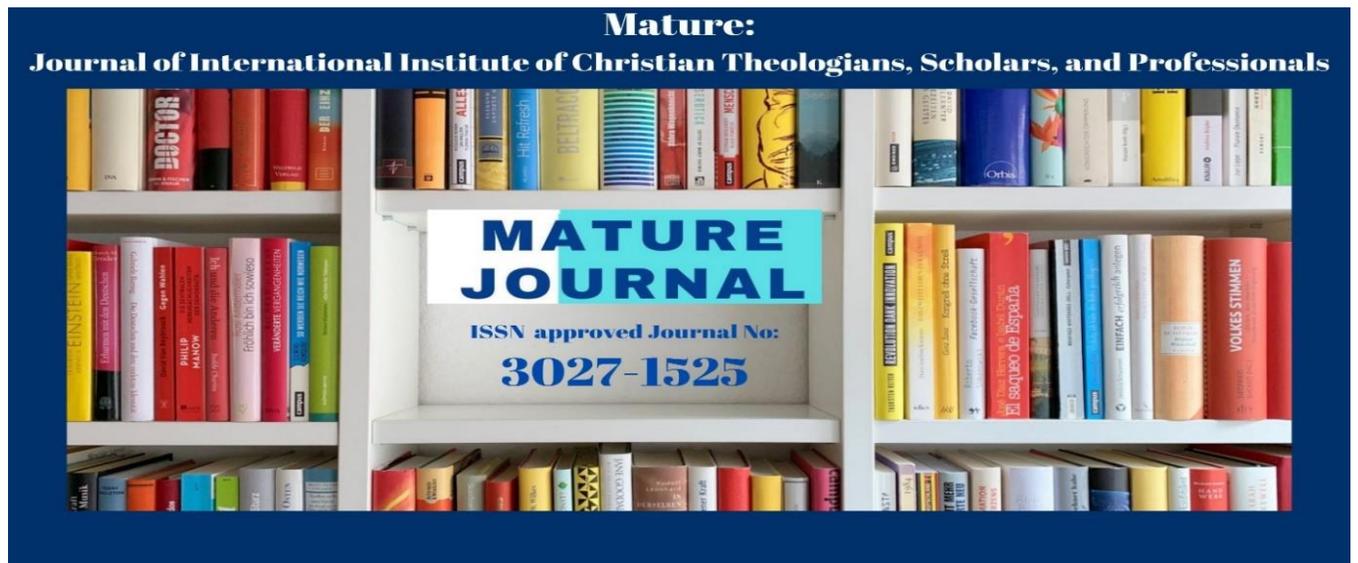


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AFRICAN THEOLOGIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THEOGENESIAL AND THEOLOGICAL PRACTICES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES

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Abstract

The study of theology in Africa has witnessed a remarkable development that has produced kaleidoscopic interpretations of God and the universe, reflecting the dynamic tension between traditional African beliefs and practices and the principles of Christian theology. Indeed, the landscape of theological discourse in Africa is rich and complex, characterised by a dynamic interplay between indigenous beliefs and practices and the tenets of biblical Christianity. The main purpose of this comparative study is to explore the intersections and diversities of theogenesial and theological praxes between African Traditional Theology (ATT) and African Christian Theology (ACT). The research investigates how African theologians understand God, the universe, and how these perspectives shape African spirituality. The study draws on the author's practical experiences in both ATT and ACT, thereby lending more credibility to the research work. Thus, the paper adopts a biblical comparative design paradigm and empirical model to provide a comparative and comprehensive overview of the two distinct theological subjects. The findings reveal a deeper understanding of ATT and ACT. The paper recommends a contextual and inculturated theology that support the growth of ACT and ATT for a better understanding of God and the universe vis-à-vis the teachings of divine revelation in the Bible—Biblical theology of education.

Keywords: africa theologies, african traditional theology, african christian theology, theogenesial praxes, theological praxes, contextualisation, inculturation.

Introduction

In his work titled *The Theology of Jesus*, Dele Alaba Ilesanmi (2024)¹ defines theology as “the spiritual science or study of God in relation to the universe He has created which includes the visible and the invisible, the natural and the supernatural, the world around us and the world beyond us.” He asserts that “No one can live a second without God and no one can live a day without doing theology”. Ilesanmi’s theological assertion is a pointer to the important role theology plays in human life.

Generally, African theology, no doubt, is often understood as a collective term for various indigenous religious beliefs that encompass spiritual understandings unique to different ethnic groups across the continent. All these African theologies derived their contents from autochthonous cultural and religious beliefs and practices of the people in Africa. Nothing foreign but purely local concoctions. African theology emphasises a relational understanding of God that is deeply intertwined with community or local life, nature, ancestors, and spirituality.

It should be noted here that central to many African religions is the belief in a supreme being who is considered both transcendent and immanent—a deity believed to be actively engages with humanity through various means such as dreams, visions, whirlwind, or ancestral spirits. In contrast, the nomenclature “African Christian Theology (ACT)”² emerges as a result of the arrival of Christianity on African soils during the colonial eras when the Western and European missionaries came to spread the gospel of Christ in Africa. This new theology on African soils planted a strange theology with biblical tools though grappling with local theology, cultures and customs. This theological framework called ACT often emphasises salvation history, salvation through grace and grace through faith, and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. However, this does not exist in isolation; the African soils mixed with Christian seeds that resulted in syncretism in some African societies. For instance, African Initiated Churches (AICs) emerged as a response to Western missionary approaches. AICs logically integrated local languages, music styles like gospel choirs rooted in traditional rhythms, and healing practices reflective of African indigenous medicine into worship settings to make Christianity intelligible to Africans. The emergence of ACT may not be far from religious interplay between the African Traditional Religion (ATR)³ and Western Christian Religion (WCR) in the toga of Christianity. Perhaps, the retention of African identity in religious market has led to ACT. Hence, the classic statement of Agbebi Omojola: “To render Christianity indigenous to Africa, it must be watered by native hands, pruned by native hatchets, and tended with native earth.”⁴

The study of theology in Africa has witnessed a remarkable development that has produced kaleidoscopic interpretations of God and the universe, reflecting the dynamic tension between traditional African beliefs and practices and the principles of Christian theology. Indeed, the landscape

¹ Ilesanmi, Dele A. *The theology of Jesus*. A thesis submitted to international school of theology towards the fulfillment of requirements for the degree of doctor of theology in theology: 2024

² “ACT” is here referred to as “African Christian Theology”

³ “ATR” is here referred to as “African Traditional Religion”

⁴ Ilesanmi, Dele Alaba. *African christianity and nationalism: The biography of dr. mojola agbebi (1860-1917), the moses of africa*. ChristoPress: 2022. See also Ilesanmi, “Major trends in Kingdom Church Growth in Nigeria” in African journal of kingdom education. (2023), vol. 1(2).

of theological discourse in Africa is rich and complex, characterised by a dynamic interplay between indigenous beliefs and practices and the tenets of biblical Christianity. The study draws on the author's practical experiences in both African Traditional Theology (ATT)⁵ and African Christian Theology (ACT), thereby lending more credibility to the research work. Thus, the paper adopts a biblical comparative design paradigm and empirical model to provide a comparative and comprehensive overview of the two distinct theological subjects and phenomenologically detail "what" exists rather than "why" it exists as the author was formerly one of the dramatis personae in African traditional theological space but at present operating on African Christian plane. The author's practical experiences in real-time situation in both theological traditions add more credence to this research work.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this comparative study is to explore the intersections and diversities of theogenesial and theologial praxes between African Traditional Theology (ATT) and African Christian Theology (ACT). The research study also investigates how African theologians⁶ understand God, the universe, and how these perspectives shape African spirituality.

Research Questions:

The following Questions will guide this study:

1. How do African Traditional and Christian Theologies view God and the cosmological origin (Theogenesis)?
2. What interfaces and dichotomies exist between African traditional and African Christian teachings on cosmological origin and its creator (Theogogy)?
3. What are the challenges of these connections and diversities for African Christian theologians and African traditional theologians?
4. How can the two theological frameworks coexist on African soils without creating religious tensions?

Theoretical Framework

The term *theogenesial*, according to Ilesanmi (2024),⁷ is an adjective word of the noun *theogenesis*. The tem is derived from the combination of two Greek words "theós," meaning "God," and "gènesi" (Greek: γένεσις), meaning "origination, or origin, ouset, the beginning, start or kickoff." He asserts that the Hebrew words for genesis are the same but broader than the Greek form⁸. Ilesanmi explains further that Hebrew "genesis" (בראשית) means "creation, making, start, beginning, formation, source, production, formation, emergence, commencement". Therefore, *theogenesis* means, God creates, starts, makes, or God's creation, formation, beginning, or origination⁹. But for the purpose of clarity, the

⁵ "ATT" is here referred to as "African Traditional Theology"

⁶ "African theologians" means those who study African theology either at Christian theological level or traditional African theological level.

⁷ Ilesanmi, Dele Alaba. "Theogenesial theory and darwinism: A biblical clarification on the origin of the universe and the tripartite nature of man" in Mature Journal of International Institute of Christian theologians, Scholars, and Professionals: 2024. Vol. 2(4), 1-24.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

author prefers to use the phrase, “God’s creation” to mean *theogenesis*¹⁰. *Theogenesial theory* states that everything came into existence by divine fiat¹¹, both the physical and non-physical elements¹². This theory posits that God is the Source and Beginning of all things. God created all things (Gen 1:1-31)¹³ and no one created Him. The universe came into existence as a result of divine fiat. God created the universe through His creative Word by fiat: “And God said Let there be ...” (Gen 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; Ps 33:6-9; Heb 11:3). This creation was systematically and teleologically done without any assistance anywhere. The process of creation illustrates God’s sovereignty, omnipotence, and supremacy. God creates by fiat means that things come into existence by divine decree and out of nothing: “let there be ...”¹⁴

In another development, the word *theogogy* is a derivation of two Greek words: “theo” and “agogia”. The word “theo” means “God” while “agogia” means “leading or guiding”. Therefore, combining the two words, we have “theogogy”, that is, the leading of God. Leading is teaching because it provides guidance or direction. Thus, theogogy is the act, art, and science of leading or teaching by God. We can simply define “theogogy” as the art, act, science or study of God’s teaching methods and principles or the art of leading people through teaching (preaching, training, coaching, mentoring, discipleship, etc.) with the use of God’s method or approach. *Theogogy* is the art of God’s approach to teaching¹⁵. How God communicates with and guides his people in the right direction. Theogogical theory centres on the concept of God as a guiding principle for teaching or God’s way or method of teaching.

Theogenesially, the quest to understand the origin of the universe and the originator has captivated humanity and generated debates for centuries among the ancient professions, such as theology, philosophy, and science. Theology, being the queen and mother of sciences, philosophy, and the mother of all disciplines, still remains the only source of trust and validity for discovering the truth among the existing professions. This is because it (theology) draws its source of knowledge from the impeccable magazine of life and the only reliable source of God’s revelation – the Bible. According to Ilesanmi (2024)¹⁶, “the Bible is the only single source of God’s revelation to humanity that can be considered reliable, valid, inerrant, and infallible.” He stresses that both science and philosophy are offspring of theology, saying that after all, philosophy has no business of its own but that of others, especially theology for its business. Ilesanmi avers that “Philosophy developed out of theology, science later developed out of philosophy because the revolt of reason gave birth to humanism, and humanism gave birth to science, while technology is an offshoot of science.”¹⁷ Ilesanmi asserts that the Bible –

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Fiat” is a divine authoritative decree. The word comes from a Latin word with the same spelling as the English word, meaning “let there be.” In early Latin Bible translations, *fiat* appears six times in the first chapter of Genesis. Its first appearance is found in the phrase *fiat lux*, meaning “let there be light” (Gen 1:3). See <https://www.gotquestions.org/fiat-creationism.html> for a better understanding.

¹² “Element” here means everything in existence, visible or invisible. See Ilesanmi, “Theogenesial theory and darwinism: A biblical clarification on the origin of the universe and the tripartite nature of man” 2024.

¹³ All scriptural quotations are from King James Bible version.

¹⁴ Ilesanmi, Dele A. “Pneumagenesial theory: The groundwork for a biblical understanding of the origin of the cosmos” in *Mature journal of international institute of Christian theologians, scholars, and professionals*. ICSTP: 2024. <https://mature.ictsp.org/>

¹⁵ Ilesanmi, Dele A. “Jesus’ teaching through discovery and pneumagogy: A theogogical approach to teaching and learning in christian education” in *African journal of kingdom education*: 2024. Vol.2 (1).

¹⁶ Ilesanmi, Dele A. “The need for biblical research and publication beyond secularism: Concepts and importance” in *Mature journal of the international institute of Christian theologians, scholars, and profession nals*. ICSTP: (2024). Vol. 2 (3), 1-14.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the word of God – should be used to evaluate the veracity or validity of all disciplines, including science and philosophy because they are not superior to the word of God¹⁸:

Most people believe that science is superior to Scripture (the Bible) with regard to the world of nature. This is not true. The Bible is not a book of science. The Bible is superior to science. It is an error to use science to evaluate the Bible, the word of God. It is only the Scripture (the Bible) that is absolute. Science is not absolute. Science is knowledge, not wisdom, but God gives both, the Bible gives both (Prov 2:6). Thus, the Bible should be used to evaluate the veracity of all disciplines. However, true science does not contradict the word of God but lends credence to it. The truth is this: without God, science and other things cannot stand, and without science and other things, the word of God stands forever; nothing can change it. True science is pneumagenesial, that is, it has a cause, beginning, genesis, root, or origin in the Spirit realm of God, the invisible Force that creates and controls the entire universe. True science (true knowledge) is a spirit (Isa 11:2). Therefore, it cannot contradict its source.

Many theories have emerged in recent times to explain the origin of the universe, from religious and mythological theories, scientific theories, philosophical theories, ancient and indigenous theories, to esoteric and mystical theories, etc. Prominent among them are big bang theory – the universe began to expand from a singularity which result in cosmic explosion arising from heat. The theory represents a dominant paradigm within astrophysics. It postulates that approximately 13.8 billion years ago, all matter was condensed into an infinitely dense singularity before expanding rapidly. The theory fails to address the cause of this “singularity” that led to the creation of the universe. This is *Uncaused Speculative Universe Theory (USUT)*. It is “uncaused” because the theory does not address the causative force behind the creation (the universe’s origin) – it lacks a clear cause; and it is “speculative” because it relies on unobservable and untested assumptions. This theory and other myriad and associated theories cannot substantiate their findings. Recently, though, big bang theory has been disregarded as scientific fact, it is regarded in some quarters as a philosophical idea of a dreamer¹⁹. Perhaps the intention of this theory is to depopularise the Biblical Creationism in Genesis that God created the universe in six days.

No doubt, among the myriad theories that have emerged, theogenesial theory presents a unique stance on the origin of the universe, espousing the biblical creationism in the book of Genesis. At its core, theogenesial theory suggests that a Supreme Being (God) initiated creation through His divine will, by His divine fiat, and out of nothing – ex nihilo (Gen 1:1; Ps 33: 6-9; Heb 11: 3). This demonstrates God’s omnipotence. Thus, God is the Causative Force, the Uncaused Cause behind the universe’s origin. This is the import of this theory called *theogenesis*. It should be noted here that understanding the universe requires acknowledging dimensions beyond physical laws. It is not within the purview of scientific or philosophical investigation; it is a theological or spiritual inquiry. The science and philosophy can only know little about the universe’s origin because they lack theological or spiritual insights to substantiate their stance. In other words, they lack epistemological validity that theology provides through biblical lens.

¹⁸ Ilesanmi, Dele A. “Pneumagenesial theory: The groundwork for a biblical understanding of the origin of the cosmos” in *Mature journal of international institute of Christian theologians, scholars, and professionals*. ICSTP: 2024. Vol. 2 (3), 1-17. <https://mature.ictsp.org/>

¹⁹ Ibid.

Theologically, God remains the first teacher. He taught: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2-3); He instructed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12-36); He taught Moses during his encounters with God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-24); Jesus' teachings to His disciples (Matthew 5-7, John 13-17); among numerous others. The epistemology of theology (how we know and understand what God teaches) in Christianity is different from that of traditional African religion; similarly, the methodology of theology (how God teaches) lies on the theological understanding of each religious framework. God speaks or teaches in diverse ways. God is a dynamic transcendent Being that does not stick to one method of teaching. God teaches or guides His people in diverse ways. This may be through dreams, revelations, visions, trance, nature, holy men and women, His voice, etc. He guides or teaches majorly through his words in Scripture – this is the primary source of God's revelation. In simple term, theology is the study of God's teachings and revelations, while theological epistemology is how God's teachings and revelations are known, understood, and interpreted. For the Christians, the theological epistemology is through the Scripture – the Bible, but for the traditional Africans, the theological epistemology is through *Ifa* corpus, ancestral spirits, gods or goddesses, dreams, revelations, visions, nature, etc. In Christian theology or African Christian theology, God can teach through other means, such as dreams, revelations, visions, or nature but, in any way He chooses, it must be in line with the Bible – the word of God. In ACT, God teaches majorly through the Scripture, while in ATT, it is believed that God teaches through other means. This is the exact position in ATT before the introduction of biblical Christianity to Africa.

Comparative Analysis between ATT and ACT: The Theogenesial and Theological Connections and Diversities

Before the advent of Christianity, Africans had their theology, cosmosophy, and epistemological theology. The methodologies of theology are quite distinct from that of the West. Yet the same God created all and the same God speaks and teaches all but in a diverse ways. African theologies speak of and teach God as the creator of the universe. Similarly, Christian or biblical theology teaches the same. Both theological frameworks also belief that God exists. Another area of convergence between ACT and ATT is that both belief systems acknowledge the presence of supernatural forces in everyday life. They emphasise communal values such as unity, respect for elders, and collective responsibility, reciprocity, and forgiveness. Additionally, both theological traditions place a strong emphasis on oral traditions ab initio as a means of passing down spiritual knowledge from generation to generation before documentation in writing. It is believed that both theologies teach that God is not unaware of whatever that happens, good or bad. They both teach one supreme God that is higher than any other gods. These interconnectedness and theological understanding support the theogenesial connections of both theological paradigms.

Contrariwise, in African Traditional theology (ATT), there is a strong emphasis on ancestral worship and communication with spirits. This is reflected in rituals, ceremonies, and practices that honour ancestors as intermediaries between humans and the divine realm. "Divine realm" can be seen as two distinct beings in ATT – God as a Spirit and other spirit beings. African theologies teach that God must be approached through other smaller gods since the higher God, the Almighty, is invisible. Thus, ATT teaches polytheism. Thus, the invisible remains the Father of the visible gods (*Abarisa*)²⁰. In

²⁰ *Abarisa* is the name of God in Ekiti of South Western Nigeria, meaning God the Father of all gods or God of all gods. This sounds biblical.

contrast, African Christian theology (ACT) incorporates elements of Biblical Christianity²¹, emphasising monotheism and a focus on Jesus Christ as the central figure of worship. Jesus is believed to be both fully man and fully God. The ACT teaches that God is a Spirit (John 4:24), an invisible but personal Being while Jesus, the Son of God, came as an image of this invisible transcendent God (Col 1:15). In other words, Jesus is the visible of the invisible God. What is more, another area where divergences can be observed is in the concept of sin and redemption. In ATT, sin is often seen as a disruption of harmony within the community rather than a transgression against God. Redemption may involve rituals or sacrifices to restore balance within society. On the other hand, ACT views sin as an offense against God or disobedience to God's laws that requires repentance and forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ and, without repentance, one goes to hell and eventually ends up in lake of fire because the names of sinners cannot be found in the book of life (Rev 20: 15). ACT teaches that sins separate human beings from God (Isa 59: 1-2). ACT also teaches that God makes provision for the salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Rom 5: 8; 1Cor 15:3-4), the Saviour of the world (Matt 1:21; John 3:16) who redeems or saves humanity. This redemptive provision is not taught in ATT but emphasises ritual and communal redemption, teaching that it is a restoration of balance and harmony. What is more, ACT teaches that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity, while ATT teaches that ancestors and spirits are the mediators that connect humanity to God. Another point of theological diversity lies in the interpretation of sacred texts. While ATT relies heavily on oral tradition and storytelling to convey spiritual truths, ACT places greater emphasis on written scripture – the Bible. Though the Yoruba of Western Nigeria has *Ifa*²² corpus as their esoteric sacred scripture, written in codes or symbols. It is believed, according to Ilesanmi (2007) that *Ifa* corpus has 16 sacred *Odu* called *Odu Ifa* (sacred texts containing wisdom and stories), 256 chapters and countless verses.²³ In this part of Africa, Ilesanmi further stressed that Ifa divination system is believed to be a revelation or message from Olodumare (God) to humanity.²⁴ This is Yoruba African theology – Ifa theology. Indeed, this difference in textual or scriptural authority can lead to varying interpretations of religious teachings and practices thereby culminating in religious tension between ACT and ATT. Furthermore, ACT teaches resurrection through Christ Jesus, emphasising individual resurrection to eternal life and affirms that resurrection is triumph or victory over death. On the other hand, ATT teaches reincarnation and transmigration. Yoruba theology, or rather mythology, teaches these concepts. Additionally, in the area of judgement, ACT teaches that individual is judged by God but ATT teaches communal judgement through ancestral spirits.

²¹ Some African traditionalists refers to it as “Western Christianity or Religion”

²² *Ifa* is a revered Yoruba divination system, the esoteric sacred Scripture of the Yoruba in Western Nigeria, West Africa.

²³ See Ilesanmi, Dele A. *Christianity and educational development in ekitiland since 1893*. A dissertation submitted to the redeemed christian bible college in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a master's degree in theology with specialization in christian education: (2007).

²⁴ Ibid.

Comparison between ATT and ACT

“Every culture is shaped by its traditions and forges its future in the light of those traditions.”²⁵ African culture is no exception. Primordially, African Theology (AT)²⁶ is autochthonous to Africa, reflecting the culture and religious traditions of the African people. It encompasses a broad range of theological reflections originating from African religious traditions and beliefs but its intersections or encounter with Christianity, Islam, and other religious practices and beliefs has given it an identity of complexity in the global religious market. This interplay culminated in the birth of African Christian Theology (ACT), which is a blend of Christian theology (CT)²⁷ and African theology (AT). This also gives African theology a new identity called African Traditional Theology (ATT) to maintain the autochthonous identity of African theology. ATT is characterised by its deep roots in indigenous and cultural contexts and anthropological insights that inform religious understandings in Africa.

Christian Theology (CT) is allochthonous to African Theology (AT). The marriage of CT and AT gave birth to ACT, a theological subset that precisely focuses on the Christian traditions and experience in Africa, aimed at contextualising biblical faith through African lenses to make Christian religion intelligible to Africans. This explains the clamour by many African theologians for a theology grounded in African culture, promoting the idea of inculturation where Christian teachings are expressed through African idioms and practices.

Historically, African theology as an academic discussion has emerged in response to colonial missionary histories and the imposition of Western theological frameworks. Consequent upon the interplay between the CT and AT, frantic efforts towards creating theological expressions that are distinctly African to express the need for a self-awareness and contextually relevant theological discourse have been stressed and espoused. The development of African theology (AT) to be at par with CT gained traction in the mid-20th century as new generations of African theologians sought to articulate their faith in ways that were relevant and authentic to their religious and cultural identities.

Furthermore, we can gain a better understanding of how these two theological frameworks, African Traditional Theology (ATT) and African Christian Theology (ACT), interact within the larger African spiritual milieu by looking at their components through illustrative cases. No doubt, a rich tapestry of ancient beliefs that highlight the interconnection of all creation is at the core of African religions, which informed an average traditional African man’s perspective about God. Traditional African societies often view God as part of their daily life approached through minor gods. Additionally, some traditional African societies revere ancestral spirits as mediators between God and humanity, emphasising a relational conception of divinity. What is more, some traditional African societies worship rivers, mountains, trees, animals, and other creatures as intermediaries between God and man. Again, some African social structures and community ethics are shaped by this holistic viewpoint, which has a significant impact on how people interact with one another, their surroundings, and their theological standpoints. African Traditional Religion (ATR), therefore, is at the root of ATT. This means, ATT cannot operate successfully without ATR. This is because ATR is the fulcrum upon which ATT revolves. In other words, our religious beliefs inform our theological perspectives. Religion is man’s quest for divine interaction with the aim of understanding a transcendental Being

²⁵ Clyde E. Fant Donald W. Musser Mitchell G. Reddish. *An introduction to the bible (revised edition)*. Abingdon Press Nashville: (1991)

²⁶ “AT” is here referred to as “African Theology”

²⁷ “CT” is here referred to as “Christian Theology”

(God), while theology is the study of a transcendental God and His wondrous creation through religious tools or platforms (sacred books, worship, prayer, sacrifice, giving, etc).

African Christian Theology (ACT), on the other hand, offers a different perspective on God, frequently embracing biblical interpretations that place an emphasis on personal faith and salvation through grace. Many African Christian theologians emphasise scriptural authority and doctrinal purity yet, give respect to traditional African ideals, such as communal cooperation, without subverting the traditional Christian ideals. For example, believers' perception of God's relationship with humans is primarily guided by the teachings found in the Holy Bible. This, however, can occasionally, if serious caution is not observed, cause conflicts with traditional or indigenous belief systems that place more value on group ceremonies than on personal religious expression. Some African societies, such as Yoruba in Western Nigeria, are guided by the teachings of sacred and esoteric scripture called *Ifa*. This may cause tension because of the religious interplay. This is because every religious group wants to retain its religious identities. This is one of the religious tensions experienced between ATT and ACT. The question of which religious tools and platforms to employ in Africa creates this tension. However, there is a substantial connection between ATT and ACT in spite of these distinctions.

In instructional methodologies, both theological frameworks have points to prove. For example, Africans often employ storytelling as a great tool for teaching wisdom about creation stories or moral teachings, which is rooted in African ancestral traditions, and it is frequently used in traditional educational approaches within indigenous or traditional settings. Animal-based folktales, such as elephant and tortoise, can include deep spiritual lessons about human nature and moral behaviour towards others. This is obtainable in ATT. On the other hand, churches frequently employ didactic approaches that is biblically based, which are defined by sermons that centre on scriptural readings and conversations that try to help individuals apply biblical concepts to their own lives. Scholars and African religious leaders have started to close the gaps between these two theological standpoints in recent years by engaging in productive discourse that aims to enrich rather than compete. For example, the formation of inter-religious groups, such as ecumenical Councils, Interfaith Organisations, Religious Dialogue Groups, World Council of Religions for Peace, etc., are parts of the initiative move. Both theological systems or strands can coexist peacefully without subverting the good moral values of any if common values are emphasised, such as reverence for God, love for each other or one another, maintenance of peace and order, etc. Although each framework offers a different viewpoint on God's character and our role in His creation, no doubt, both ultimately prepare to answer important questions about life via their own religious lens. By acknowledging areas of agreement as well as differences—in theology or morality—we can promote more nuanced discussions that respect both indigenous knowledge systems and biblical Christianity by engaging in contextual theology that support the process of inculturation, which is the process of integrating Christian traditions into native customs without destroying the textual meanings of biblical teachings or erasing good cultural identities. This, without any doubt, will significantly contribute to our understanding of the deeper mysteries of God.

The concept of *theogenesis* as related to ATT and ACT refers to the various ways that different religious cultures perceive their relationships with God or gods and cosmological interpretations. In many African contexts, God is seen as an active participant in everyday life—a view influenced by traditional beliefs about ancestors who mediate between humans and divine forces. For instance, among the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria, *Olodumare* represents an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent creator who interacts with humanity through lesser deities (*Orishas*). Hence, the Ekiti of Eastern

Yoruba refers to God as *Abarisa*, meaning: Father of gods (deities) or God of all gods – this, perhaps, the perfect name for God in African interpretation and understanding. In this sense, understanding God's nature involves recognising these intermediaries that reflect both personal experiences and communal identity. In essence, the traditional African person believes that God is the creator of all things, including the universe and everything in it. In Yoruba theology or mythology, *Olodumare* (the Supreme God) is the creator and sustainer of the universe. It is believed that *Olodumare* sent the sky god called *Obatala* to create the earth, assisted by other deities, such as *Orunmila* (the god of knowledge and wisdom, who knows the secret things) who played the advisory role during creation; and *Eshu* (messenger god) who assisted Obatala to shaping the earth.²⁸

More so, in the area of *theogogy*, the focus is on how Christians and African traditional believers understand divine guidance or teachings through channels of their religious belief systems. This aspect brings into play concepts such as redemption, salvation, resurrection, moral living, love, peace, worship of one living God, etc. that are often articulated through sermons or church teachings in Christian religion. While ATT teaches reincarnation, moral living, love, peace, worship of gods, etc. Vital points to uphold here are that each theological view of the two theological frameworks are different theogenesially and theologically but both theologies or religions teach love, moral living, and teach that God exists and created the universe.

The Challenges of Contextualisation and Inculturation

There two major challenges confronting African Christian theologians in their bid to contextualise Christian faith within African cultural frameworks:

1. The fear of syncretism and the dilution of fundamental Christian tenets while contextualising ACT within African cultural frameworks is a serious challenge to African Christian theologians. That is, thinking on how best to integrate African traditional beliefs into Christian theology (CT) without compromising the theological integrity of Christianity.
2. Continuous interplay between African indigenous beliefs and practices and the tenets of biblical Christianity without serious caution and genuine inculturation and contextualisation will culminate in religious tension between the two theological frameworks – ATT and ACT. This is a source of trepidation to African Christian theologians. This tension may cause blur interpretations of Christian doctrines thereby lead to absolute deviation from traditional Christian framework.
3. The fear of cultural and theological imperialism and dominance.
4. The challenge of how to address conflicting cultural and biblical values.

²⁸ Oral traditions. For a better understanding, consult *Yoruba sacred texts (Odu Ifa)*; Beier, Ulli. Yoruba mythology. Cambridge university press: 1966; Idowu, E.B. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. Longman; 1962; Awolalu, J.O. *Yoruba belief and Sacrificial Rites*. Longman: 1979

5. Limited resources and expertise for contextualised and inculturated research.
6. Language and cultural barriers

Recommendations

There is need to contextualise Christian Theology beyond the addition of prefix “African” to “Christian Theology” if we want to make African theological teachings relevant and meaningful to Africans. In doing this, the African Christian theologians needs to understand African religious teachings, culture, history, and values very well before engaging in contextualisation. This will help them to remove cultural values that are not good. This is part of the attempts this author has made in this paper.

Incorporating African customs that are good into worship practices, such as languages, drumming, cultural attires or dresses, etc. This, some African churches have achieved.

Translating Christian Bible into African languages, not only the major African languages. For example, in Nigeria, the major languages are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. We can also include Urobo, Igala, Nupe, Ekiti, etc. Though Ekiti is part of Yoruba, it remains the single largest linguistic homogenous ethnic group in Nigeria. This is the only place in Yoruba land that Christianity was not introduced by a foreigner but by the people themselves through the help of the Holy Spirit and homogenous cultural identity.

There is need for careful contextualisation and inculturation to make Christianity more relevant to African cultures and experiences. This will help Africans to express their faith in their own cultural context.

Conclusion

The study has been able to do a comparative analysis of theogenesial and theological connections and diversities of African Christian Theology (ACT) and African Traditional Theology (ATT). While these two theological frameworks shared values, such as communalism, love, moralities, reverence for Supreme Being, and teach that God is the creator of the universe, divergences exist in areas such as sin, redemption, salvation, and textual authority. The study also reveals that Contextualised and inculturated Christian teachings will enrich African Christian Theology (ACT), making it more flourishing, relevant, authentic, and effective in Africa. Similarly, it will help African Traditional Theology (ATT) to be relevant, more dynamic, and refined to suit the purpose of God. Finally, the research work reveals a deeper understanding of ATT and ACT and recommends a contextual and inculturated theology that will support the growth of ACT and ATT for a better understanding of God and the universe vis-à-vis the teachings of divine revelation in the Bible—Biblical theology of education.

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