Relationship Between Theology and Culture and Its Implications for Contemporary Christians

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Abstract
Theology is the study about God, His love and plans for humanity and the universe. Conversely, culture is the people's way of life, which encompasses their philosophy, ideology, worldview, nutrition, language, clothing, songs, dance, tradition, occupations and all activities they are known for. Theology needs to be integrated with culture for greater advantage. Theology shapes cultural norms, values and practices to correspond with biblical truths. Reversely, cultures influence theology, establishing it in specific context for effective comprehension and application. Bible unfolds the inclusion of culture in theological formation in creation, incarnation, great commission, Pentecostal experience and in Apostle Paul's mission strategy. Any theological formation that isolates culture is viewed superficial. Every culture is intended to fulfil God's purpose, which is the actual reason theology is rooted in culture. Cultures opposing God deviate from their intended purpose and should be reevaluated.

Key words*: theology, culture, and integration*

Introduction

Theology is like a seed, and culture is the soil on which it grows. Theology never grows in cultural isolation. In fact, God's plan has always involved engaging cultures. When God began with the Jews, He was not trying to make the whole world Hebrews but reaching them through a man from a particular culture. He promised Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse; and all people on earth will be blessed though you" (Gen 12:3).

Cultural integration is a prerequisite for theological effectiveness. Akiniwale Oloyede asserts

> If theology is to be intelligible, it has to use the language of the culture which it is undertaken in 'order to 'find expression in the clearest and most coherent language." This is necessary because of the ever-renewed interpretation of the scripture. Recognition of the cultural factor is equivalent to acknowledging that there is no final theology. Formulations of theology are culturally conditioned and therefore need reinterpretation as cultural forms change.[1]

Theology and culture are intertwined, like plant and soil. Attempts to separate them lead to distorted or diminished theology. Conversely, integrating theology and culture yields fruitful

[1] Akinwale Oloyede, *Introduction to Christian Theology in African Context* (Osogbo, Hirise Celebrity Publishers, 2023),56.

results: germination, growth, bloom, fruitfulness and ultimately, the harvest of souls or the transformation of lives.

This paper will consider the following subtopics: An Overview of Theology and Culture, Biblical Perspective of Theology and Culture, Theology and Culture in the World History, The Relationship between Theology and Culture and The Implications of Theology and Culture for Contemporary Christians.

An Overview of Theology and Culture

Theology is the teaching about God, His concern, thoughts and plans for humanity and the universe. Millard J Erickson defines theology as," the discipline that stives to give coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily on the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life."[2] He identifies five key areas of the task of theology as follows : theology is biblical: Its contents are sourced from the Canonical books of the Bible (Old and New Testament); theology is systematic: It is drawn from the Bible and also relates its various portions to one another and create a harmony in various teachings to form a whole; " theology relates to the issues of general culture"; theology is contemporary: it deals with timeless issues and also use language, thought and concepts that are relevant to the modern issues; theology is practical: it pertains to living. In relation to the scope of theology, Alister McGrath says, "The scope of theology includes biblical studies, systematic theology, historical theology, and practical theology."[3] This denotes that the integration of biblical studies, systematic theology, historical theology and practical theology constitutes theology.

Culture is simply the way of life of people which includes their worldview, ideology, philosophy, language, customs (nutrition, dressing, etc.), arts (and singing, dancing, etc.) and all other activities that they are known for. In relation to the definition of culture, John S. Mbiti says

> The word culture covers many things, such as the way people live, behave and act, and their physical as well as their intellectual achievements. Culture shows itself in art and literature, dance, music, and drama, in the style of building houses and of people's clothing, in social organization and political systems, in religion, ethics, morals and philosophy, in the customs and institutions of the people, in their values and laws, and in their economic life.[4]

Theology is never built as an entity. It must consider culture for effectiveness. Emiola Nihinlola quotes Paul Tillich who says that "Theology is never done in a cultural vacuum; every theologian begins with certain prepositions."[5] It is disastrous to establish theology outside the culture. It creates barriers to effective communication of the gospel message. There is a need to consider culture while doing theology.

Biblical Perspective of Theology and Culture

Biblical perspective of theology and culture refers to the way theology and culture are viewed in line with the teachings of the scriptures. There are several places that theology and culture are identified in the Bible. However, only few will be considered in this paper.

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[2] Milard J. Erickson *Christian Theology 3rd Ed*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013),7.

[3] Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basics 3rd ed.* (Oxford: Willey Blackwell, 20016),272.

[4] John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.,1986),7.

[5] Emiola Nihinlola, *Theology Under the mango Tree,* A Hand Book of African Christian Theology, (Ogbomoso: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary; 2018),15.

The Creation of Mankind

The creation of mankind reveals the Biblical perspective of theology and culture. The Bible says "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, …. So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them: male and female he created them" (Gen 1:26,27). Everybody was created in God's image, irrespective of their culture. In creation, God identified every culture. The creation is never culturally bounded. John Piper says that "The image of God is not culture- specific but culturally diverse."[6]. Indeed, it is noteworthy to consider culture while doing theology.

Incarnation

Incarnation teaches that the Son of God came to the world and dwelt among men in the flesh. The Bible says "The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and power." (John 1:14), Theology and culture are revealed in incarnation. In other to reach man, God had to become man. God had a message of love for the mankind. He did not throw it down to man from heaven, probably in a book form; but He came to man's abode and lived with him for a while. This is theology contextualized. The Son of God only went back to heaven when his mission had been accomplished. He raised people who would carry His message to the whole world. Similarly, when the word of God is brought to people's culture, it thieves greatly to fulfil God's purposes and will.

Great Commission

Theology and culture are identified in the Lord's Commission. The Bible says "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mathew 28:19). Jesus did not restrict this mission for only the Jewish nation, but He considered all nations important. He knew that the only way that could contextualize His message was to order His disciples for centripetal evangelism. He desired people to be reached in their own culture to transform them as well as their culture

According to Timothy Keller, 'The great commission is not just about souls, but about transforming cultures. Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God emphasizes that salvation touches every area of life-personal social and culture…The gospel changes cultures because it changes people, and changed people change cultures."[7] In order words, a theology contextualized is culture transformed. Transformation of lives seems easier when the word of God is structured in an individual's context than when it is disseminated in other people's context.

In the Great Commission, Jesus displayed an example that should be followed by every gospel minister who wants to make great impact in the gospel ministry. As for Jesus, He was not just concerned about disseminating the gospel message, He was also concerned about the people that would receive the message and their culture. The same command that forms the basis of the Great commission ("…. go and make disciples of every nation") is expected to be the controlling factor for the contemporary gospel ministers in theologizing and for preaching the gospel. John

[6] John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross and the Christian* (Wheaton: Crossway,2011),38.

[7] Timothy Keller, Center Church: Doing Balanced Gospel -Cantered Ministry in Your City (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 292.

Stott opines, "The Great Commission requires us to bring the gospel to bear on every aspect of culture."[8]

Pentecostal Experience

The Pentecostal experience reveals the integration of theology and culture. God identified every culture in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem by making the people to speak in several languages which could be understood by the Jerusalem pilgrims. The Bible says "When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken." (Acts 2:6) It had been the mind of God to connect other cultures through a particular culture. Indeed, Pentecostal experience reveals God's interest in the entire human race. According to Barton Bruce

> Christianity is not limited to any race or group of people. Christ offers salvation to all people without regard to nationality. Visitors in Jerusalem were surprised to hear the believers speaking in languages other than their own, but they need not to have been. God works all kinds of miracles to spread the Gospel, using many languages as He calls all people to become his followers. No matter what your race, colour, nationality, or language, God speaks to you.[9]

The outpouring of the Holy Spiri reveals a contextualized theology, there was an inclusion of several races. Many people were reached in their respective languages.

Paul's Mission Strategy

The mission strategy of Apostle Paul identifies contextualization in theology. Paul considered it a mandatory activity to reach all people in their respective cultures, classes and levels. The Bible says

> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the Law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law…. To the weak I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some (I Corinthians 9:20-22),

In connection to contextualization of theology, Sunday Bobai Agang et al assert, "An African theologian, Jesse Mugambi emphasizes that Christian identity can only take shape in specific culture."[10] Mugambi illustrates,

> If theology is a womb thing, it means it is always both intensely personal and culture bound. However, culture as such is not Christian. People created in the image of God can grow spiritually and mature to the likeness of Christ in any culture. As Christians they can identify their culture positively. Paul in Corinthians

[8] John Stott, The Contemporary Christian: An Urgent Call to Reformation (Leicester: Inter-varsity Press, 1992),293.

[9] Barton Bruce, "The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost" in *Life Application Study Bible* (USA: Tyndal House Publishers, 1996), 2128.

[10] Sunday Bobai Agang; Dion A. Forster and H. Jurgens Hendricks eds, *African Public Theology* (Carlisle Gambia: Langham Publishing Nig,2020),58.

9:19-23 explained how he approaches specific cultural groups in sharing the gospel[11].

Apostle Paul's missionary strategy reveals a made easy to gospel effectiveness, which is reaching people in their specific cultural context. Paul's missionary strategy in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 denotes cultural relativism. He advocates for adapting to various cultural contexts for effective communication of the gospel message. Theology contextualized is theology actualized.

Theology and Culture in Church History

Early Christians contextualized in Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures in several ways. During the seron on the mount, Jesus told the multitude, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them." (Mathew 5:17). Jesus did not abandon Jewish law nor their tradition as a way of reaching them, rather He identified them as basis for fulfilling the law. Ben Witherington asserts, "Few scholars dispute that Jesus' main spoken language was Aramaic, although he probably used Hebrew when reading the scrolls in the synagogue and Greek when conversing with Gentiles."[12] He did not isolate culture in His theological formation.

The early Christians really understood that Christ 's intention was to reach the world with the Jewish nation, so they toured the line of their Master by identifying Jewish culture in their ministerial engagements. Even Paul identified with Greek culture in order to effectively reach the Gentile world with the gospel. The most effective strategy for disseminating the gospel message has always been that which recognises the cultural context of a particular people. The early Christians earnestly embraced Roman language and other important things within their culture, which played a great role in the propagation of the gospel. N. T. Wright asserts "The early church's use of Roman roads, language, and administrative structures facilitated gospel spread."[13] Paul was privileged to be a Roman citizen by birth. He hailed from Tarsus, which was a city in the Roman Province of Cilicia (Act 21:39). He gained this citizenship by birth. He could declare his citizenship with confidence. The Bible says "The commander went to Paul and asked, 'Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?' 'Yes, I am', he answered," (Acts 22:27). This citizenship became instrumental to his missionary success. Every culture has its philosophy, and Bible gives meaning to every culture and equally shapes it philosophy.

That Bible was written in foreign languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic) is a good standpoint, indicating that contextualization of theology is never man-made but rather God's arrangement, expected to be applied by men. R C. Sproul asserts "The Scriptures were written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, reflecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of the ancient world."[14] Contextualization of theology has been an age-long strategy for gospel effectiveness. Contemporary gospel ministers should not neglect it because it is always effective.

Just like the earlier Christians, during the Middle Ages, theology was not done in a vacuum or in an isolation. It was used in a way that it identified other cultures, for easier comprehension and effectiveness. In relation to contextualization of theology, one of the theologians of the Middle Ages known as Thomas Aquinas advises "Theologians must consider the circumstances of time

[11] Agang et al, 58.

[12] Ben Witherington, The Christology of Jesus (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress,1990) 236-

[13] N. T. Wright, *The Early Christian Mission vol 1 of Christian Origins and the question of God* (Downers Grove, Intervarsity Press, 2007),156.

[14] R.C. Sproul, *Essential Truth of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2015), 35.

and place, and adapt their teaching accordingly."[15] Consideration of the circumstances of time and place when doing theology (advised by Aquinas), refers to bearing the culture of the people in mind during theologisation.

There was a contextualization of theology during the Reformation period. Theology was not done at this period in negligence of culture. Culture was significantly considered and utilized as a great tool for establishing theology. One of the prominent and pivotal theologians of the Reformation period known as Martin Luther, confidently asserts "The gospel is not only a doctrine, but a culture."[16] During incarnation, it took God to come in the personal of His Son to live among men in a certain culture. Jesus ate Jewish food (Lk 22:7020; John 21:12-14), wore their cloth (Mat 9:20-22), spoke their language (Mat 27:46) and took parts in Jewish traditions that was pertained to Hebrew males (Luke 2:41-52). When Apostle Paul spoke to the crowd in Aramaic, attention was given to Him (Acts 22:2). It is gruesome mistake to ignore culture, while doing theology; because language is a part of culture, and language is a medium by which theology is expressed.

There was equally a belief to contextualise theology during the Enlightenment, Modern and Contemporary Eras. Theologians in these eras did not isolate culture in their theological activities. In fact, Friedrich Schleiermacher frankly says "theology is rooted in personal experience and culture. Religion is shaped by cultural context."[17] Indeed, personal experience and culture are indispensable in shaping theology. The way individuals live and their specific cultural contexts matter significantly in theological formation. Theology is said to be disseminated when its message is established in a particular context or when it identifies with a specific culture. The issue of contextualizing theology cannot be over emphasized. It is worth doing, and doing it is noteworthy. The Relationship Between Theology and Culture.

Theology Impacts Culture and Culture Shapes Theology

Theology is the reasoned discourse about God, concerning His thoughts, plans, and purposes for humanity and the universe. Theology is the teaching about God, drawn from the Bible, and established within culture. There is a profound relationship between the Bible, theology, and culture. The Bible serves as the source of theology, while culture is its soil of establishment. Theology cannot exist without the Bible. Thiessen says

> The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the scientist, a source of unorganized or only partly organized facts out of which he formulates his generalizations. As it is unsafe for the scientists to draw conclusions before he has made a sufficient number of inductions, so it is unsafe for the Bible student to formulate doctrines out of isolated or insufficient proof- tests.[18]

In other words, theology is derived from the Bible and contextualized within culture. Miroslav Golf declares, "Theology must engage culture critically, using the Bible as normative

[15] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), 116.

[16] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* ed. Helmut Lehmann and James Atkinson, vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1960), 86.

[17] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to His Cultured Dispersers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1996), 17.

[18]Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Willam B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990),201.

framework."[19] One of the most challenging tasks is to decontextualize theology, which can result in a distorting or diminishing understanding of the gospel message.

Theological ideas, values, and practices significantly shape or influence different aspects of cultures like values and ethics, art and literature, social norms and institutions, politics and policy, science and technology. In relation to theology shaping values, art, literature, social norms, politics, science and technology, Desmond Tutu says "Christian theology has influenced African politics, shaping our notions of justice, morality, and human rights"[20] The significant role of theology in shaping human lives and activities cannot be overstated. This profound impact necessitates the integration of theology and culture.

Culture Shapes Theology

Culture is indispensable in theological formation, as theology must be shaped by culture to be contextualized. To be meaningful and effective, theology must consider the cultural context in which it is practiced. James KA Smith says "Cultural perspectives shape our interpretation of theological concepts, influencing how we understand God's revelation"[21]. Culture should never be neglected in theological formation, as it encompasses human lives and activities that theology addresses.

Theology Informs Culture and Culture Contextualizes Theology

Theological perspectives inform and guide our comprehension of human identity within cultural contexts. Christena Cleveland says "Christian theology informs our understanding of human identity, shaping our sense of self."[22] Conversely, cultural contexts significantly influence theological comprehension and application. An understanding of a particular culture enhances theological effectiveness. Christena adds "Cultural contexts influence how we understand and apply biblical teachings."[23] Failure to consider cultural contexts can lead to widespread misapplication and misunderstanding of biblical teachings.

Theology Reforms Culture and Culture Challenges Theology

Theology refines and improves culture by modifying elements that contradict biblical teachings, allowing Christians to partake in and enrich their cultural heritage without compromising their faith. The treatment of widows in some Eastern Nigeran cultures is a pressing human right concern. Forcing women to shave their heads, perform humiliating tasks, or undergo other forms of mistreatment is a clear violation of their dignity and rights. Here, theological institutions can educate communities about biblical values and human rights. Wright declares, "Christian theology

[19] Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011),187.

[20] Desmond Tutu, *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 123.

[21] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009),123.

[22] Christena Cleveland *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2013), 45.

[23] Ibid, 63.

reforms culture by challenging societal norms and promoting justice mercy and love".[24]The word of God can thrive in rural communities through theological reformation of harmful cultural norms and traditions.

Conversely, culture challenges theology. African cultural values, such as strong family ties, community emphasis, respect for elders, heritage preservation, and traditional wisdom, present both challenges and opportunities for theological reflection and practice. An African child can offer their sit to respect elders, greet with curtesy and even seek guidance from them. As far as African people are concerned, this is humility. This thought reflects so much in African theology. This seems opposite to Western cultures where equality and individualism prevail. In respect to culture challenging theology, N. T. Wright says "Culture challenges theology to reimagine its artistic expression."[25] Every culture has its unique characteristics and contributions to theology. The cultural context of each locality is significantly essential for theological interpretation, effectiveness and application.

Theology Transforms Culture and Culture Reflects Theological Values

Theology transforms culture, improving and revolutionizing societies, as seen in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4), breaking cultural and social barriers. Timothy Keller asserts, "Theology is not just about understanding God, but about shaping culture."[26] Theology contextualizes to accommodate diverse cultures, effectively reaching people with the gospel within the unique contexts.

Alternatively, culture reflects theological values. When cultures are transformed by theology, they illustrate, represent and express theological values, fulfilling God's purposes. Cornelius Plantinga opines, "Culture reflects God's creative purposes, and is a manifestation of His wisdom."[27] Theology and culture are interrelated; considering their cultural contexts is crucial for effective and meaningful theological formation.

The Implications of Theology and Culture for Contemporary Christians

Contextualization

Emiola Nihinlola quotes Willbur Donovan who sees Contextualization as "Applying the truth of God to a local culture."[28]. When theology and culture are integrated, biblical truths are applied in the cultural context or perspective of the people involved, thereby enhancing cordial relationship among Christian believers.

Unity and Inclusion of Diverse Cultures

Another implication of theology and culture is that diverse cultural norms and values are considered, thereby bringing unity among Christians. People like to see things from their specific

[24] N. T. Wright, *Surprise By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection and Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper One, 2007), 193.

[25] Wright.

[26] Keller,75.

[27] Cornelius Plantinga, Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

[28] Emiola Nihinlola, Theology Under the mango Tree, A Hand Book of African Christian Theology, (Ogbomoso: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary; 2018), 39.

cultural context or perspectives. Similarly, their thought about God is usually formed to reflect their individual culture. Hamel quotes Gordon Kaufman who says that "No individual human mind constructs the idea of God from scratch. All thinking about God and devotion to God take place within a cultural and linguistic context in which the notion of God has already been highly developed."[29] Theological formations that neglect cultural contexts will inevitably face significant challenges and difficulties.

Prevention of Tribal Bigotry

Tribalism refers to the attitude or ideology that creates and reinforces distinction, barriers and boundaries between one's own group (or tribe) and others, often denying equal privileges, rights, or status to those outside the group. In relation to tribalism Chinyere and Ngozi lament, "It is sad that no matter how anointed a minister can be in a church dominated by an ethnic group, he or she is likely not to rise above a particular level because of tribalism. Often, many observers pinpoint that politicking in today's church is chronic than observed in the political parties".[30] Evidently, some ministers of the gospel have stooped so low to act like unbelievers as a result of tribal bigotry. Tribalism disintegrates culture and theology, leading to several abnormal attitudes in the Christendom. "In some churches, promotion is not by merit but by ethnicity. A minister has to belong to a particular ethnic group to be recognised or promoted as part of the governing council."[31] Tribalism threatens the integrity of Christendom, fostering division and discord. However, integrating theology and culture prevents tribal bigotry among Christ's followers. By shaping worldviews and perception, theology bridges tribal gaps. As a result, Christians from a particular tribe or locality warmly welcome Christians from other tribes as their own.

Worldview Formation

Another implication of integrating theology and culture is that it makes room for the shaping and formation of worldview. When theology influences cultural norms and values, people's thought, beliefs, perception or worldview are shaped or formed to align with biblical truths. Hamel asserts "Our beliefs and values are shaped by the intellectual and moral climate in which we live, even our concept of God."[32] As theology forms individuals' worldviews, their actions and way of life are transformed to reflect the biblical principles.

Effective Comprehension and Application of Gospel Messages

The understanding and interpretation of the scriptures are shaped by individual perceptions and cultural contexts. In fact, effective comprehension and application of Gospel messages require consideration of cultural contexts in theological formation. According to Hamel, "It is reasonable to conclude that when individuals read the Bible; how they interpret it is always highly

[29] L. Ann Hamel, "The Implications of Culture on Who We Are and how We understand the Bible and Share the gospel" (Jul 29, 2016),6, https: www.google,com/search?=implications-of-theology=and-culture-PH&oq=lmp&gs-lcrp= (accessed October. 5, 2024)

[30] Chinyere Abiaziem and Ngozi Umah, "Tribalism in Churches: Facts or Fallacy?" (March 17,2019), https:/independent, ng/tribalism-in-churches-fact-or-fallacy/ (accessed October5,2024).

[31] Abiaziem and Umah

[32] Hamel,6.

individualistic and strongly influenced by the mental programming through which they view life."[33] Notably, an integration of theology and culture enhances comprehension and application of gospel messages.

Disintegration of Theology and Culture (Bad Practices to Avoid)
Below are the negative implications that occur when theology and culture are disintegrated.

Deculturized Theology
According to Garri Glass, "Deculturized theology is theology that is done in cultural isolation, without consideration of the cultural context or perspective."[34] This does not only affect theological interpretation, it also affects its effectiveness and application.

Cultural Idolatry
Cultural idolatry occurs when one's culture is elevated to an idolatrous level, influencing theology and compromising biblical truths. Lilly Fischer says "When something here on earth is allowed enough power over us to devastate, idols are revealed."[35] Prioritizing cultural norms above biblical teachings is idolatrous and harmful to the Christian faith.

Cultural Supremacy
Cultural supremacy is the harmful practice of placing superiority on one's own cultural values and norms, thereby undermining and degrading individuals from distinct cultural backgrounds.
In relation to this, Soong-Chan Rah asserts "Cultural Supremacy is the elevation of one's cultural values, norms and practices above others, often leading to marginalization or exclusion of diverse perspectives."[36] This practice does not only hinder the gospel message, it also disintegrates the family of God. Cultural supremacy includes the followings:

Attributing Demonic Origins to Culture
One of the bad practices that should be avoided is attributing demonic origins to culture. The researcher cautions theologically uninformed individuals against attributing demonic origins to culture. Culture and demons are unrelated. The interchangeable use of culture and demons is a serious misconception. Idol worship, specifically, is not cultural expression but rather submission to Satan's influence. Cultures that provide entry points for Satan's operations take great risk, leading some to mistakenly attribute demonic origins to culture. Desmond Tutu, a Sout African theologian notes, "We must affirm the goodness of African culture and not see it as inherently evil or demonic."[37] Attributing demonic origins to culture is cable of reinforcing the malpractice of doing theology in cultural isolation, which is likely to prevent the effectiveness of gospel message.

[33]Hamel.,6.

[34] Garri Glass, *Theology and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 123.

[35] [35] Lilly Fischer "Cultural Idolatry", The Scroll Cairn University's Student News Paper (November 13, 2023 The), https://scroll.cairn.edu/on-cultural-idolatry/ accessed October 4, 2024.

[37] Desmond Tutu, *God has a Dream a Vision of Hope for our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 2004),51.

Conclusion

Theology is the teaching about God, His concern, thoughts, and plans for humanity and the universe. Conversely, culture is the people's way of life, which includes their philosophy, ideology, worldview, food, language, clothing, songs, dance, tradition, occupations and every activity that represents them. Theology and culture are interrelated. Theology shapes cultural norms, values and practices to align with biblical truths. Conversely, cultures influence theology, leading to establishing it in specific context for effective comprehension and application.

Bible identifies the inclusion of culture in theological formation in creation, incarnation, great commission, Pentecostal experience and in Apostle Paul's mission strategy. The early church, middle age, reformation, enlightenment, modern and contemporary eras acknowledged the need for not doing theology in cultural vacuum or isolation. Any theological formation that isolates culture encounters significant challenges and much struggles.

Every culture is intended to fulfil God's purpose, which is why theology is rooted in culture. Cultures opposing God deviate from their intended purpose and should be reevaluated. Theology detached from culture hinders divine understanding. Ultimately, theology connects God to humanity through cultural context.

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