Theory

Cultural studies theories emphasise diversity, inclusivity, and individual freedom in interpreting culture. Aybike argues that culture is dynamic and shaped by human creativity, agency, and social interaction rather than fixed traditions or dominant ideologies (Aybike, 2020, 135). Don views culture as a site of negotiation where meanings, values, and identities are constantly redefined through dialogue and participation (Don, 2015, 401-421). Theories such as pluralism, postmodernism, and multiculturalism support the idea that all cultural expressions deserve equal recognition. This approach promotes tolerance, critical thinking, and empowerment, encouraging societies to celebrate differences while fostering equality and mutual respect among diverse groups. In this research, this theoretical lens enables the analysis of both biblical culture and African traditional customs as living cultural expressions shaped by historical experiences, social structures, and religious beliefs. Rather than treating biblical culture as merely ancient or African traditions as merely primitive, the theory allows both to be examined as meaning-making systems that respond to human needs and divine encounters.

Cultural Materialism Theory

Harris (1968) developed Cultural Materialism as a theoretical approach that explains culture through the lens of material conditions such as technology, environment, and economic organization. It posits that a society's infrastructure (means of production and reproduction) determines its social structure and ideology. Cultural practices, beliefs, and rituals are thus adaptations to material realities rather than purely symbolic constructs. Harris argued that material constraints shape cultural evolution, offering a scientific framework for understanding human behavior. Scholars like Orser (2017) and Smith (2020, 45-60) expand the theory to contemporary contexts, including globalization and environmental change. Cultural materialism helps researchers analyse how economic and ecological factors influence cultural norms, from food production to religion and politics. It remains significant in anthropology and sociology for linking cultural meaning with tangible, empirical realities. This theoretical perspective informs the analysis by encouraging an examination of how both biblical culture and African traditional customs emerged in response to concrete material realities.

Cultural Relativism

Cultural Relativism is an anthropological theory introduced by Boas (1940), emphasizing that cultural beliefs and practices must be understood within their own social contexts rather than judged by external standards. It rejects ethnocentrism and promotes respect for cultural diversity, arguing that no culture is inherently superior to another. Herskovits (1958) and Rachels (2019) expanded the concept, highlighting its ethical implications in cross-cultural understanding and moral philosophy. Cultural relativism remains vital in anthropology and sociology for promoting tolerance, contextual analysis, and appreciation of cultural uniqueness. This perspective informs the study by guiding the analysis to approach both biblical culture and African traditional customs with respect and fairness. Biblical practices are interpreted within their ancient historical and cultural settings, while African traditions are examined within their indigenous worldviews, social structures, and religious meanings.



Diffusionism Theory

Diffusionism Theory emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as an anthropological explanation for the spread of cultural traits across societies. It posits that most cultural innovations, such as technology, religion, and art, originate in a few cultural centers and then diffuse or spread to other regions through migration, trade, conquest, or contact. Scholars such as Tylor (1871), Graebner (1911), and Frobenius (1897) argue that cultural similarities among distant societies result from borrowing rather than independent invention. Diffusionists emphasized tracing the historical routes of cultural transmission to understand human development. Though later criticized for underestimating local innovation, diffusionism remains valuable in cultural studies, archaeology, and history for explaining cultural exchange, globalization, and hybridization in both ancient and modern contexts (Faridullah, 2024).

In anthropology and cultural geography, diffusionism deals with the movement of ideas, technologies, and practices between cultures. Human beings are creators; we make objects and acquire new manners. It is not a new observation because scholars have long observed that various cultures occasionally employ incredibly similar tools, techniques, or cultural practices (Dangqing and Jingxin, 2024). Here arises another interesting question: do these similarities come about due to the spread (diffusion) of ideas, or did they independently arise in various places? In diffusionism, the cultural elements of one society to another over geographical areas are transmitted out of their society through mutual interaction. A good example is the hammock (Guilz, 2021). European sailors had spent centuries lying uneasily on decks of their ships on heaps of rope or whatever they could endure. The hammock was introduced by Christopher Columbus in his first voyage to the New World. The idea spread easily and was adopted by other European seafaring countries, and within a short time, it became the norm of sleeping on ships. Relocation diffusion occurs when people move or groups of people migrate physically between localities, taking their culture with them.

The Puritans settled in New England, moved to build their religious ways in a new land. Expansion diffusion is a notion that explains how a new cultural aspect diffuses through a growing population that leads to a dramatic rise in the amount of people who adopt it (Robbins, 2014). Hierarchical diffusion is when cultural concepts appear to jump up and down between elites in one urban centre, through the non-elite or less affluent regions, to elites in another city. This trend seems to have been the case with the proliferation of sushi eating in the United States. The idea of contagious diffusion can and does propagate just like the diseases: in fact, this very word can actually be defined as the diffusion of diseases across the culture. This has been the trend with the spread of HIV/AIDS. When one culture adapts the overall idea of another culture and uses it in a new context within its culture, this is referred to as stimulus diffusion. An example of this kind of diffusion is the diffusion of reindeer herding among Siberian peoples (Matt, 2024). Diffusion may be slowed, delayed, or even blocked due to a variety of factors. The effect of time and distance was that the spread of cultural features could be restricted by time and distance until modern transportation appeared. In some cases, cultures engage actively to draw up some cultural alterations in an effort to ensure that such alterations are not adopted. This approach helps to explain how cultural similarities may arise across different societies without assuming direct biblical influence or cultural superiority

The Biblical Culture in Academic Debate.

The word Bible originates in the Greek language: *τὰ βιβλία*, the books (books) (*biblion*) (Acts 24:7) (Bandstra, 2004, 126-247). A bible is not a book but a group of papers whose complicated history



we have yet to comprehend. The earliest books began as oral traditions of songs and tales from one generation to the next. Only nowadays, twenty-first-century scholars start to consider the intersection between writing, performance, memorization, and oral aspects of these texts (Carr, 2011). According to Riches, the biblical writings were published in significantly different political, cultural, economic, and ecological conditions in the lives of their authors (Riches, 2021). Certain pieces of writing mirror a nomadic lifestyle. Other sources belong to individuals of established kingdoms and Temple worship, of exile, of intense persecution by foreign invaders, of royal courts, of wandering people, and of those who identified themselves as the sophisticated writers of the Hellenistic world.

Biblical culture, biblical worldview, and biblical standards are used interchangeably. However, Biblical culture contains aspects on how people lived daily, their family systems, leadership patterns, economic activities, worship practices, moral expectations, and relationships with God and one another. It reflects the historical realities of ancient Israel and the early Christian communities, shaped by their environment, traditions, and encounters with neighbouring cultures. The biblical worldview reflects how people see God, humanity, morality, community, and the world through the lens of Scripture. It emphasises belief in one sovereign God, the dignity and responsibility of human beings, the importance of obedience, justice, love, and faithful relationships, and the conviction that life has meaning under God's guidance. While Biblical standards represent God's expectations for how people should live, relating rightly to God, to others, and to society. These standards emphasise values such as righteousness, justice, love, faithfulness, humility, and obedience, serving as a measure for evaluating beliefs, actions, and cultural practices in the light of Scripture.

Biblical cultures are important to understand to interpret the scripture correctly. The Old Testament is highly entrenched in the Ancient Near Eastern culture. Walton also points out the significance of being in the culture in order to figure out what the texts actually entail (Walton, 2025). Israelites culture in the world, the historical context, and the traditions of these people were the source of the Old Testament narratives and teachings. Albright (1960), Golb (1990, 103-114), and Bartlett (1997) posit that the study of the biblical culture has long been based on historical and archaeological studies. These disciplines are trying to re-create ancient Israel and its life, institutions, and practices in the context of the world of the Ancient Near East. The relations between archaeological finds and the patriarchal culture in Genesis are an indication of a biblical culture that is based on historical facts. Criticism of this approach, however, has been raised because it blindly harmonizes biblical texts and material evidence.

Ancient Israel Family and Kinship.

There are families all over the Old Testament. At the beginning of Genesis, we observe the connections of people, formation of kinship ties, and living together people because of similar experiences, blood ties, and fates. Sons of God often refer to the people of God, and such family lineages constitute the key element of the narrative. However, regardless of the fact that it is a consistent subject in the stories and laws of Israel, the family cannot be easily defined (Isabelle, 2023a). No Hebrew word will fit the modern English meaning of family. Rather, there are clusters of associated words, which define relationships between individuals and collectives in a manner that is similar and yet not identical to modern-day families. The term, which is associated primarily with families, is the word *beth-av* (the house of the father). The *beth-av*, in the real world, was a multigenerational and male-headed household, which acted as the fundamental unit of kinship. Its structure, though, was not restricted to blood ties or close relatives; it may contain servants, the prisoners of war, and even the foreigners (Isabelle, 2023b).



According to Dutcher-Walls, Genesis 1-3 is seen in theological discourse about marriage and family matters because it is the starting point of the couple and family (Dutcher-Walls, 2009). Genesis 2, especially, is applicable here, and one might fail to notice the nuances of the story because there is a cultural gap between the ancient Hebrew world and Africa. Both Genesis 1 and 2 give out an essentially collective and intertwined image of humankind. However, New Testament theology is introduced when the Old Testament expectations, laws, and promises reach their fulfillment and require clearer interpretation, especially in the light of the life and work of Jesus Christ. It is introduced as a fulfillment because the New Testament presents Jesus as the realization of Old Testament hopes, fulfilling the Law, the Prophets, and God's covenant promises (Matthew 5:17). Themes such as salvation, covenant, sacrifice, and kingship find their complete meaning in Christ (Rodney, 2021). At the same time, it functions as a remedy because it addresses the limitations of human obedience under the Law. The New Testament reveals God's grace, offering redemption, forgiveness, and transformation through Christ and the Holy Spirit, rather than reliance on the Law alone.

Human beings are not free and self-sufficient but are profoundly interrelated, with the first one being God and the image of God, the second being the ground out of which they were created, and the third being each other. God is represented as the individual of all humankind united, both male and female (Genesis 1:27). God also produces human beings in his likeness, and subsequently Adam will have a son in his likeness and so forth (Genesis 5.3). Human beings will never cease to be highly reliant upon others. The thing that is made is not individual beings but a community. Since Genesis 2 gives a more detailed narrative account of the creation of humanity, the condition of the first human without people similar to them is the description of the problem of the flawed relationship with God. The creature formed from the ground needs to relate to others who are similar yet different, embodying both likeness and difference (Dutcher-Walls, 2009b).

African Traditional Religion and Customs

African traditional religion is based on oral traditions, and it is transmitted orally between generations. The principles of the religion are taught by the community members using practical examples among the generations, although ancestor veneration, reincarnation and polytheism differ significantly across African societies. Myths, folklore, informal tales about deities and goddesses, proverbs, songs, conversational music, and dance also enable one to learn this religion (Idowu, 1973a). African Traditional Religions (ATR) form a complex and dynamic system of native spiritual beliefs and activities in the African continent. It incorporates different rituals, cosmologies, and ethical systems that predate the arrival of major world religions such as Christianity and Islam by many thousands of years. ATR is characterized by a great relation to the natural world and its divine aspects, and how everything in the living world is interdependent (Idowu, 1973b).

The culture of people is what makes them unique compared to other human societies in the larger human family. It is also a part of the study of anthropology, which focuses on human beings and the specifics and connections of humans to their surroundings (Idang , 2015). The totality of traits and characteristics peculiar to a people, which is usually called custom, is encompassed in it. These unique characteristics are language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing and so on. There are also social norms, taboos, and values of the people in custom (Idang, 2015). Values in this context are the beliefs regarding what is right and what is wrong, and what is important in life. However, colonialists were trying to put an end to such practices. The history of colonialism



in Africa and its effects on the people in Africa have been influential and strong since the formal commencement of colonialism in Africa after the Berlin conference in 1885 till the official end in approximately 1960. The consequences have been extensive, and the impact has been on the African practices and culture to the point of a near-complete change of the African lifestyle to the western forms (Shedrack, 2021, 78-83).

The Biblical Culture and African Traditional Customs

The African society had already established cultural systems that were well established before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. When the Bible was spread across Africa, the teachings, culture, norms, values, and worldview that were embodied in the scripture came into conflict with the existing African traditional practices. There is no doubt that African traditions and biblical cultural world views are similar in their ideas of sin, creation, family and kinship, marriage, community, sacrifice, devotion of ancestors, covenant, and justice, among others. Nonetheless, these relationships have been mostly distorted by Western Biblical scholars. This was rejected by Christopher Wright, Kenneth Bailey, Craig Keener, P. N. Bauding, D. Westermann, and R. S. Rattray, who described African Traditional Religion and its practices as fetish and barbarism (Idowu, 1960). Ezenweke raises an outrageous question: how are untutored Africans supposed to conceive of God (Ezenweke, 2024, 1-17). This view adds that the religion and culture of the Africans cannot be justified in the bible. Within the culture of the West and especially the United States, individuals tend to interpret biblical writings based on their culture and not based on the culture in which the scriptures were formed.

This method of studying the Bible may give the misconception of the biblical context and falsely apply the principles of the Bible (Holroy, 2019a). Once read in the context of the appropriate culture, the risk of misinterpretation and misuse is reduced to a minimum, and readers can realize more effectively how a specific passage is related to their situation in life. The story of the speech delivered by the Apostle Paul in Athens is presented by Luke (Acts 17:16-34) and provides a great example of why it is important to study Scripture in the context of the culture in which it was given. However, it is also necessary to take into consideration the cultural undertones of the passage prior to analyzing the biblical text itself (Holroy 2019b). African scholars like Ukpong, Dickson, Mbiti, Temba, Knut, and Kwame Bediako, and Mercy Oduyoye, among others, have confirmed that Africa and Africans played major roles in the bible. The inclusion of African biblical scholars reinforces the background credibility of the study.

Adamo shows that the word Africa and Africans is mentioned over 867 times in the bible, and that, there are numerous names which are used to refer to Africa or Africans, including *Wawat*, *Kash*, Egypt, Kush, and Yehudi, the son of Nathaniel, son of *Sheleimaiah*, son of *Cushi*, which is incited in Jeremiah chapter 36:1-23.10 (Adamo, 2018a). This implies that there was centrality and significance of Africa and Africans both in the life and history of ancient Israel and in the bible, especially in Jeremiah. Africa and Africans also played a role in the religious, political, and cultural life of ancient Israel. Hypothetically, is it perhaps feasible and possible that Yahwism monotheism originated on the African continent? Could it have been Egypt or other areas in Africa that introduced the concept of monarchy in ancient Israel? Is it possible that the many parallels in the cultural life of ancient Israel and the African societies are due to the fact that Israel was exposed to Africa and interacted with them? How come that the people of African continent are said to be chronically religious? (Adamo, 2018b). We should note that in Bible (1 Kings 10, 2 Chronicles 9) it informs us that the Queen of Sheba traveled to Solomon in Jerusalem – did he perhaps also visit Africa? Sheba is often associated in some traditions with Ethiopia or the Horn of Africa (Le Roux, 2016). In fact in Ethiopian tradition (the *Kebrā Nagast*) it is asserted that The Queen of



Sheba (Makeda) was Ethiopian and that she and King Solomon had a son, Menelik I, who later returned to Ethiopia and founded the Solomonic dynasty (see also Stinchcomb, 2021).

The redemption drama was not a slave affair that the Euro-American scholars have tried to make it to be in their interpretation of the bible. Ancient Africans were individuals of high status. The *Cushites*, from whom the Egyptians emerged as a hope for Israel, included admirable individuals of African origin, such as Ebed-Melech and Jehudi (Adamo, 2018c). This proves the point that the bible is not alien to Africa and Africans, contrary to the accusations of a few political agitators or anti-colonialists in Africa. In Africa, therefore, Christianity is not an alien religion. Listed below are some of the areas where biblical culture and African traditions were compatible and incompatible.

Areas of compatibility

- i. Community life: both biblical and African traditions prioritize community over individual
- ii. Respect for elders: biblical reverence for elders (Leviticus 19:32; 1Timothy 5:17) parallels African age-based hierarchies as custodians of wisdom and tradition.
- iii. Moral codes: there is alignment in moral teachings, such as honesty, hospitality, sexual ethics, chastisement, and capital punishment, among others (e.g., ANE/Mosaic law and African customs)
- iv. Oral tradition and storytelling: Scriptures were transmitted orally before being written; parables and narratives were key teaching tools, while oral tradition is central in preserving history, values, and moral instruction in Africa
- v. A spiritual view of life: life is seen through a spiritual lens in the biblical culture, where God interacts with humanity, also spirituality permeates daily life; belief in spiritual forces and divine intervention is widespread in Africa.
- vi. Rituals and Ceremonies: Rituals such as Passover and circumcision (Exodus 12:1-28) mark religious and social milestones in the Old Testament, and in Africa, life stages (birth, initiation, marriage, and death) are symbolic, community-oriented marked by elaborate rites.
- vii. Altars and Sacrificial Objects: altars were erected as central to worship, used for sacrifices to Yahweh (Genesis 8:20; Exodus 20:24), and offerings and sacrifices were made on the altars to gods, ancestors, or spirits in the same way.
- viii. Staffs and Rods: Rods and staffs symbolised authority and divine power (Moses' staff in Exodus 4:2) while chiefs, elders, and priests often carry staffs as symbols of power or ancestral connection.
- ix. **Garments and head coverings:** it is the biblical culture that priestly garments in Exodus 28, and veil/head coverings held spiritual significance; likewise, sacred garments and head wraps are worn during rituals, initiations, and festivals.
- x. **Incense was used in temple** worship (Exodus 30:7-9) and anointing oils for consecration (Exodus 30:22-25), while in African tradition, incense and scented herbs and oils are burned in shrines and used in spiritual rites.
- xi. **Sacred stone and memorial pillars:** In the bible, stones were used to commemorate divine encounters (Jacob's pillar in Genesis 28:18), and sacred stones and trees mark ancestral sites or covenant grounds in Africa.
- xii. **Water and purification vessels:** ritual washing and purification were performed with water in basins (Leviticus 14:8-9), and water is also a symbol of spiritual cleansing in many rites, using pots and calabashes.



- xiii. **Ancestral tombs and burial artifacts:** biblical patriarchs were often buried in caves or marked graves (Genesis 23). Burial customs in Africa involve sacred graves, ancestral shrines, and symbolic artifacts buried with the dead
- xiv. **Deathbed blessing:** this culture was originally part of the ANE culture (Nuzi, Mari) but was adopted by the Jews since Abraham sojourned through the land. In Genesis 27:1-40, Isaac, in his old age, blesses Jacob, mistaking him for Esau; Jacob, in Genesis 48:1-22, on his deathbed, blesses the two sons of Joseph; and in Genesis 49:1-28, Jacob blesses all his sons. This portrays a cultural parallel with traditional African cultural practices; the deathbed blessing is a sacred, respected, and powerful moment where elders speak about the future of their descendants. The spiritual, communal, and prophetic roles of such blessings show a deep cultural and religious alignment, even if the theological foundations differ.
- xv. **Marriage Practices:** Polygamy remains culturally acceptable and practiced in both biblical culture (Old Testament) and African tradition.
- xvi. Note: Of course there are many African societies, so from one area to another how these above-stated areas are treated could differ.

Areas of divergence

- i. **Monotheism and polytheism:** when biblical culture is monotheistic, African traditional religion often incorporates multiple spiritual beings. Although Africans do not worship these beings, they serve as intermediary between the worshippers and God.
- ii. **Sacrifice:** Blood sacrifice is common to both, but the biblical sacrificial system in the New Testament culminates in Christ's blood dropped once and for all (Heb. 10:1–10).
- iii. **Ancestor veneration:** this conflicts with biblical (New Testament) teachings on the afterlife and spiritual mediation
- iv. Emphasis on monogamy in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:2; Mathew 19:4–6) contradicts.
- v. **Death and Afterlife:** Biblical culture (New Testament) believes in resurrection and final judgment (John 5:28-29, Revelation 20:12-15), but in African tradition, the afterlife is often understood as joining the ancestors or reincarnation.

Conclusion

This study has critically explored the interplay between biblical culture and African traditional customs, revealing a dynamic relationship marked by both convergence and divergence. This investigation shows that while biblical culture and African traditions share several common values such as communal living, respect for elders, and spiritual consciousness, they differ significantly in areas such as monotheism and polytheism, Ancestor veneration, and monogamy, among others. By examining these intersections contextually, the study highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and theological reflection in applying biblical principles within African settings. However, the research underscores the need for a balanced approach that neither dismisses African traditions outright nor compromises the core message of Scripture. Instead, it calls for a contextual theology that affirms the redemptive truths of the Bible while recognizing the cultural realities of African communities. This investigation contributes to the broader discourse on inculturation, cultural hermeneutics, and the relevance of biblical faith in non-Western contexts. The study further encourages mutual enrichment between biblical culture and African traditions in ways that promote authentic Christian expression and deeper cultural identity. One limitation of this study is its generalized handling of African traditional customs, which may overlook important



cultural variations across different African communities. Furthermore, the absence of empirical data limits insight into how these contextual integrations are experienced in contemporary Christian practice. Future research could focus on specific African ethnic groups or regions to deliver a more distinct and accurate analysis of how specific traditional customs interact with Old Testament biblical principles.

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Genesis 1:27
Genesis 5:3
Jeremiah 36:1; 23:10
Leviticus 19:32
1 Timothy 5:17
Exodus 12:1-28
Genesis 8:20
Exodus 20:24
Genesis 4:2
Exodus 30:22-25, Exodus 7:9
Genesis 28:18
Genesis 49:1-0
Genesis 48:1-22
Hebrew 10:1-10
1 Timothy 3:2
Mathew 19:4-6



John 5:28-29
Revelation 20:12-15

Conflict of Interest Statement: *The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.*



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