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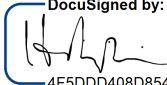
"CAN ANYONE WITHHOLD THE WATER...?"

A Biblical and Historical Analysis of Contextualization and Indigenization in the African American Church towards the Practical Prevention of Spiritual Marginalization

A Proposal for a Doctoral Dissertation

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Abstract

Thesis

Contextualization and indigenization have always been necessary and expected components of establishing Christian communities of faith and practice. Failed or obsolete attempts at contextualization and indigenization in evangelism and missions continue to harm the development of the African American Church. This results in the development of spiritually marginalized communities alienated from the very relationship with God that such communities need. Preventing such spiritual marginalization in communities requires a training curriculum that combines a working theology on appropriate contextualization and indigenization with a framework for practical implementation. The outcome would decrease the tendency to replicate non-contextual religious practice and increase the capacity to replicate the foundational concepts of the Christian faith, thus decreasing our development of spiritually marginalized people or groups.

The methodology used towards exploring this thesis combines a biblical and historical analysis of contextualization and indigenization, a biblical and historical analysis of anti-contextualization and anti-indigenization in African regions and the African American Church, and a biblical and historical analysis of foundational Christian concepts. This conceptual analysis leads to a practical approach to appropriate contextualization in the contemporary African American Church. This research will ultimately contribute to a curriculum that will establish an understanding of contextual theology combined with practical application, specifically toward preserving urban African American culture without compromising foundational Christian concepts. Pastors, churches, and conferences in African American communities and broader contexts may use this curriculum to train church leaders on contextualization and indigenization.

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Throughout the spread of the Christian church, evangelists and missionaries representing dominant effector cultures and subcultures have attempted to replicate their culture, religious preferences, and national identities more than the foundational Christian concepts that lead to true conversion, faith practice, and worship expression. In such instances, the Christian faith message is rejected as the capacity for receptor cultures to adopt the faith of Christianity often relies heavily upon their willingness to deny all elements of their own cultural identity deemed unacceptable by the effector culture. Due to the unique nature of the development of the African American Church, this dynamic is even more significant. African Americans have existed as a marginalized community since its origins in 1619 in Jamestown, Virginia. Historically, Eurocentric cultures have viewed elements of African culture as inferior and unacceptable. The most prominent display of this dynamic of presumed inferiority occurred during the era of enslavement and white supremacy during the 17th to 20th centuries. The imprint of Eurocentric superiority and preference could be seen in all aspects of African American life, but primarily in the faith practice and worship expression of African American Christianity. The African American Church became the first free institution to exist for African Americans by African Americans. However, Eurocentric Christian cultural and religious preferences were pressed upon them at the expense of their own indigenous cultural identity causing African American Christian faith practice and worship expression to possess a more Eurocentric and less African Christian imprint. Even as the African American Church began to develop a faith practice that was more synonymous with its African culture, a sense of cultural elitism emerged from it as respectability politics in the face of white supremacy,

as well as a hyper-focus on holiness grounded in oppressive and paternalist standards, had shaped much of African American Church faith practice and worship expression.

Further, as African Americans began to experience more freedoms of expression beyond religion and spirituality in America, such as in music and the arts during post-Emancipation, the African American Church began to face the same theological and ecclesiastical challenges the church historically faced in its evangelical efforts. Matters of what is considered acceptable and unacceptable in the context of our faith practice and worship expression emerged and were often dealt with inappropriately. The dark cloud of white supremacy, African American attempts at equality with whites through hyper-morality, and the lack of an authentic cultural identity tremendously impacted responses to these theological challenges. The byproduct of the African American Church's inability to embrace and encourage indigenous faith practice and worship expression throughout its development is the same marginalization African Americans have always experienced in America, though in the spiritual and ecclesiological sense. As a result, these spiritually marginalized groups have developed a similar disdain for the African American Church that Africana people have held regarding European missionaries for centuries. African American subcultures exist within the African American community who desire a relationship with God but seek alternative avenues to engage that relationship due to the spiritually marginalizing practices of the African American Church and its inability to embrace and encourage indigenous Christian faith. The task for the African American Church in the 21st century is to avoid this same development of spiritual marginalization by focusing on replicating fundamental Christian concepts rather than our own cultural and religious expressions through appropriate contextualization and indigenization. Contextualization and indigenization have always been necessary and expected components of establishing Christian communities of faith and practice.

Failed or obsolete attempts at contextualization and indigenization in evangelism and missions continue to harm the development of the African American Church. This results in the development of spiritually marginalized communities alienated from the very relationship with God that such communities require. Preventing such spiritually marginalized communities requires a training curriculum for churches and church leaders that combines a working theology on appropriate contextualization and indigenization with a framework for practical implementation. The outcome would decrease the tendency to replicate non-contextual religious preferences and increase the capacity to replicate the foundational concepts of the Christian faith, thus decreasing our development of spiritually marginalized people groups.

Scope and Nomenclature

Timeline

The historical analysis of this research is a narrow study of the role of contextualization and indigenization in the development of the African American Church with emphasis upon four primary epochs: the initial spread of Christianity into North Africa from the 1st to 7th centuries, the emergence of Christianity in West Africa during the 15th and 16th centuries, the development of Christianity under American enslavement from the 17th to 19th centuries, and the development of the African American Church in post-emancipation during the 19th and 20th centuries.

African American?

The three more common terms used to identify the descendants of enslaved Africans living in America are Black, Africana, and African American. I do not suggest that these are the only three terms. These are the three that appeared consistently throughout the historical research. I

prefer to use the term African American for the scope of this study instead of the two alternatives, and my preference for the term African American is due to subject matter and focus. Some academic settings prefer the term Black Church instead of African American Church. However, the term Black in the context of this research would expand the focus onto all people who possess melanin-rich skin tones. At its most general level, this term would apply to multiple people groups worldwide as melanin-rich people groups populated many parts of the Western hemisphere through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Prior to the Trans-Atlantic slave diaspora, Afro-Asiatic people of the Middle East and East could be considered Black as well. Using Black as a cultural identifier would create too broad of a scope, as Black culture in America, both within the church and in society, has taken on many forms and means different things to different people. Likewise, an expanded scope would be necessary if the term Africana were used. Though a portion of research and study in this dissertation draws from the history of Christianity in the African context, it is only to serve as a launching pad into the more significant focus on the practice of Christianity by people of African descent in America. Therefore, the term Africana would be too broad as well. The term African American is the best term to use for the focus of the research as it provides the most succinct focus on the Christian faith practice and worship expression developed by people of African descent who were brought to America and forced to develop their own identity apart from the identity of their ancestors. Black or Africana theology and ecclesiology would be a study that incorporates the entire globe. African American correctly identifies descendants from Africa who established an identity in America. Therefore, I prefer the term African American.

The African American Church

Amongst many others, there are six significant denominations in the African American Church: African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion), the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. (NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). Each of these is a branch of one of three primary American Protestant faith traditions that were heavily involved in the conversion of enslaved Africans and the development of the African American Church during the 17th to 20th centuries: the Baptists, the Methodists, and the Holiness/Pentecostal faith traditions. Therefore, only Baptist, Methodist, and Holiness/Pentecostal faith traditions are directly acknowledged throughout the dissertation. It is not done to slight or diminish the relevance of other African American Church faith traditions and denominations. These specific references are due to the weight of impact these three faith traditions have had upon the development of the African American Church. There is no attempt to identify any specific denomination within the African American Church directly. The historical analysis has specific references to AME and COGIC denominations, which is only due to the documented direct involvement of those specific denominations during critical historical moments. Thus, references to the African American Church generally focus on African American Baptist, Methodist, and Holiness/Pentecostal faith traditions with occasional direct references to African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denominations.

Contextualization vs. Syncretism

Discussions on contextualization and indigenization often include the topic of syncretism. Though the task of providing working definitions for contextualization and indigenization occurs

in Chapter 1, it is best to address the topic of syncretism beforehand to avoid it as a distraction

from the rest of the reading. The topic of syncretism typically arises as the counterargument to

contextualization and indigenization since the focus of contextualization and indigenization

involves providing grace and space to the receptor's cultural identity in the work of evangelism

and mission. This counterargument emerges from understanding the church's role as Christ's

ecclesia, having been "called out" of the world to become the salt of the earth. The aim and

perplexity for the church and church leaders is leading diverse individuals, groups, and

communities into a deeper relationship with God through a relationship with Jesus Christ by

leading them out of the practices that may hinder the same. Therefore, the church's work is of no

effect if she only exists to acquiesce to every cultural norm. Thus, for some Christians, the

concepts of contextualization and indigenization place the church in conflict with Paul's

admonition for Christians not to be "conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing

of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and

perfect" (Ro. 12:2, NRSV). For the opponent of contextualization and indigenization based on

syncretism, contextualization and indigenization are synonymous with conformity.

Resolution to the tension regarding syncretism occurs through the appropriate application

of the term. The origin of the term syncretism is to identify attempts to bring together what may

appear to be opposing schools of thought, and the earliest documented usage of the term in this

manner is by Plutarch.[1] Later, Erasmus employed syncretism as a system of principles to find

harmony amongst oppositional Protestant sects. Thus, the genesis of the concept of syncretism

focused on the attempt to find unity in diversity. This concept rests at the center of Christianity

and ecclesiology. From its earliest form Christianity as a faith practice became the byproduct of

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[1] Walter A. Elwell, "Syncretism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 1158.

syncretism between Judaism and surrounding Gentile cultures, as much of Christian practice developed in the context of pre-existing Jewish religious practices. It was not until the 17th century that syncretism began to refer to the "dilution of the essential truths of the gospel through the incorporation of non-Christian elements," which is the more common understanding of the term.[2] However, involved in the actual work of appropriate contextualization and indigenization, as well as one of the primary goals of this research, is the identification and preservation of the foundational concepts of the gospel. Identifying these foundational concepts will be the central focus of Chapter 4. Thus, resolving concerns with syncretism in contextualization and indigenization may occur in two ways. First, we should not view the idea of syncretism as an uncommon occurrence since it has always been a part of the church's development and since the church itself is a byproduct of syncretistic practices. The work of contextualization and indigenization seeks to employ the positive attributes of syncretism found in the term's earliest usage. Second, we should recognize that the true challenge with syncretism only occurs when foundational Christian concepts are compromised or sacrificed altogether in favor of cultural preferences. This concept resembles Old Testament guidelines against Israel and their intermingling with foreign cultures. As Chapter 1 will explain, the concept of syncretism occurs amongst the patriarchs and the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament. It is only when cultural norms and behaviors promote spiritually and physically harmful faith practices and idolatry does God seem to prohibit syncretistic relationships.

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[2] Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second, p. 1159.

Methodology

The methodology will consist of a biblical and historical analysis of contextualization and indigenization, a biblical and historical analysis of anti-contextualization and anti-indigenization, and a biblical and historical analysis of appropriate contextualization and indigenization through the implementation of foundational Christian concepts. Chapter 1 establishes working definitions for contextualization and indigenization, including seven indigenous Christian faith characteristics. These seven characteristics of indigenous faith develop through a thorough analysis of the biblical record from the book of Genesis to the church's post-apostolic history. This analysis will show that the contextualization of faith practice for developing indigenous Christian communities has always been a birthmark of the faith. Chapter 2 presents a deeper biblical and historical analysis of the appropriate practice of contextualization and indigenization during the first four centuries of the church's development and expansion, primarily emphasizing its expansion into North Africa. This analysis will be juxtaposed with a historical analysis of the attempted spread of Christianity into West Africa by Catholic Portuguese missionaries, emphasizing the difference between the appropriate contextualization and indigenization efforts of the early church and the anti-contextual and anti-indigenous efforts of Roman Catholicism. Chapter 3 will explore how the characteristics of contextual and indigenous faith practice and worship expression resurfaced on colonial plantations in America amongst enslaved Africans. The Portuguese missionaries' introduction of Christianity to West Africans needed appropriate contextualization. Nevertheless, enslaved Africans took to their new understanding of Jesus. They developed an indigenous faith practice in the context of American enslavement, which led to the development of the African American Church. Unfortunately, the African American Church developed a brand of anti-contextualization and anti-indigenization along with the development of

spiritual marginalization despite its initial contextual and indigenous progress. The African American Church seems to have repeated the same failures of early Roman Catholicism and early American Protestantism as each respective faith tradition placed missiological emphasis on the replication of religious preferences in the place of foundational Christian concepts. Thus, Chapter 4 distinguishes foundational Christian concepts from religious preference through a biblical analysis of the prophetic witness and the apostolic tradition.

This methodology will prove that contextualization and indigenization have not only been necessary components of church evangelism and missions since the church's inception but also fundamental components of church growth. Further, the ineffective or absent practice of contextualization and indigenization amongst African American communities in America has resulted in unhealthy church models that subsequently gave rise to spiritually marginalized groups. A biblical foundation for restoring appropriate contextualization and indigenization by interconnecting the Old Testament's prophetic witness with the New Testament apostolic tradition will develop from this methodology. The goal of this methodology is a training curriculum that combines a working theology on appropriate contextualization and indigenization with a framework for practical implementation. As a byproduct of such, we will witness a growth in individuals engaged in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and a decrease in spiritually marginalized groups.

Contributions to the Scholarly Field

This research interconnects the scholarly fields of ecclesiology, church history, cultural Christianity, and contextual theology. Very few works in either of these scholarly fields tend to lend themselves to the issues of the contemporary African American Church through the voice of

an African American pastor. Nor do we find where they leave any framework for practical implementation, which is what this research will accomplish. This research will also contribute to a curriculum that will establish an understanding of contextual theology combined with practical application, specifically toward preserving urban African American culture without sacrificing the foundational Christian concepts. It will be called The Contextual Theology for Urban Evangelism Training Curriculum for pastors and churches. The curriculum will include a succinct explanation of the foundational Christian concepts and how African American Christians can individually and communally express those foundational concepts without fear of entirely abandoning their cultural identities. Pastors, churches, and conferences in African American communities and abroad may use this curriculum to train church leaders on contextualization and indigenization. This material will be helpful primarily in urban settings since most existing material on contextualization and indigenization focuses on foreign evangelism and mission. Material that speaks towards the domestic work of evangelism and mission, especially in urban African American communities, is minimal. In Acts 1:8, Jesus provides the apostles with a progressive and expansive model for evangelism that began domestically in Jerusalem and expanded into foreign territory. For African American Church leaders, the African American community of the spiritually marginalized is our Jerusalem, and very little material exists that aids us in reaching them appropriately. It is also no secret that Eurocentric male thought and voices that fail to speak to the complexities of the African American Church experience within the African American community have dominated the scholarly fields of evangelism and mission. This generation of millennial and Gen-Z African Americans desire a relationship with God but are largely unwilling to accept any presentation of such a relationship that is replete with the religious patriarchy, oppression, and suppression they hold responsible for their current marginalization. Thus, the most significant contribution I can

provide to these scholarly fields of evangelism, missions, and ecclesiology is an African American voice for African American pastors who have the burning desire to reach the spiritually marginalized in their communities while being left without a practical approach. These are vital to restoring the African American Church's impact amongst spiritually marginalized communities.

Contextualization & Indigenization Defined

Contextualization and indigenization have always been necessary and expected components for establishing Christian communities of faith and practice. They exist as co-requisite parts of the work of Christian evangelism and mission. Contextualization occurs during the process of evangelism and mission through the efforts of an effector culture while a receptor culture seeks to develop an understanding of the gospel message in its context. It is through indigenization that a receptor culture is allowed freedom in adaptation and expression of faith practice that does not diminish nor compromise the foundational concepts of the Christian faith. Indigenous faith practice becomes the by-product of appropriate contextualization. Through appropriate contextualization, indigenous Christian communities are developed.

Contextualization

In *Encountering the History of Missions*, Terry and Gallagher define Christian contextualization as "the whole process of communicating the gospel and establishing churches that reflect the cultural context of the people."[1] In the work of contextualization, the foundational concepts of the Christian faith are not lost but rather enhanced through the analogous communicable terms and symbols of the receptor culture. From its inception Christianity has been culturally continuous. No one culture nor historical epoch was meant to represent the full portrait of what it means to be Christian or express faith through faith practice and worship expression. The foundational concepts of Christianity, which are but extensions and further developments of God's eternal will for humanity, are unchanging just as God is unchanging.

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[1] John Mark Terry and Robert L. Gallagher, *Encountering the History of Missions: From the Early Church to Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), p. 262.

Though unchanging in essence, Christianity should still be mosaic in its expression as to reflect all cultures that have been accepting of it. The apostle John describes such a mosaic in his apocalyptic revelation:

> After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb! (Rev. 7:9-10, NRSV).

In this eschatological scene, John does not witness a monolithic worship experience being devoted towards the Savior. Rather, he witnesses a mosaic amalgamation of worship drawn together under the name of God and the Lamb of God, Jesus. Thus, what God envisions for the church as seen in John's revelation is a universal church in which indigenization has been encouraged through appropriate contextualization.

Contextual Theology

Whereas theology itself explores who God is and how we are to communicate His being to others, contextual theology explores how God has been experienced within a particular cultural context and how He should best be communicated within that context. Liberation theology, Black Liberation theology, and Womanist theology are some examples of contextual theology.

Liberation Theology

The central focus of Liberation theology is to communicate the person of God and the message of God's kingdom to impoverished Latin American communities in a way that expressed God's love for the poor. In Liberation theology, salvation is not viewed only as a spiritual

experience with future eschatological implications. It carries present implications of salvation from political, social, and economic injustices. It embraces the fulfillment of God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10).

Black Liberation Theology

Black Liberation theology adopted a similar approach in the context of Africana people with heightened emphasis on the liberation of people of color. Black Liberation theology focuses on who God is to a people who experienced a history of enslavement and oppression in the name of God. Black Liberation theology may be best defined as a theology in the context of the "amelioration of the condition of black people and consciously locked in battle with white racism."[2]

Womanist Theology

Womanist theology is an example of contextual theology that explores the person of God from a context that does not ignore race, gender, sexuality, or class. All of which are areas often ignored in traditional biblical scholarship that has typically been dominated by white patriarchal perspectives. In *Womanist Sass and Talk Back*, author Mitzi Smith defines Womanist theology as the following: "Womanists boldly use our agency to interpret sacred texts for ourselves and in ways that free us and our communities from constructions of God that further oppress us and that condone violence on the basis of gender, race, class, sexuality, and othering."[3]

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[2] Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 171.
[3] Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), p. 3.

Womanist theology, Black Liberation theology, and Liberation theology each seeks to communicate God within various contexts and not just one dominant context. Each seeks to communicate God in some way that is different than the others. This is not to suggest that God is different to different people, as this would challenge the immutability of God (Mal. 3:6). The nature of God is unchanging. Rather, it is to suggest that certain cultural settings may experience Him in different ways and even to the extent that some may experience aspects of Him that others may not.

Contextual Theology in Scripture

For example, in the context of Genesis 26:22-23, Isaac has an experience through which God revealed Himself as One who enables the personal growth and prosperity of His human creation: Jehovah- Rehoboth. In the context of Exodus 15:22-26, God reveals Himself to Moses and Israel as Jehovah-Rophe, the God who heals. Isaac's context may not have called for a heightened emphasis on humanity's ability to find healing in the person of God. The same may be said regarding Israel's context at Marah and their need for God to be revealed in a way that addresses their health rather than their corporate growth. However, this does not suggest that God was not a healer at the time that Isaac needed growth and prosperity. Nor does it suggest that God stopped being the source of personal growth and prosperity when Israel needed Him to be the source of healing. God is simply communicated to each in a way that is relative to their context while in no way altering the essence of His being. The author of Hebrews writes, "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son…" (Heb. 1:1-2, NRSV). Since contextual theology explores the many ways

that God may be communicated in various contexts, the work of contextualization embraces this theological approach and employs it in the work of evangelism and mission.

Contextualization: Faith apart from Religion

In the work of contextualization, the goal for the effector culture is to separate their cultural identity and preferences from the foundational concepts of the Christian message itself so that the essence of the message does not get lost in or become intertwined with the identity of the messenger. The apostle Paul exemplifies this in several of his letters as he writes to various churches who all possess a different cultural context than that of his own Jewish context.   To the Philippians, Paul states that his Jewish identity and him having a knowledge of Jesus Christ are not synonymous concepts. Thus, it was not required for the Philippian Christian converts to learn the principles and precepts of Judaism for them to develop their faith in Christ (Php. 3:2-11). In his letter to the church in Rome, he informs the Jewish Christians in Rome that their fellow Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ must be given grace to develop their faith apart from their Jewish culture (Rom. 3:19-24). Charles H. Kraft in *Issues in Contextualization* states it best: "The goal of Contextualization is that a people would commit themselves to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior without the requirement that they convert to another culture."[4] In the absence of proper contextualization, the effector culture will be inclined to use phrases and concepts that are unfamiliar to the receptor culture without also assuming the responsibility of translation. The message of the faith is typically rejected in such cases and the work of evangelism becomes lost in translation. Whenever an individual has a message to deliver, that individual should assume the primary responsibility in communicating the message.[5]   Thus, where contextualization is

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[4] Charles H. Kraft, *Issues in Contextualization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016), p, viii.
[5] Kraft, *Issues in Contextualization,* p. 4.

appropriately implemented, the effector culture assumes the responsibility of translating the message into phrases and terms the receptor culture may readily understand.

Indigenization

When the faith of Christianity is appropriately communicated contextually, indigenous Christian communities become the by-product. The indigenization of the Christian faith is "the internal adaptation of external mission."[6] An indigenous Christian community is one whose faith practice and worship expression reflect their own cultural identity and distinctives as they are drawn from within rather than having them ascribed by the effector culture. There is no coerced attempt or inclination to replicate the cultural identity of the effector culture.[7] Essentially, there is no prohibition against such a replication. Yet, in the presence of appropriate contextualization there is also no fault nor demonization for failing to do so. This is the opposite of what was experienced during most colonial missionary endeavors beginning around the 15th century as colonial missionaries typically demonized mostly all expressions of missionized cultures that failed to reflect their own. During missionary endeavors in North America amongst Native Americans during the 16th to 20th centuries this demonization is well documented. Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker have described the experiences of Native American encounters with European missionaries. According to Native American testimony, "All our Indian ancestors were directly accused of engaging in devil worship by the earliest European invaders of Indian lands…"[8] However, the Native Americans in question here were not devil worshippers. They were professed Christians. Their expressions of worship towards God were merely presented within their own

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[6] Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity the Religious Impact* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), p. xiii.
[7] Terry and Gallagher, *Encountering the History of Missions*, p. 258.
[8] Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E. Tinker*, A Native American Theology* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 71.

cultural dynamics; cultural dynamics that were indigenous yet foreign to the missionaries. As a culture, Native Americans find great value in the land and the earth's elements.[9] While European missionaries in the indigenous homeland confused Native American appreciation of the earth and elements with idolatry, an appropriate contextualization would reveal that Native Americans experienced God through the elements. Such an experience would be no different than what we read in the biblical record of the Hebrew's experiences with God as they often experienced the divine presence through the elements as well. As the Hebrews journeyed through the wilderness from Egypt during the Exodus, they were assured of God's presence in the form of fire and a cloud (Ex. 13:21-22). On several occasions God's Holy Spirit is referenced through the elements of wind, fire, and water (Jn. 4:13-14; Acts 2:2-4). Considering Native American reverence of the land we should remember that Yahweh's punishment of the Babylonian conquest was a result of the Israelite's failure to reverence the Holy Land through the Sabbath Laws (2 Chron. 36:21; Jer. 29:10-11).

What may be used to identify an indigenous faith practice or indigenous Christian community? Terry and Gallagher provide us with possible goals to attain for a faith practice or community of faith to be viewed as appropriately indigenous. They propose that an indigenous church should be self-imaging, self-functioning, self-determining, self-supporting, self-propagating, self-giving, and self-theologizing.[10] Due to space and scope I will only expound upon two of these: self-imaging and self-theologizing.[11]

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[9] Kidwell, et. al., *A Native American Theology,* pp. 53-54.
[10] Terry and Gallagher, *Encountering the History of Missions,* pp. 261-262.
[11] I further elect not to engage in a detailed discussion on the remaining five goals of an indigenous church because they are a by-product of the other two. If a faith is contextualized to be practiced in a way that is self-imaging and self- theologizing, it would become self-functioning, self-determining, self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-giving.

Self-Imaging

The thought of a self-imaging Christian community is grounded in the Imago Dei: the very fact that all of humanity, not just select cultures and people groups, has been created in the image of God. A myriad of theological interpretations exists regarding what it means to be in the image of God. Yet, most interpretations agree that the image of God is what enables humanity to be relational since God Himself is relational. A self-imaging Christian community possesses the intrinsic quality to be relational both with one another as they live out their faith, and with their divine Creator as they express worship towards Him. The capacity to be relational both with God and neighbor is drawn from points of commonality where areas of likeness and similarity intersect. Challenges will arise when one is expected to be relational with those whom they share no likeness. The Greek term *koinonia*, which Paul uses in many of his letters, expresses this expectation for a Christian community. *Koinonia* points to a type of fellowship and relationship that is focused upon the things the community has in common with one another, and more importantly, the points where the community find commonality with God.[12] In the absence of self-imaging, it becomes impossible to develop an indigenous faith as in the case of such an absence the community will struggle to find a God to whom they can relate. This has been experienced heavily among Africana and Native American groups. We see this in false ideologies such as polygenesis, the curse theory of Ham, and paternalism. These ideologies have perpetuated views of God and Christianity that often prevents African Americans from seeing themselves in the Christian faith.

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[12] I do not suggest that God is common here. Scripture is clear that God is holy and exists transcendently above His creation. This commonality is spoken of only in the sense of the communicable attributes God elected to share with humanity in creation. Although God is transcendent, He also chose to be imminent as "Emmanuel," God with us. He certainly possesses incommunicable attributes that positions Him as divine, holy, and unlike humanity. He also possesses communicable attributes that positions Him to be relatable to His human creation.

Polygenesis

Polygenesis is a creation ideology rooted in slavery and segregation that promotes the belief that there were multiple origins of various human groups. It proposes that Native American and Africana cultures are traced back to ancestors other than Adam and Eve while making whites the only true descendants of God's first humans. There were even other pro-slavers who, while rejecting polygenesis on the grounds that it contradicted the biblical record of creation, replaced polygenesis with the degeneracy theory. This was an ideology that supported a type of monogenesis that would suggest though all human beings evolved from the same Adam, certain people groups such as Africans and Native Americans somehow degenerated into a lesser reflection of the divine image.[13]

Curse Theory of Ham

The curse theory of Ham was a result of a racist interpretation of the Genesis 9:18-27 account of Noah's uncovered nakedness in front of his sons. The curse theory suggests, "Negroes were the children of Ham, the son of Noah, and that they were singled out to be blacks as the result of Noah's curse, which produced Ham's colour and the slavery God inflicted upon his descendants…God had permanently cursed ugly blackness and slavery into the very nature of African people."[14] Thus, suggesting that Blacks do not live in the image of God, but they exist through the curse of Noah.

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[13] Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, NY: Bold Type Books, 2016), p. 51.
[14] Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, p. 21.

Paternalism

Paternalism was a 17th to 19th century ideology that promoted the inability of African Americans to govern themselves without the aid of white Christian slave masters. Kidd and Hankins describe paternalism as "the notion that southern slavery offered Christians the best context in which to evangelize slaves…there was a Biblical injunction to take care of slaves as one would nurture children. Emancipation…would likely leave slaves both unconverted and destitute."[15] The idea of paternalism produces a faith practice that is not developed through the community's relationship with God, but solely dependent upon their relationship with the effector culture. African American and Native American Christian converts were expected to adopt a faith in which they saw themselves as evil and incompetent while their white oppressors were portrayed as good. Understandably this form of Christianity moved most of them to seek faith alternatives, alternatives through which they could see themselves in their God and live out their faith indigenously.

Self-Theologizing

An indigenous faith is also a self-theologizing faith. A self-theologizing Christian community is one that develops a theology of God from within their own lived experience with God, one that remains true to the foundational concepts of the Christian faith as presented to us in scripture while expressing this theology in ways that are culturally appropriate.[16] As a by-product of contextualization, a self-theologizing community "…goes beyond merely the literary setting to include geographic, linguistic, social, political, cultural, and ideological factors." Utilizing both

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[15] Thomas S. Kidd and Barry G. Hankins, *Baptists in America: a History* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 69.
[16] Terry and Gallagher, *Encountering the History of Missions*, p. 262.

biblical revelation and the contemporary context, the scriptures become "the starting point or determinative factor in theological work done in light of its modern-day background."[17] A self-theologizing community seeks to appropriately respond to the question, "Whom do you say that I, the Son of Man am," without the influence or opinions of leaders from outside cultures being forced upon them (Matt. 16:13-17). To self-theologize, a community needs only to be introduced to the tools by which the voice of God is to be discerned and the scriptures are to be studied as the authority of faith practice. They are then left to discover in their own conversion journey what elements of their own culture fall beyond the parameters of appropriate expressions of faith and bring them under submission to the knowledge of God (II Cor. 10:4-5). Consider when Moses asked God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" (Ex. 3:13). In the context of a people who have not engaged in a faith practice with God for over four centuries, there was no concrete or definitive way for Moses to explain God to them. Moses himself was in the introductory stage of a relationship with God. Thus, the oral and documented traditions of their ancestor's experience with God would have to serve as the initial framework from which the people could draw to embark upon their journey in discovering, trusting, and living for God through their own experiences.

The God of Your Ancestors

God is often communicated through the established traditional accounts of those who have experienced Him whenever He is being introduced to those who have not experienced Him. By the time Moses encounters God as recorded in Exodus 3, there had been established encounters

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[17] Lothar Schreiner, "Contextual Theology," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999–2003), p. 678.

with God by Moses' ancestors that date all the way back to the original Adam. Those traditional accounts become the foundation upon which the new generation develops a relationship. It becomes the decision of the receptor or receptor culture whether they accept the tradition of the elders as truth. In the Old Testament the faith of the ancestors/elders was the tradition from which a new generation drew. In the age of the ecclesia/church, the tradition of the ancestors became the apostolic tradition. Thus, God's response to Moses: "I Am has sent me to you…The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations" (Ex. 3:14-15). It is here that God introduces Himself personally to Moses and the Hebrews. In doing so, He transitions from being identified by the general Hebrew name for God, Elohim, to being identified by the personal Hebrew designation of YWHW/Jehovah. Through the name YWHW/Jehovah, the person of God is revealed to the community through their development of a personal relationship with Him. God is no longer unrecognizable to them. Though still transcendent in His being, a greater depth of intimacy and imminence is established. Moses and the Hebrews will learn who God is to them indigenously within their own context, the same way their ancestors before them had done. This is what it means for a community to be self-theologizing: to develop a knowledge of who God is through one's own lived experience using the available divinely inspired resources to draw from.

"I Am" Has Sent You

God's instructions for Moses to introduce Him to the Hebrews as *"I AM,"* is to build upon the standard of God's immutability. As the Hebrews begin to develop their theology of God from the oral and literary traditions of their ancestors, they have the task of taking what is revealed to

them and adapting it to their new cultural context. Their own lived experience in their faith journey with God may be in many ways different than the cultural context of those who came before them. Yet, God is still God. "I Am who I Am."   In other words, God's "I Am" response to Moses suggests the Hebrews will develop their own contextual theology of God, but it will be a theology that is consistent with who He has already proven Himself to be. God can never be something or someone He has not always been. Who God is to the new generation of Hebrews that experience Him will not be different than who He was to previous generations of Hebrews. There may be a new revelation of His character or a new application of an already revealed aspect of His character. Yet anything regarding Him that we may identify as "new" will still be consistent with who He has already revealed Himself to be. Even during Jesus' ministry to further advance the inauguration of the new kingdom on earth, Jesus was careful in assuring Israel that he was not coming to present a theology of God that changed who God had already revealed Himself to be to them. He was only coming to express the kingdom message's greater implications for Israel in what had become their new context as well as to establish a model for further contextualization (Mt. 5:17-18).

An appropriate contextualization of the Christian faith produces an indigenous faith practice that is, but not limited to, both self-imaging and self-theologizing. This is not just evidenced in the historical development of the post-apostolic era of church evangelism and missions. A thorough analysis of the biblical record itself will show that the contextualization of faith practice for the development of indigenous Christian communities has always been a birthmark of the faith. The breadth of this analysis includes select profiles from select people of the Old Testament, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the development of the church under the apostles, and the composition of the holy book. From each of these we may draw an important characteristic of an appropriately contextualized and indigenous faith.

Characteristics of Contextual and Indigenous Faith

Insider Relevance (Cain and Abel)

The earliest account of a people attempting to live out a relationship with God contextually

and indigenously after the Eden incident is found in the narrative of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4.[18]

We are told that Cain and Abel were engaged in what should be considered as a contextual

expression of worship as they both brought their offering to God.

> In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, [4] and
> Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had
> regard for Abel and his offering, [5] but for Cain and his offering he had no regard" (Gen.
> 4:3-5, NRSV).

The author of Genesis 4 chooses not to elaborate on why God found Abel's offering acceptable

but not Cain's. Though assumptions abound in the field of hermeneutics regarding why this is so,

there seems to be no definitive answer. Neither is there any elaboration on what it meant for Cain

to either "do well" or "not do well" to remedy the rejection. What we may safely assume is that

Cain and Abel were both clear on what was required of them, and there was an established and

understood way in which they were to practice their faith in God and live out a relationship with

God within their context. This would also be true for the initial audience for whom the literary

work of Genesis had been written. In the work of contextualization and indigenization I refer to

this as an act of insider relevance. Though we as outsiders may read the passage and feel culturally

excluded from what is taking place, those within the culture understood it quite well. At the core

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[18] I chose to begin this analysis after the Eden incident of Genesis 3 because it is the Eden incident itself that
positions humanity to face the challenge of wrestling with their own desires and cultural conceptions against the will
of God. If culture reflects manifested human intellect, ingenuity, and intent, then the Eden incident gives us the first
time the will of God and human culture are in opposition. Everything after it requires the restoration of God's will,
revealed and lived out within the context of often conflicting human culture.

of contextualization and indigenization rests a clearly recognizable and understandable comprehension of God's will and expressions of faith by a receptor culture even when it may not be recognizable to outside cultures. Thus, those of us who are not of the primary audience's culture may read Genesis 4 with difficulty in discerning how worship was to be expressed within that context. However, the central characters of the narrative as well as the literature's initial primary audience recognized and understood it without a need for interpretation.

Experiential Learning (Noah)

In what may be considered the first installment of God's plan of redemption and restoration, the post flood narrative of Noah's emergence from the Ark reveals another marker of contextualization and indigenization: experiential learning. When Noah and his family emerge from the Ark, they encounter a world much different than the one they once knew. This positions them to practice their faith and explore their relationship with God through new expressions of faith indigenously.   Immediately after emerging from the ark, Noah is thrust into a new vocation. He transitions from the carpenter and engineer who managed to build a boat for never-before-seen flood waters to a horticulturalist who must now become a man of the soil (Gen. 9:20). For someone who has never navigated the field of agriculture in his service to God, we should not be surprised that it came with some complications. "He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in his tent" (Gen. 9:21). What we may draw from Noah and his family is that the process of contextualization and indigenization is not one that carries an expectation for perfection. When attempting to live out the faith within the context of new cultural environments or from an indigenous foundation, we cannot do so with expectations of flawlessness, but from a place of grace that makes room for experiential learning towards a more appropriate faith practice.

Dynamic Adaptation (Abram/Abraham)

If through the life of Noah, we find an example of the experiential learning process regarding the contextualization of the faith, it is through the life of Abram/Abraham where we learn that adopting a life of faith and trust in God is an ever-evolving process of dynamic adaptation. In the story of Abram/Abraham the promise of offspring is given to a husband and wife whose reproductive capacity has already been compromised. God gives this promise to Abram/Abraham in a cultural context where surrogacy as a response to barrenness is acceptable. It is important to note that the promise of offspring is encapsulated within the commitment to covenant relationship. Thus, Abram/Abraham's life is a perfect example of both the faith process of developing trust in the existence of God and developing a trust that God is engaged in the affairs of humanity. As Abram/Abraham is faced with the frustration of developing a faith and trust in God against the various human dynamics that threaten the fabric of that faith, he is often found reverting to a dependency upon cultural practice. At each point, God is seen providing the necessary correction and guidance, leading him back on the path of righteousness for His name's sake (Ps. 23:3). In the practice of a contextual faith, God's word becomes the lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105).

In Genesis 15, Abram attempts to pass off his servant Eliezer as heir to his inheritance, possibly having grown impatient with God and frustrated with the process at this point. God assures Abram that this was not the appropriate way to go about it, but that his heir would be produced by his own seed (Gen. 15:1-4). Unfortunately, Abram only receives clarity concerning his ability to produce the seed. He still has doubts concerning Sarai/Sarah's capacity to give birth. Therefore, he resorts yet again to the culturally appropriate solution by engaging in the act of surrogacy (Gen. 16:1-4). It would not be until thirteen years after the birth of his surrogate son,

Ishmael, that the son of the promise would indeed be born of his wife Sarai/Sarah (Gen. 21:1-3). Abram/Abraham endured a twenty-five-year process of developing his ability to trust God regarding the birth of his son, Isaac. It was a process that continued even beyond that point as other challenges would arise that would test Abram/Abraham's ability to trust God and practice his faith in the context of human and life dynamics. The process of appropriately contextualizing the faith in a way that produces indigenous faith practice is not an overnight process. It is a life-long process filled with intentional guesswork and is ever-evolving. Yet, as we learn to discern the voice of God, we are equipped with the capacity to make necessary adjustments that allows the work of faith that God has begun in us to be performed unto a completed work (Php. 1:6). The righteous person is not righteous because he has done everything right. They are righteous because they are actively engaged in the work of righteousness. "For though they fall seven times, they will rise again… (Prov. 24:16, NRSV).

Cultural Mosaic (Moses)

The life of Moses stands as a great example of contextualization as the process through which faith practice and worship expression become a cultural mosaic reflection of the people. In Moses we find someone who balances four different cultural ethos. Moses is born the son of enslaved Hebrews. He is adopted as an Egyptian and spends the first forty years of his life in the court of Pharaoh. The next forty years of his life were spent in Midian where he eventually married into the family of a Midianite priest. He would spend the final 40 years of his life as the spiritual leader of the newly established nation of Israel. In analyzing the life of Moses, we discover that Moses appropriately draws from all these cultural dynamics in the development of his faith practice. Traces of Moses' multi-cultural background can be seen throughout his leadership in

Israel. When we compare the structure, form, and function of the Mosaic Law, we see similarities

with other Ancient Near Eastern legal codes such as the Code of Hammurabi and the Hittite Law

Codes.[19] When comparing the book of Deuteronomy with the Hittite vassal treaties a common

structural composition emerges. Though these cultural elements are repurposed by Moses to

promote the will of God regarding the practice of faith for His people, Moses evidently draws from

this aspect of his multi-cultural character. It was Moses' Midianite father-in-law, Jethro, who

encourages him to employ a type of collective leadership and delegate authority to elders (Ex.

18:13-27). It is likely that Jethro drew this leadership model from his experience as a Midianite

priest (Ex. 2:16).

Through an analysis of the life of Moses we gather that in the process of contextualization

God is not opposed to the employment of cultural dynamics that promote His divine purpose and

the foundational concepts of the faith. Moses uses the tools of his own cultural mosaic character

in like fashion with Paul's exhortation in Philippians: "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever

is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable,

if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Php.

4:8, NRSV).

Relational Balance (the Incarnation)

The Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us sets a precedent for the type of

relational balance that God desires for faith practice as we live out our faith with other humans.

Emmanuel, "God with us," expresses God's lived experience in practicing the very faith He

expects from His human creation. In the record of the Hebrew scriptures, we witness God

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[19] John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context: A Study of Parallels between Biblical and Ancient near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), pp. 69-91.

instructing humanity on how we should worship Him from His place of transcendence. In the New Testament account of the ministry of Jesus, the second person of the Trinity serves alongside humanity to embody the will of God and establish a more imminent relationship with us. In His divinity the world was made by Him. Yet, through the Incarnation He became humble enough to endure a lived experience in the world He made (Jn. 1:10). As the very imprint of God's image, Jesus provided the world with a high priest who shared in our human passion and experiences, while setting forth a model for living out the faith (Heb. 1:1-3; Heb. 4:14-15). The same "I Am" title that Moses was told to use to introduce God to the Hebrews in Exodus was used on several occasions by Jesus, primarily in John's account of the gospel. The emphasis is the same as well: that God was to be experienced in relational terms that would be developed as people live out their faith.

Through the Christological kenosis doctrine associated with the Incarnation, we understand that God in the person of the Son embarks upon the lived human experience at the risk of his own divine integrity. Jesus fully becomes one with the cultural context of those He desired to reach while denying himself his own position of authority. This type of relational balance is a core characteristic of contextualization and indigenous faith practice. The precedent was further established the moment Jesus told his disciples that they are now "friends" (Jn. 15:13-14). A balance was henceforth restored in God's kingdom where elements of superiority and inferiority were detached from communities of faith. There would be no more slave or free, male or female, Jew nor Greek regarding who was the greatest in the kingdom. Via the Incarnation of the Son of God, humans are now able to become children of God. Yet, humans could not become children of God unless the Son of God had been willing to become human (John 1:12).

Liturgical Diversity (the Apostles)

Contextualization and indigenization were imbedded in Jesus' commissioning of his apostles to continue his work in God's kingdom: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20, NRSV). In Acts 1:8, Luke uses the phrase "ends of the earth" in the place of "all nations." Yet, both gospel chroniclers simply use different terms to relay Jesus' expectation for the apostles to cast a diverse net in their evangelism and mission efforts. If the work of evangelism and mission was expected to capture a very diverse range of converts, surely there must have been an accompanying expectation for liturgical diversity. The very construct of Jesus' apostolic board was contextualized and resulted in a very diverse production of indigenous faith practice. Jesus selected men from a diverse cultural background that included businessmen, fishermen, and political affiliates. They were born and raised in different parts of Palestine, and Jesus' mandate for them to evangelize diverse regions of the world with the gospel message was fulfilled by them.

The initial stages of the church's development counted Jewish Christians as the majority. Yet even that required a brand of contextualization. As evidenced by the cultural diversity of worshippers represented in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-11), Judaism was a widespread practice that required each cultural representation to return to their homeland to appropriately implement their new faith through Christ indigenously. When the Christian faith began to spread into Gentile regions, a greater focus on contextualization and indigenization emerged as the church faced its first clash with a non-Jewish practice of the faith. Peter's vision and subsequent evangelical witness to the household of Cornelius initiated the work of Christian contextualization and indigenization amongst non-Jewish cultures (Acts 10-11:16). From that

point onward people determined that the appropriate contextualization of the faith meant that faith practice should no longer be viewed monolithically through the Hebrew-Judeo culture but should be practiced indigenously with special prohibitions against acts of idolatry and sexual impurity (Acts 15:22-35). It became clear that God had no intention for a spiritual conversion to Christianity to be synonymous with a religious conversion to Judaism. The faith would spread among the nations contextually and practiced indigenously within the liturgical diverse contexts of the Gentile believers.

Linguistic Transposition (Scripture Translation)

The role of Christian evangelism and missions has always been to spread God's kingdom into all nations and for all people (Matt. 28:19-20). Such diversity in communication cannot be achieved in the absence of diversity in both delivery and receptivity of the message through linguistic transposition. God's Holy Spirit has always worked to ensure humanity's ability to receive, retain, and recall God's word (Jn. 14:26). People have been devoted to the transmission of the Word of God into whatever the common language may have been anywhere and at any given point in time. God's communication of His word has always been a contextual phenomenon, designed to be readily receptive by whatever cultural context to which He speaks. Thus, on the Day of Pentecost every man heard the word contextually in their own language (Acts 2:5-11). If faith is to be practiced indigenously it must be received linguistically. "For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard?" (Ro. 10:13-14). The linguistic contextualization of God's word has long been a vital element of the development of Christian faith communities.

The first time we hear of God instructing someone to document the history of His people

of faith is in Exodus 17:14, as Moses with Joshua's assistance assumed this literary responsibility.

The books of Numbers and Deuteronomy both include references where God tells Moses to

document the events described therein. Moses' access to Egyptian records during his time in the

family of Pharoah would have provided him with primary and secondary sources to develop the

historical records of the book of Genesis.[20] It must also be recognized that Moses drew from his

own multicultural background as well as other Ancient Near Eastern cultures to assist in the

composition of Hebrew literature and the practice of Judaism as a whole.[21] Thus, the very concept

of a written record of faith and practice itself is a product of contextualization and indigenization.

In *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, author John J. Collins writes, "The Bible claims that

Moses received a new revelation, but even a new revelation was of necessity expressed in language

and imagery that were already current…Israelite religion, too, did not emerge in a vacuum. Its

novel aspects came into being as modifications of beliefs and practices that had been current for

centuries."[22] As the collection of what was recognized as divinely inspired sacred scripture among

the Hebrew-Israeli faith community grew from the Mosaic Law to include the Writings and the

Psalms, Israel experienced various shifts in its history. From an established nation to a divided

kingdom, to an exiled people in Babylon, to a reformed people under Persian authority, their lived

experience with God was never monolithic. The documentation of their faith and practice required

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[20] Based on an analysis of the genealogical records listed in Genesis and Exodus, Moses was not far removed from first-hand accounts of what took place in the garden and onward. Adam was alive when Methuselah was born, Methuselah was alive for much of Noah's life. Shem, Noah's son, was alive when Abraham was born, even unto Isaac. Levi, Jacob's son, was Moses great grandfather. Therefore, very few generations had passed before Moses was born, which would make it possible for Moses to receive inside information concerning what took place in the garden of Eden from Adam as it was passed through the family line.

[21] Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, was a Midianite priest who took Moses in during Moses' time as a fugitive from Egypt (Ex. 2:15-3:1). This time spent in Jethro's family would have made just as much of an impression on Moses' worldview and character shaping as did his time in Egypt. It was Jethro who helped Moses develop the leadership model of delegation through which elders were appointed to help Moses fulfill his duties (Ex. 18:13-27).

[22] John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress Press. Kindle Edition), p. 31.

constant linguistic transposition. The Hebrew scriptures do not come to us in an uninterrupted

form, and the historical record suggests that our current form of the Hebrew scriptures is accredited

to the reform work of Ezra and Nehemiah in the context of the Persian Empire, as they sought to

revive the faith practice of Judaism.[23]

When Alexander the Great established Greece as the new world power around 300 to

200bc, Koine Greek replaced Hebrew as the dominant language within Judaism due to the

Diaspora. This collection of Hebrew-Israeli writings was translated into the Greek language for

the benefit of Diaspora Jews. This Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures became known as

the Septuagint. The word Septuagint, or its Roman numeral acronym LXX, means "seventy" and

refers to the 70 Jewish scholars who worked to complete the translation.[24] The Christian faith

began from the ministry of Jesus using these same inspired scriptures while producing its own set

of divinely inspired literature in the Greek language, which we know as the New Testament. As

the Christian faith began to spread from its Palestinian roots in Jerusalem through to "the uttermost

parts of the earth" it was understood that one of the keys to the continued growth of faith practice

was the contextual availability of the holy books. According to New Testament scholar and

theologian Desiderius Erasmus, whose early 16th Century Latin translation of the New Testament

served as a vital resource for the Protestant Reformation, all converts to Christianity should be able

to read the word of God in their own cultural vernacular versus that of dominant external cultures.

He is quoted as saying,

> I could wish that every woman might read the Gospel and the Epistles of St. Paul. Would
> that these were translated into each and every language so that they might be read and
> understood not only by Scots and Irishmen, but also by Turks and Saracens...Would that
> the farmer might sing snatches of Scripture at his ploughing and that the weaver might hum

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[23] Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 294-295.
[24] Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible,* p. 5.

phrases of Scripture to the tune of his shuttle, that the traveler might lighten with stories from Scriptures the weariness of his journey.[25]

The first major translation of an acknowledged canon of scripture for the church was concluded sometime around 405ad, by scholar Jerome. Jerome took the task of translating the scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, known as the "Latin Vulgate." The term vulgate means "common language." Prior to the Latin Vulgate, other translations existed in Old Latin, Syriac, and Coptic, but were very poorly translated and difficult to interpret. According to Pope Damascus, the need for a more dependable version of scripture in the Latin language was necessary if Latin speaking converts were expected to appropriately live out their faith.[26] In the 14th century, John Wycliffe thought it profitable to have Jerome's Latin Vulgate translated into English. Wycliffe's critical views of the Roman Catholic Church and their hierarchical advantage during the time were grounded in their access to scripture versus the layperson's lack thereof. Access to a biblical canon that was contextualized for English converts was key to spiritual revival and reformation.[27] While there would be several other advancements and improvements upon Wycliffe's English translation of scripture such as Tyndale's translation from Greek manuscripts into English and the 1611 version authorized by King James, the central point here is that European Christian converts saw having access to translations and versions of the scriptures in their own cultural language a vital component of the contextualization of their faith practice. Further, this would make the unwillingness of some European evangelists and missionaries to function according to the same practice of contextualization amongst other cultures questionable. In other

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[25] J. D. Douglas & P. W. Comfort (Eds.), *Erasmus, Desiderius. Who's Who in Christian History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), pp. 234-235.
[26] Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000) p. 339.
[27] Terry and Gallagher, *Missions,* pp. 117-118.

words, they managed to identify the necessity of contextualization towards the development of an indigenous faith when it benefited themselves but suppressed these vital concepts in the midst of their own cross-cultural encounters. This was especially the case as European evangelists and missionaries began canvasing west Africa. When Henry the navigator opened the sea route to go beyond the northern tier of Africa, the primary concern of the nation backing his voyage became colonial expansion and resource acquisition. Christianity became the vehicle through which this goal could be accomplished. Yet, what I will discuss in the next chapter is that the practice and expression of Christianity brought to west Africa was not a culturally mosaic faith that was contextualized for the purpose of an indigenously African Christian experience. Rather, it would be one that suppressed and oppressed all elements of non-European Christian faith practice and worship expression in the name of Christ.

Chapter Summary

Contextualization is the process through which the foundational concepts of the Christian faith are communicated in ways that acknowledge and reflect the cultural context of its people. The appropriate contextualization of the Christian faith allows for converted individuals and faith communities to practice their faith in ways that are indigenously self-imaging and self-theologizing. Self-imaging and self-theologizing do not suggest that God is different or that God changes based upon the cultural context. This would challenge the immutability of God. However, God may be experienced in different ways, or different cultures may experience aspects of God's character that may not necessarily be shared by others. In the contextual and indigenous communication of who God is, new cultures and generations may experience Him in new ways,

but He may never be communicated in ways that are inconsistent with who He has been to past generations and cultures.

Observable characteristics of a self-imaging and self-theologizing faith reveal that experiences with God and expressions of worship towards God may be insider relevance, experiential learning, dynamic adaptation, cultural mosaic, relational balance, liturgical diversity, and linguistic transpose. In chapter 2, I will discuss how these characteristics of self-imaging and self-theologizing were expressed in the early spread of the faith under the leadership of the apostles with a central focus on 1st to 4th century North African Christianity. During the 4th Century, these characteristics would begin to experience suppression because of the church's Constantinian shift and the rise of papal primacy. The suppression of these characteristics of self-imaging and self-theologizing would continue as Christianity entered West Africa, only to resurface between the 17th and 19th centuries on slave plantations in North America as enslaved Africans embraced the Christian faith.

Contextualization and Indigenization from 1st century North Africa to the North American Slave Plantations.

Within the first five centuries of the church's expansion the appropriate contextualization and indigenous faith practice of Christianity was implemented. The Christian faith was being communicated in ways that were culturally reflective while producing indigenous faith practice and worship expression. The indigenization goals of self-imaging and self-theologizing were being met in ways that displayed insider relevance, experiential learning, dynamic adaptation, cultural mosaic, relational balance, liturgical diversity, and linguistic transposition. Jesus' apostles would evangelize in a geographical location and serve until indigenous leadership could be developed. The apostles would then move into a different region to produce a new effort or lend their support to a pre-existing effort.[1] Christianity in its early centuries had fully embodied contextual and indigenous faith practice and worship expression. According to Irvin and Sunquist, Christianity had…

> …taken on aspects of the local cultures around it. Christians worshipped the same God but did so in different languages. By the third century prayers were being offered in Syriac, Greek, Latin, Egyptian, and other tongues. Believers confessed the same Jesus Christ, but they did so in a variety of images, ideas, and expressions of faith. New elements were being absorbed by the movement as Christians sought to relate the story of Jesus to their own local contexts.[2]

By the time of the Nicaean Council in 352ad, the Christian faith had spread into five major metropolitan areas that were acknowledged as the five patriarchal communities of faith: the church of Jerusalem in Palestine, the church of Rome in Europe, the church of Antioch in Syria/Asia

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[1] John Mark Terry and Robert L. Gallagher, *Encountering the History of Missions: From the Early Church to Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), p. 7.

[2] Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019), p. 103.

Minor towards the east, the church of Byzantium/Constantinople in Asia Minor towards the north, and the church of Alexandria in Africa. The development of this ecumenical patriarchate model under the leadership of the episcopal bishops was to implement a framework for the preservation of the catholicity of the church and protection against heresy. [3] This would be done according to the apostolic tradition amidst the church's culturally continuous expansion.[4] The church is not catholic in the sense of a monolithic faith practice but in the preservation of its foundational framework; a framework that was passed on to the apostles by Jesus after his resurrection and established by the belief that Jesus Christ suffered, was buried, and the third day he rose again (Acts 1:3; I Cor. 15:3-7).[5] We celebrate and reverence this foundation through the sacraments of Baptism and holy communion.[6] This is the foundation upon which the apostles contextually and indigenously began developing the church, and the episcopal leaders of the church each worked as being wise master builders from this foundation within their own cultural contexts (I Cor. 3:10).

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[3] The term catholicity, meaning "universal," refers to the wide-ranging nature of the church. The apostolic tradition of the church's catholicity stems from the Great Commission of Jesus in the development of the church. The apostolic tradition rests in the church's trust in the unique relationship the apostles had with the Jesus. According to the scriptures, God revealed the mysteries of His kingdom and the church to Jesus. Jesus then passed them on to the apostles for continued preservation. In *Against Heresies,* written around 200a.d., Tertullian stresses the importance of the apostolic tradition in maintaining continuity in revelation from God to the universal church through the relationship of Jesus and the apostles.
Tertullian, "The Prescription against Heretics," in Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Peter Holmes, vol. 3, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), pp. 252-258.
[4] Paul Avis, "The Eastern Orthodox Tradition," in *Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Andrew Louth (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 193.
[5] In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Clement of Rome writes, "The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God."
Clement of Rome*, "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians," in The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus,* ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1*, The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 16.
[6] Elliot Ritzema, "Nicene Creed," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Electronic edition, Logos Bible Software.

Origins of Indigenous Faith Practice in Africa

Contextual and indigenous Christian faith practice grew noticeably throughout the region of North Africa under the episcopal oversight of the church of Alexandria. The characteristics of an indigenous faith practice emerged as North African evangelists and missionaries served in vital roles in the establishment of the faith and African theologians were contributing voices to the development of early doctrinal discussions. Sanneh in *West African Christianity* states,

> But whatever success there was in those early beginnings some of it could be credited to African Christians, some of whom had met Jesus personally and were present in Jerusalem, Antioch and other places when the movement began. Similarly, some of the Apostles appear to have landed on African soil, encouraging the setting up of churches.[7]

The earliest encounters of the Christian faith on the African continent would have been sometime between 29ad and 33ad when Jewish Africans heard Peter's Pentecost message during the Passover. Among the cadre of these devout Jews were worshippers from "Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene" (Acts 2:4-10, KJV).[8] These worshippers carried this new message of faith in Jesus as the Messiah to their African homelands. Although a converted community of Christians were not officially recognized as a church until one of Jesus' apostles had the opportunity to catechize the region, individual conversion and faith practice was taking place throughout North Africa. As the faith spread throughout the region of North Africa, two places emerged as epicenters for the growth of indigenous African Christian faith practice: Alexandria, Egypt and Axum, Ethiopia.

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[7] Lamin O. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*, U.S. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 13.

[8] Brandon Lacey, *Contributions of Early North African Theologians* (East Texas Baptist University, History of Missions, Fall 2019), p. 4.

Indigenous Christianity in Alexandria

The work of Christian contextualization and indigenization in North Africa finds its authoritative roots in Alexandria, Egypt, and the patriarchal church of Alexandria. Around 57ad, Apollos, a well-esteemed Alexandrian Jew and eventual ministry contemporary of the apostle Paul, emerged as a gospel preacher and teacher in Ephesus. Apollos may have been a disciple of John the Baptist (Acts 18:24-25) and was either among the Jewish converts during Peter's preaching at Pentecost, or a byproduct of the preaching of an Alexandrian convert from Pentecost. Apollos was recognized as a well-educated gospel orator from a Christian community that had developed in Alexandria.[9] According to Acts 18 Apollos initially possessed a zeal for the Christian faith but also possessed an under-developed understanding of salvation, which is indicative of a faith that was still in the process of experiential learning.

If the presence of the Christian faith spread into Alexandria via the Pentecost converts, the development of those individual converts into a church community may be attributed to Mark the evangelist. Shaff & Wace record the historian Eusebius writing this concerning Mark in Alexandria:

> And Peter makes mention of Mark in his first epistle which they say that he wrote in Rome itself, as is indicated by him, when he calls the city, by a figure, Babylon, as he does in the following words: 'The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son'…And they say that this Mark was the first that was sent to Egypt, and that he proclaimed the Gospel which he had written, and first established churches in Alexandria.[10]

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[9] The city of Alexandria was established as the capital of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 331bc. It stood for centuries as one of the most important cities of the ancient world, and from its inception it possessed a large Jewish population. Alexandria was so important to both Judaism and Greek culture that it was in Alexandria that the Septuagint, the first Greek translation of the Bible, was written. Alexandria obviously maintained a strong Jewish community through the early years of Christianity (Acts 6:9, KJV), and by the time of the ministry of Apollos it had developed a Christian community as well.

[10] Eusebius of Caesaria, "The Church History of Eusebius," in *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, vol. 1, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890) Electronic edition, Logos Bible Software, p. 116.

Mark and his family were Jewish citizens of Cyrene, Libya, who had originally immigrated to Jerusalem during Roman persecution in Africa. His father's name was Aristopolus, and his mother's name was Mary (Romans 16:10, KJV).[11] Mark's family were friends with another family from Cyrene: Simon the Cyrenian who helped Jesus carry the cross (Mark 15:21). These familial relationships with Mark at the center became very important pieces to the spread of Christianity in Africa, primarily in the region of Alexandria, Egypt.

With self-theologizing being one of the goals for indigenization in insider relevant and dynamically adapted ways, one of Mark's greatest contributions to the contextualization of Christianity in Alexandria, Egypt may have been the Alexandrian Catechetical School (also referred to as the School of Alexandria). The impact of this school was not only felt in Alexandria, but it was the first of its kind in all the world. The school of Alexandria served as the breeding ground for Christian intellectual thought. It's effectiveness and procedures would be copied throughout the Eastern world in Carthage, Caesarea, Cappadocia, and even Rome. It produced the allegorical method of spiritually interpreting the scriptures while at the same time maintaining the literal and historical integrity that has become common to many European and Western Christian schools.[12] As the gospel spread throughout the region of North Africa and converts began to grow, it was important to the church leaders that there be a catechetical system available to properly instruct them in the faith. Thus, the catechetical school of Alexandria became a vital component of the church of Alexandria, as many of the leaders of the catechetical school would also eventually assume leadership of the church of Alexandria.

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[11] Thomas Oden, *The African Memory of Mark* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), pp. 51-52.
[12] Oden, *The African Memory of Mark*, pp. 241-242.

Indigenous Christianity in Ethiopia

The church of Ethiopia developed under the patriarchy of the church of Alexandria, which continues in the contextual and indigenous faith tradition of the apostolic tradition though not as discernable as the Alexandrian tradition of Egypt. This is primarily due to the breadth of which the term "Ethiopia" was used during the first several centuries of the Christian movement. During this time, the term "Ethiopia" was used to refer to a stretch of geographical expanse that included parts of Nubia, Egypt, and even India.[13] The work of evangelism by the apostles in this stretch of geography included Matthew, Bartholomew, and Thomas. A record of exact location for each is inconclusive. Yet, it is believed that the part of Ethiopia that became recognized as the Ethiopian Church was in the capital city of Aksum and was placed under the apostolic responsibility of Matthew.[14] As mentioned in chapter 1, at some point during the proceeding 30 years, the Ethiopian eunuch returned to Ethiopia from his encounter with Philip carrying the Christian faith message. Ethiopian tradition recognizes "the eunuch" as the region's first evangelist,[15] and through his efforts a Christian community developed. A more historically accurate account of faith practice emerges regarding the Ethiopian Church in Axum. S.J. Dumont in his journal article titled *The Church in Ethiopia* states,

> The apostle of Ethiopia is Saint Frumentius, a Syrian, who was cast ashore there by accident-or rather by the same providence which, a century later, allowed the boy Patrick to be taken captive to Ireland. Frumentius…before long he wrote to Saint Athanasius, patriarch of Alexandria, to ask that a bishop should be given to the Ethiopian Christians. Saint Athanasius decided that Frumentius was the best man for this charge, and so he became the first abouna.[16]

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[13] Dale H. Moore, "Christianity in Ethiopia," *Church History* 5, no. 3 (1936), pp. 271-272, accessed February 6, 2023, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3160789.
[14] Irvin and Sundquist, *History of the World Christian Movement,* p.216.
[15] D. A. Hubbard "Ethiopian Eunuch." *New Bible Dictionary*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 346.
[16] S. J. Dumont, "The Church in Ethiopia," *The Furrow* 9, no. 10 (October 1958): p. 679. accessed February 6, 2023, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27657498.

Saint Frumentius' passion for developing an indigenous faith in Ethiopia led to him having the documents containing the doctrine of Christianity translated into the Ethiopian Ge'ez language. The Ethiopian faith practice was truly indigenous. Theirs was a faith practice that was truly culturally mosaic, insider relevant, and linguistically transposed. [17]

The Ethiopian Church tradition established a brand of self-imaging that is one of the goals of an indigenous faith practice. Their self-imaging is grounded in their own insider relevant status as a chosen people of God through the Solomonic dynasty. Ethiopian faith tradition holds that Ethiopian king Menelik I was the son of king Solomon and the queen of Sheba, which grants Ethiopians a special place amongst God's chosen. The Ethiopian Church holds the ark of the covenant in high regard as it is believed that the ark was given to Menelik I as a gift from king Solomon, explaining the ark's sudden disappearance from scripture.[18] The self-theologizing of the Ethiopian Church may be seen through its insistence on what they linguistically transpose as the *tewahido* doctrine: the belief in Christ's existence in only one nature.[19] Whether one agrees with the *tewahido* doctrine or not is not of central focus here. [20] What is the focus is that space for developing this theology regarding the nature of Christ is well within the parameters of experiential learning that is being practiced contextually and indigenously. If the Ethiopian Christians are indeed wrong in their one nature theology of Christ, then they have made a mistake that most humans make throughout their practice in wrestling with how to properly identify an infinite God

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[17] Keon-Sang An, "Ethiopian Contextualization: The Tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church," *Mission Studies* 33, no. 2 (November 2016): p. 266, accessed February 6, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341445, p. 266.

[18] Robert Gnuse, "Sheba of Arabia," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Electronic edition, Logos bible Software.

[19] Keon-Sang An, *"Ethiopian Contextualization,"* p. 266.

[20] The preference for the term *tewahido* is itself an example of self-theologizing. *Tewahido* is the Ethiopian Ge'ez translation of the Greek term *monophysite*. Both terms suggest that Christ possessed only one nature versus the two dual natures of humanity and divinity. The Ethiopian preference for the term tewahido makes the concept insider relevant.

in finite terms. This is the same struggle Moses encountered when asking Elohim how and in what way he should describe God to the Hebrews (Ex. 3:13).

The Rise of Anti-Indigenous Faith

The initial spread of Christianity into North Africa was appropriately contextual and indigenous.   However, the Christian conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine initiated a shift against contextualization and indigenization in North Africa.[21] Constantine's relocation of the capital of the Roman empire to Byzantium and his merger of church and state affairs may serve as the most impactful markers of the regression of contextual and indigenous Christian liturgy at large.   Constantine was converted to Christianity in 312ad and from thence proceeded to Christianize the entire Roman Empire. For the first time in its history the church was legally exempt from Roman persecution. While this was certainly grounds for celebration within the church, Constantine's conversion left cause for concern as many wondered if it was simply a political move made by a politician to strengthen his imperial control.[22] Even if Constantine's conversion was authentic, it does not suggest that the contextual and indigenous preservation of the apostolic tradition took priority over other state affairs. Constantine viewed too much diversity in Christian liturgy as a doorway to division within the imperial state and desired unity in the form of stronger catholicity. This zeal for unity and uniformity at the expense of the true meaning of

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[21] In Walking in the Prophetic Tradition, author Jason A. Bembry refers to the period of 306-337ad as the church's "Constantinian Shift." Bembry states that this period had a "profound effect on the way Christians would come to view themselves, their traditions, and their relationships with the power of the state."
Jason Bembry and Miriam Perkins, *Walking in the Prophetic Tradition: Models of Speaking Truth and Acting in Love for Everyday People* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), p. 8.
[22] It is important to note that Constantine, though converted in 312ad, was not baptized until just prior to his death. Some view this as evidence for what may have initially been an inauthentic conversion. However, it was not uncommon for converts to delay baptism as they continued to develop their understanding of the faith.

catholicity according to the apostolic tradition for the church led to the rise of anti-contextual and anti-indigenous Roman Catholicism.[23]

The term catholic in the apostolic tradition refers to the universality of the church that extends beyond boundaries of time and geography. This universality does not mean that one style of faith practice was to be applied by the entirety of Christianity. Rather, the universality of the church means that the church itself possessed a boundaryless expanse. No specific epoch, denomination, or geographical area of Christian liturgy possessed the fullness of revelation regarding appropriate faith practice. The manifold wisdom of God and the mystery of the church carries much to unpack as it involves an infinite God whose thoughts and ways are being discerned and practiced by finite humans. No one generation or denomination has sufficient human wisdom to unearth all things applicable and relative to the church, which leaves much for each generation to contribute. Each contribution becomes a development for the church that builds upon the contributions before it as we continue to build on the foundation laid by the Eternal Word, Jesus (I Cor. 3:10).[24] Each development of the doctrines and ecclesiology of the church throughout the unfolding of time occurred when those involved could discern them. In its catholicity, the church simply develops as any living and growing organism should. This growth and development may create change and discomfort while also introducing the organism to areas of improvement that it was unable to discern in a lesser developed state. Constantine attempted to use Christianity as a tool for maintaining unity in the Roman Empire through his own monolithic interpretation of catholicity.   This is the very antithesis of apostolic catholicity and an attack against contextualization and indigenization. When Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea in 325ad

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[23] Constantine's involvement in church affairs without full acknowledgement of the apostolic tradition became a stumbling block for the faith, whether intentional or unintentional.

[24] Brandon Lacey, *Ecclesiology Final Paper*, Southern Methodist University (Ecclesiology, Community, and Models of Leadership, 2022), p. 4.

in light of the rising Arian controversy, it was convened on the premise of maintaining unity within the church by establishing more definitive orthodoxy and orthopraxy. However, his desire for a more definitive faith was based on the presumed negative impact that a seemingly divided religion he had previously endorsed would have on the stability of the empire.

When Constantine moved the capital city of the Roman Empire to the Byzantine East in 330ad (soon to be renamed Constantinople) it became productive for the quantitative growth of the church in the East but counterproductive for contextual and indigenous faith practice in two ways. First, Constantine heavily involved himself in the affairs of the Eastern churches as evidenced by the Council of Nicaea. Constantine himself was in no way directly permitted to be authoritative in matters of church doctrine. However, his strong push for a definitive orthodox faith was felt and his position as emperor eventually overshadowed that of the bishop of Constantinople. The marriage of church and state under Constantine, though certainly well received by the church due to its implications on persecution, came at the expense of insider relevance, cultural mosaic, and liturgical diversity. Second, in the West, the absence of an imperial presence in Rome positioned the bishop of Rome to assume leadership responsibility in the Western half of the empire. Just as church and state had been married together in the East, they had been married together in the West. The church at Rome was no longer just the seat of religious guidance in the West, but it had become the seat of political authority as well. Where at one point the five patriarchal leaders of the one catholic and holy church were relationally balanced to promote the contextual and indigenous global spread of Christianity, the bishop of Rome had emerged as the most authoritative ecumenical voice.[25]

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[25] The spread of Islam along with other competing religions throughout North Africa, Palestine, and Asia Minor diminished the growth of the churches in those regions. This left the bishops of Rome and Byzantium/Constantinople as the foremost authoritative and active voices for the church in major metropolitan areas.

Once Constantinople finally fell to the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century, the church at Rome further established itself as the authoritative voice for faith practice in the church. The presence of Islam in North Africa and East Asia prohibited the spread of Christianity in those regions.[26] Thus, evangelism and missionary efforts for the furtherance of the faith was placed majority in the hands of the church of Rome. At no point was the church of Rome or its leadership interested in yielding their place of primacy within the church. It refused to yield itself to any subjection to governmental kings or rulers as they recognized God as their only King. Apostolic succession from the apostle Peter and its ability to survive the spread of opposing religion fueled their perceived position of papal primacy. Relational balance was no longer a focal point of faith practice in the spread of Christianity under primal Rome and the catholicity of the apostolic tradition was replaced with the monolithic liturgy of Roman Catholicism. It became clear that the Roman Catholic Church had grown much more interested in spreading Roman Catholicism universally and solidifying its place as the pinnacle of Christianity than it would be interested in spreading a faith that was contextual and indigenous. This is most certainly the case during evangelism and mission attempts to spread Catholicism into Western and sub-Saharan Africa for the first time.

Anti-Contextualization and Anti-indigenization in West Africa

The rise of Roman Catholicism and the regression of contextualization and indigenization would continue in the beginning of the 15th century when Prince Henry the Navigator led Portugal on the first successful European voyages into West Africa. They entered the region with pre-existing biases regarding the people of the previously unchartered regions of West Africa. It was

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[26] Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, p. 15.

believed that the region was inhabited by a ferocious people with savage behavior in need of conversion to Christianity.[27] Portuguese missionaries viewed West Africa as "the Dark Continent" and during missionary activity "condemned its culture and made little effort to identify with it."[28] Having abandoned contextualization and indigenization in all points, Portuguese missionaries referred to as "Conquistas" proceeded to "preach the Gospel but to induce the foreign peoples to accept Christianity as found and formed in the West."[29] Hence, it becomes clear that Christian mission by the Portuguese in West Africa was no longer primarily a matter of communicating the Christian faith in the preservation of the apostolic tradition. It was now a tool for both the preservation of Roman Catholicism in its political fight against Islam as well as the advancement of Portugal as a world power through the enhancement of their wealth. Both agendas would benefit greatly from West African powers being converted to Roman Catholicism. Western Christianity had officially been intertwined with European nationalism. Once Christianity and European nationalism became synonymous concepts, Christian liturgy became monolithic within the nation and contextualization and indigenization was viewed as threatening and evil.

Most attempts at monolithic liturgy in West Africa without contextualization and indigenization would not serve fruitful due to the depth of diversity that already existed in West African spiritual culture. While a monotheistic God was a concept West Africans would be familiar with, the spirituality of the people was just as diverse as the cultural diversity of the people. Thus, attempts at expanding a faith practice that was acceptable in only one form of orthopraxy was often rejected in West Africa. Albert Raboteau quotes,

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[27] Robert O. Collins, *Africa: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2006), p. 111.
[28] Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (Bedford Square, London: Edward Arnold, 1986), p. 55.
[29] Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 45.

> Portuguese missionaries have undergone great labours, and run mighty hazards to convert some of them to Christianity, ever since the beginning of the last, and during this century, but with little success: for though some seem to embrace the doctrines, yet many mix it with pagan idolatry and Mahometanism; others are no sooner baptiz'd but they return to their wild natural way of living.[30]

West African attempts to contextualize the faith of the Portuguese was met with claims of idolatry and witchcraft due to a lack of insider relevance on the behalf of the Portuguese. Some of what the Portuguese referred to as pagan and idolatrous was an attempt at linguistic transposition in which West Africans attempted to indigenously express their faith through West African cultural concepts rather than through the language of Catholicism. It can be said that the Portuguese introduced West Africans to Christianity. It cannot be said that the Portuguese introduced West Africans to God.[31] The West African view of God was very similar to the Western view in relation to the transcendence and supremacy of God. The belief in West African culture was that God is so holy and distant in His dealings with humanity that human prayers could only be submitted to Him via the intercession of lesser gods.   What West Africans referred to as a god was often the equivalent to what their Roman Catholic missionaries referred to as angels or saints. It is not beyond reason to suggest that the European Christian's usage of the term supernatural was synonymous with the same acts and occurrences that West Africans termed "magic."   In the same way the ancestry and patriarchy of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are revered in Hebrew-Judeo culture, West African culture promotes a similar and possibly stronger reverence for the ancestors. This is not to suggest that every occurrence of West African spirituality was appropriate and acceptable towards promoting the contextualization of Christianity. It is only to suggest that in

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[30] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 6.
[31] Zora Neale Hurston, *Barracoon*, First ed. (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2018), p. 19.

instances where there were opportunities to find cultural relevance, they were missed due to a lack of relational balance and space for diverse liturgy on the part of Portuguese Conquista. A lack of insider relevance, dynamic adaptation, and liturgical diversity on the behalf of Portuguese missionaries created a demonization and dismissal of West African culture rather than viewing these cultural dynamics as opportunities to contextualize Christianity.

On May 3, 1491, Kongo ruler Nzinga Nkuwu was baptized, leading to both the baptism of his queen, and the prince of Kongo Mvemba Nzinga (Dom Afonso I). Overtime the church of Kongo was established. Prince Nzinga would be catechized according to Roman Catholic faith and liturgy by Portuguese missionaries, and more Portuguese were sent to the Kingdom of Kongo to accelerate the spread of Roman Catholicism. Nzinga eventually moved the church in Kongo closer to Portugal and Prince Nzinga's son, Henry (Henrique), would eventually be consecrated as an African Catholic bishop.[32] Although the church of Kongo grew considerably during the father-son duo of king Mvemba Nzinga and Bishop Henrique, it would eventually fall due in large part to its lack of indigenous identity and the subsequent role that Portugal played in the slave trade. The church of Kongo in West Africa was established upon Roman Catholic liturgy and Eurocentric representations of the faith. Much of what were reflections of Kongo culture would be destroyed and replaced with Roman Catholic relics of faith and no attempts at self-imaging and self-theologizing were made. When Portugal became heavily involved in the kidnapping and trade of Kongo citizens into enslavement, the relationship between King Mvembe and the Portuguese leadership deteriorated. By the time of Mvembe's death Kongo's cultural identity had all but vanished under Portuguese power and colonialism.

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[32] Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, pp. 50-52.

The Contextual Faith of African Christians in North America

African Christianity during the epoch of enslavement grew indigenously African despite the lack thereof in West Africa. The origins of Christian faith practice and worship expression among enslaved Africans in North America was a true symbol of a contextual and indigenous faith. Enslaved Africans dynamically adapted a conceptual faith that had been used towards their enslavement, and they linguistically transposed it in a culturally mosaic, insider relevant way that would be developed experientially throughout their time on plantations. Though the church of Kongo had fallen due to an absence of contextualization and indigenization, the seed of the Christian faith had been intertwined with the existing God-consciousness of the West African culture. The conversion of the Nzinga dynasty of Kongo to Catholicism could have been more for political reasons than spiritual reasons, which some suppose, and we recognize there was a lack of contextualization and indigenization on the behalf of the Portuguese. Yet, the spread of the Catholic doctrine throughout West Africa, along with the pre-existing West African spiritual beliefs regarding God suggests that enslaved Africans did not arrive on the American continent theologically nor Christologically illiterate. In addition, since spirituality and cosmology in West Africa were diverse and varied among different ethnic groups, a cultural mosaic of faith practice existed within West African culture due to their tendency to take advantage of any spiritual practice if it proved beneficial. [33]   West Africans were characteristically contextual and indigenous faith practitioners, which would be witnessed through the enslaved African's dynamic adaptation of the Christian faith on North American plantations.

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[33] Will Coleman, "West African Roots of African American Spirituality," *Peace Review* 9, no. 4 (1997), p. 533, accessed February 6, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659708426105.

The Self-Imaging of Enslaved Africans in Faith Practice

As enslaved Africans in America became more familiar with the content of Christian scripture, they simultaneously became more familiar with the God of the Christian scriptures. Though some enslaved Africans came to America with an existing God-conscious and a conceptual knowledge of Christianity, West African Christians did not have access to scripture and their understanding of the faith had been based primarily upon the Portuguese catechisms. Enslaved Africans gained exposure to the Bible audibly by hearing it read by shipmasters, enslavers, anti-enslavers, and abolitionists. They began to commit the words and images of the book to memory during which a process of self-imaging developed. They began to refer points from the biblical figures and stories to their ancestors as well as their current condition. The enslaved saw themselves in the biblical narratives. They recognized that in the passion accounts of the Savior, Jesus felt just as forsaken by God as the enslaved did within their own context. Jesus, in the drawing moments of his passion as well as on the cross had to depend upon the Father's assurance for strength.[34] While West African spirituality was accepting of a myriad of spiritual beliefs and practices, in no other deity would they encounter one who became human and experienced a range of suffering identical to enslavement. They would find a sense of self-imaging through the parallel of the cross and the lynching tree. God engaged Himself in the fight for human justice by becoming human and experiencing death. Yet, He overcame death via the resurrection to create a new hope for humanity, which provided strength for the enslaved in their own fight for justice. For those such as Sojourner Truth, this is what it meant to call Jesus *Immanuel, God with us.* She along with other enslaved Africans subscribed to a faith in Jesus because just as they were, so, too had Jesus been unjustly whipped and hanged from a tree. Hopes

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[34] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree,* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), p. 99.

for deliverance were being drawn from the humanity of Christ's sufferings and resurrection.[35] The biblical trope of the Exodus was one in which the enslaved fully saw themselves and their hopes for freedom. From it, the enslaved developed faith in a God who would lead them unto freedom and justice just as He had done with the Hebrews. They would not only one day be delivered from the horrors of enslavement and the slave trade, but their oppressors would be forced to give an account for the harsh treatment of the African. What the God of the Christian Bible had done for the Hebrews had become the expectation of the enslaved African Christian.[36] They even found a point of reference to their land of ancestry as they saw through the person of Moses and the miracles God had worked through Moses a reminder of the ancestors and the "magic" of West Africa.[37]

The self-imaging of enslaved African Christians continued through other tropes as well. For enslaved Africans who became familiar with the God of the Christian scriptures, self-imaging meant replacing characters and elements of the biblical narratives with their own cultural context. People associated with oppression found in the scriptures, such as Pharaoh and Herod, represented enslavement and enslavers for enslaved African Christians. Places such as Egypt and Babylon were Israel's version of North America. While enslavers were using the bible to justify the enslavement of Africans, many of those same Africans were using the bible as the source of inspiration for survival and deliverance. Just as God had instructed Moses that the children of Israel would find their cure for snake bites through a bronze serpent (Num. 21:8-9), African Christians believed their healing was found in the weapon used against them. Their hope

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[35] Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective,* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2006), p. 123.
[36] Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 83.
[37] Callahan, *The Talking Book*, pp. 91-94.

was to find the cure for what ailed them in the very thing that was being used as poison against them.

The Self-Theologizing of Enslaved Africans in Faith Practice

In addition to self-imaging, enslaved African Christians were self-theologizing. Who would the enslaved African Christian tell you God is? How would the enslaved African Christian describe God? The enslaved African Christian would begin by telling you that God is the God of the oppressed. In the exploration of an identity and understanding of God, enslaved Africans discovered that the God of the Christian scriptures is seen as the God of the oppressed more than anything else. He is such the God of the oppressed that He became the oppressed:

> …though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross (Php. 2:6-9, NRSV).

God could have taken human form in the person of royalty, which would've been a true reflection of Jesus' right as a descendent of the Davidic lineage of kings. Yet, he would elect to become the son of a carpenter within a poor Jewish family and lived amongst the oppressed of Israel. Who else, or who better, do African Americans have to draw from to gain hope and encouragement while having been subjected to such an unfair estate but Jesus?

In addition to the Incarnation of the Son, enslaved African Christians built their theology of God through the Old Testament prophets. The greatest complexity for the enslaved African Christians was how to reconcile the ethics of the Christian faith with the harsh treatment they received by White European Christians in Africa and in America. White European Christians either complicitly or implicitly supporting enslavement and the slave trade chose to overlook the

theological implications of justice, righteousness, and salvation found in the oracles of the Old Testament prophets. Thus, in the words of James Cone, "Instead of turning to the white theologians of America and Europe for an analysis of the gospel, African Americans began to reread the Bible in the light of their own history and culture, as well as the contemporary black liberation struggles."[38] It has been erroneously theorized that the white patriarchal theology of the enslavers was forced upon Africans and was accepted without deference. The opposite was true in most instances. Enslaved African Christians built their theology of God primarily through the messages of Old Testament prophets such as what we find in Isaiah 30: "Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him" (Is. 30:18, NRSV). The slave revolt led by Denmark Vesey in 1822 as well as Nat Turner's revolt in 1831 were built upon a theology of God as the God of the oppressed and a rejection of their enslaver's theology. During the period of enslavement African Christians adapted the Christian bible to their cultural context and developed an understanding of who God was to them apart from who the enslavers attempted to tell them God was.

Chapter Summary

Contextualization and indigenization as defined and described in chapter one was very much identifiable in the first several centuries of the spread of Christianity. The church eventually spread into five patriarchal regions with the purpose of maintaining the tradition of the apostles contextually and indigenously. One of these patriarchal regions was the church at Alexandria in

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[38] James H. Cone, "Black Theology," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999–2003), p. 275.

Egypt, which produced some of the greatest contributors to early church theology and liturgy. The church of Ethiopia from the city of Axum emerged under the Alexandrian patriarchate and further highlighted the way contextual and indigenous liturgy was experienced in North Africa up until the era of Constantinian Rome.

Though the conversion of emperor Constantine produced an era of religious freedom for Christians for the first time in the Roman Empire, it also led to the first time that state affairs and episcopal church leadership were in symphonia. Constantine moving the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, in addition to the spread of Islam, ultimately led to diminished effectiveness for the church in the East and a rise to primacy for the church at Rome in the West. Efforts for the church of Rome to maintain this seat of primacy both in Christian authority and political power lead to a focus on a single, monolithic liturgy for Christianity which posed a threat to the furtherance of contextual and indigenous faith practice.

Through a combination of political control and religious zeal, more so the former versus the latter, Portuguese missionaries brought Catholicism to West Africa. West African kingdoms such as the kingdom of Kongo were Christianized according to the Catholic tradition. Though the lack of contextualization and indigenization in West Africa would eventually prevent a longstanding faith in the region, the seed of the faith combined with the pre-existing understanding of a monolithic God was carried over onto slave plantations in America. Africans began to adapt their knowledge of Christianity with the biblical narratives of the Bible by contextualizing the words of the bible to draw hope for their deliverance. This produced an indigenous expression of African Christianity through which a self-imaging and self-theologizing community of faith had been developed.

In the next chapter, I will discuss in further detail how the faith of African Christians was expressed on slave plantations and how those expressions of faith developed into the cultural faith identity of the African American Church. This cultural faith practice that developed on the plantations became the seedbed for the development of contextual and indigenous African American churches. However, the racist ideologies of enslavers, the classist racial uplift of the early African American Church, and the hyperfocus on sanctification during the Holiness/Pentecostal movement produced sets of faith practice and worship expression that were anti-contextual and anti-indigenous.

Race, Class, Holiness, and Spiritual Marginalization

Enslaved African's dynamic adaptation of the Christian faith while on slave plantations was contextual and indigenous. Their faith practice developed into a cultural faith identity that became the seedbed for developing indigenous African American churches. The gospel's spread amongst enslaved Africans in America cannot be generalized. It varies based on epoch, geography, and case. Therefore, this study focuses on the Christian faith's adaptation by enslaved Africans during the mid-17th to early 20th centuries within the Methodist, Baptist, and Holiness/Pentecostal faith traditions. Before the Great Awakening of the late-18th century, the spread of Christianity and the proselytizing of Native Americans and enslaved Africans in colonial North America was primarily a Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian effort. However, as we saw with Portuguese Christianization efforts amongst Africans in chapter two, there was no attempt at contextualizing and indigenizing the Christian faith amongst the enslaved. These early colonial Christians also faced the complexity of whether the Christian baptism of the enslaved would lead to their freedom. Thus, while the seed of Christian faith was deposited amongst enslaved Africans between the 16th and 17th centuries, as Genovese states, "…the mass of the slaves apparently became Christians during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."[1] After the American Revolution, Baptist and Methodist church leaders sought to spread the Christian faith throughout colonial North America with greater missionary zeal than Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian Christians. Along with this missionary zeal, there was also an emphasis on the conversion and

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[1] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York NY: Vintage Books, 1976) pp. 164–165.

freedom of enslaved Africans.[2] While enslaved Africans had initially encountered the God of the

Christian faith through Catholicism, the Baptists and Methodists were instrumental in equipping

enslaved Africans with the framework for contextualizing Christianity and developing an

indigenous faith practice. In *The History of the Negro Church*, Carter G. Woodson writes,

> … there developed among the Baptists and Methodists a number of traveling missionaries,
> seemingly like the apostles of old, who in preaching to blacks and whites alike won most
> Negroes by attacking all evils, among which was slavery. Freeborn Garretson, one of the
> earliest Methodist missionaries, said to his countrymen that it was revealed to him that "it
> is not right for you to keep your fellow creatures in bondage; you must let the oppressed
> go free." He said in 1776: "It was God, not man, that taught me the impropriety of holding
> slaves: and I shall never be able to praise him enough for it. My very heart has bled, since
> that, for slaveholders, especially those who make a profession of religion; for I believe it
> to be a crying sin." Bishop Asbury recorded in his Journal in 1776: "I met the class and
> then the black people, some of whose unhappy masters forbid their coming for religious
> instruction. How will the sons of oppression answer for their conduct when the great
> proprietor of all shall call them to account?"[3]

The missionary zeal of the Baptists and Methodists and the stance they seemed to have taken

against enslavement were appealing factors for enslaved Africans' adaptation to the Christian faith

within the plantation context. In addition, Baptists and Methodists apparently displayed an

openness in worship and faith practice that was less rigid and less culturally detached than

Catholics, Anglicans, and Presbyterians. More specifically, the Methodists' system of united and

networked churches provided more substantial support for the fight against enslavement and

oppression. The Methodist system also contributed to the ability of free blacks to establish

churches apart from white supervision. Meanwhile, the autonomous structure of the Baptist

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[2] The stance of the Baptists and the Methodists on the enslavement of Africans was neither perpetual nor universal.
Ultimately, both Baptists and Methodists would soon face internal divisions on the topic of African enslavement,
and the issue of enslavement would become a point of contention within both faith traditions.
[3] Carter Godwin Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1972) p. 16.

tradition was even more attractive due to its capacity to provide a less complex path for converted enslaved African Christians to become preachers of the gospel and share their faith across the plantations. These dynamics made it possible for enslaved Africans converted to Christianity to appropriately adapt their faith to their own context in ways that produced indigenous faith practice and worship expression.

The Indigenous Faith and Worship of African Christians During Enslavement

As mentioned in chapter 2, enslaved African Christians fully displayed self-imaging and self-theologizing in their worship expression. One of the primary worship expressions of indigenous African Christianity was the collection of songs often sung both on the plantation and in the African church service known as The Spirituals. The Spiritual was a form of music influenced by the West African ancestry of the enslaved. The Spiritual was a type of self-imaging and self-theologizing rooted in theodicy that emerged to reconcile the experiences of the enslaved community, both the bad and the hopeful, with what they understood about their supreme God. One of the cultural characteristics of music in ancestral Africa was the rhythmic expression of life's contemplations and various dynamics. In *The Power of Black Music*, author Samuel Floyd develops a link between contemporary Black music and ancestral African culture. Floyd states, "The objective of African music is . . . to translate everyday experiences into living sound . . . to depict life, nature, or the supernatural."[4] Thus, intertwined in the Spirituals were words of lament to God that expressed the pain and hardship of enslavement, with words of hope and an expectation for future deliverance. The message of the Spirituals for the enslaved was that the God of the enslavers was not the God revealed to them in the Bible. Thus, God should be trusted with their

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[4] Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 14.

deliverance because the Bible reveals Him as a deliverer and has proven it through the record of

His deliverance of the Hebrews. In addition, dance, drum, and song were always essential

elements to the ancestral West African spiritual experience.[5] This rhythmic display was commonly

accompanied by mythical storytelling incorporating every aspect of life. Mythical storytelling

combined with rhythmic expression through song and dance became the framework for the

indigenous worship expression of the African church worship service as they dynamically adapted

their acquired faith to their plantation context in insider-relevant ways. Raphael Warnock states,

> …slaves did not simply become Christians; they fashioned Christianity to fit their own peculiar experience of enslavement in America." Along the same lines, Howard Thurman observes that "by some amazing but vastly creative spiritual insight the slave undertook the redemption of a religion that the master had profaned in his midst."…For to "fashion Christianity" to suit African Americans' "peculiar experience" underscores the ways in which slaves were not simply passive recipients of missionary preaching but active and creative agents in the development of a religious self-understanding that had pragmatic and life-sustaining value for those in bondage.[6]

The spirituals became the sound of self-imaging and self-theologizing during enslavement. As

West Africans used rhythmic dance and drum rituals to express life's contours, so did enslaved

Africans use the Spiritual. The practice of mythical storytelling and veneration of the spirits of

Africa was adapted onto plantations and used to channel the lament of converted enslaved African

Christians.

Initially, white enslavers would usually allow enslaved Africans who had converted to

Christianity the freedom to conduct worship services on Sunday mornings. The rhythmic cadence,

climactic shouting, and ecstatic behavior typically seen during the sermonic presentation are all

liturgical expressions of the indigenous faith practice of the African Christian preacher during

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[5] Zora Neale Hurston, *Barracoon*, First (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2018), p. 62.
[6] Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Religion, Race, and Ethnicity* (NYU Press: Kindle Edition), pp. 22–23.

enslavement. Their rhythmic style of oratorical preaching was rooted in the dance, drum, and song cultural expressions of ancestral West Africa, which the African Christian preacher incorporated into their liturgical expressions on the plantations. However, white enslavers would soon become suspicious and fearful of this indigenous style of worship as it started to become too African. An African Christian prayer or church service on a plantation infused dance and drums in a way that resembled ancestral West African spiritual rituals. Floyd writes, "In the circumstance of slavery, the spiritual was the transplanted Africans' primary means of expressing their current struggles and fulfillments while maintaining contact with the traditions and meanings of the past…"[7] West African culture believed that a spiritual ritual of consecration, contemplation, and meditation granted humans greater access to the divine realm to invoke spiritual power into human affairs. This type of consecration is known as "tarrying." Holmes describes tarrying as "a determined and stalwart persistence that is sometimes rewarded with a connection to God and the regeneration of the human spirit."[8] Thus, a loud and intense style of worship took place on slave plantations that caused enslavers to regard it as sorcery rather than appropriate Christian worship. This racist view of indigenous African Christianity on the American plantations would become the first of three significant attacks against the contextualization and indigenization of Christianity during the development of the African American Church. The other two significant attacks were the African American Baptist and African Methodist's classist response to those racist views, and the spiritual elitism that emerged with the African American Holiness/Pentecostal movement.

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[7] Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, p. 40.
[8] Barbara Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), Kindle Locations 668-674.

Racism and The Absence of Insider Relevance

The racist ideologies of white American Christians regarding West African culture became the first attack against contextual and indigenous Christianity in the African American Church. As enslaved African converts began to adapt their understanding of the God of the Christian scriptures to their cultural context, they were almost immediately met with the same cultural demonization from enslavers and even some Christian missionaries as what had taken place in ancestral West Africa. American enslavers, Christian and non-Christian alike, possessed a pre-existing fear of West Africans and West African religious culture. American enslavers used terms such as pagan, syncretism, witchcraft, and superstition to express white Americans' fear of all aspects of indigenous West African culture. Thus, attempting to diminish all aspects and resemblances of that culture was a fixed standard during the enslavement process.[9] Enslaved Africans learned to retain much of their traditional practices through a cultural mosaic blend with Christianity. Many enslaved African Christian preachers had also been former griots, conjurers, or shamans while home in West Africa.[10] Thus, when they became Christian preachers on American plantations, some of that cultural identity was adapted. The same type of dynamic adaptation is what we find in the Biblical record of the development of the nation of Israel. Moses drew from his Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern background in developing the nation of Israel while using the assistance of his father-in-law Jethro, a Midianite priest.

When slave revolts began to occur across North American plantations, enslavers developed a greater sense of fear regarding the indigenous faith practices of the enslaved. Most slave revolts,

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[9] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 4.

[10] Will Coleman, "West African Roots of African American Spirituality," *Peace Review* 9, no. 4 (1997), p. 536, accessed February 6, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659708426105.

such as Denmark Vesey's revolt of 1822 and Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion, used the Bible and the scriptural prophecies of the enslaved African spiritual leaders as their premise. [11] A similar brand of ancestral African syncretism with Christianity fueled the Haitian Revolution of the late 18th century. Thus, the enslavers had grown to associate slave rebellion with indigenous African Christianity, causing them to place greater restraint upon it. A stronger sense of oversight, especially within the Baptist tradition, was ascribed to enslaved Christian communities and churches. These racist views of West African and African American culture only fed further into the racist ideology that people of African ancestry had been excluded from full participation in the image of God simply because they were African. The 17th century ideologies of polygenesis and the curse theory of Ham had already pervaded American theology and religion. They were used as the Biblical grounds for white religious superiority and preference. Then, white enslavers interpreted the 19th century emergence of Darwinism as their proof that people of African and African American descent are biologically predisposed to being inferior to whites. Faith practice and worship expression developed by whites stood as the barometer for acceptable forms of Christianity.

Classism and the Absence of Dynamic Adaptation

Classism was the second attack against contextual and indigenous Christianity in the African American Church. As white Americans began to restrict indigenous liturgy in the African

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[11] Along with Rev. Morris Brown, Denmark Vesey was one of the founders of the Emanuel AME Church in 1817. Many of the Vesey-led revolt participants were members of the Emanuel AME Church.

"In 1822, however, because of the spirit of insurrection among Negroes following the fortunes of Denmark Vesey, who devised well-laid plans for killing off the masters of the slaves, the African Methodists were required to suspend operation. Their pastor, Morris Brown, was threatened and would have been dealt with foully, had it not been for the interference of General James Hamilton, who secreted Brown in his home until he could give him safe passage to the North…"

Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, pp. 42-43.

American Church through racism, the African American Church itself began to promote similar

restrictions and prohibitions in response to the rise of classism within African American culture.

Towards the end of the 18th century, free African American Christians, alongside the abolitionist

movement, proposed that African Americans could lessen white hostility towards African

American Christians if their faith practice and worship expression looked less African. Thus, the

increased hostility from whites towards the indigenous ancestral worship of African American

Christians and a stronger commitment to white American church liturgy produced an intentional

shift away from ancestral cultural expressions of faith. The goal was for African American faith

practice to appear more American than African in hopes that the less African that African

Americans would behave, the more receptive white Americans would become. This shift in the

faith practice of the African American Church was a microcosm within the overarching focus of

African American racial uplift and social acclimation. As abolitionists strategized for the

destruction of slavery, the strategy included emphasizing behavior by African Americans that

reflected white culture in all aspects, including religion. In *Stamped from the Beginning,* author

Ibram Kendi states,

> Abolitionists urged free Blacks to attend church regularly, acquire English literacy, learn
> math, adopt trades, avoid vice, legally marry and maintain marriages, evade lawsuits, avoid
> expensive delights, abstain from the noisy and disorderly conduct of industry, sobriety and
> frugality. If Black people behaved admirably, abolitionists reasoned, they would be
> undermining justifications for slavery and proving that notions of their inferiority were
> wrong.[12]

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[12] Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, NY: Bold Type Books, 2016), p. 124.

A diminished interest in returning to Africa, a heightened emphasis on becoming fully

ingrained in American society, and acceptance as equals amongst whites contributed to the

abandonment of African culture.[13] By the mid-19th century, free African Americans began to

entirely disassociate themselves from African ancestry, opting to embrace the term "Negro"

instead of "African" to promote greater separation.[14] The African American Church served as the

primary vehicle for such. African American Baptist and Methodist church leaders began

emphasizing education and a more refined Christian liturgy. The increase in education amongst

African Americans prior to the Civil War was the precursor for the Reconstruction and post-

Reconstruction era of racial uplift: a movement that further complicated appropriate

contextualization and indigenization within the African American Church. According to Carter

G. Woodson,

> The progressive Negroes boldly advocated a change in the worship. From the more advanced white churches they had learned to appreciate the value of serious and classical music, of intelligent sermonizing, and of collecting offerings in the pews. The old-time plaintive plantation hymns, they insisted, should give place to music of a refined order, supported by the piano, organ, or other instruments; the tiresome minister, covering all things in creation in his discourse, should yield to a man prepared to preach to the point at issue;[15]

To this cause, anything less than dignified dress, speech, and behavior was considered

unacceptable. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham writes that the ethics of the African American Church

post-Reconstruction and leading into the Jim Crow era were rooted in racial uplift. Dress and

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[13] In 1816 Presbyterian minister Robert Finley lobbied to establish the African Colonization Society. Its purpose was to shift the focus from the abolition of slavery to the deportation of free blacks back to Africa to develop American colonies. While some Blacks, such as AME founder and Bishop Richard Allen, supported the idea of colonization, most free Blacks were against the idea. They preferred the idea of assimilation over colonization. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, pp. 145-147.

[14] Kendi, p. 154.

[15] Woodson, p. 142.

behavior for African Americans, especially African American women, had to appear respectable

"in order to gain the respect of whites."[16] Using the term "bourgeois respectability,"

Anthea Butler describes the way individuals such as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington

desired to use a more refined religious worship by the African American Church as the pathway

towards racial uplift:

> The improving literature of the day often also tied the theme of religious uplift to racial uplift, but it promoted a particular type of religiosity. Many of those who touted bourgeois respectability were appalled at certain types of African American Christian practices, such as shouting and dancing, and they strove to tie respectability to restrained religious fervor. The emotionalism of former slaves' religious practices did not fall in line with the bourgeois notions of respectability…Religion was both promoted and domesticated to serve the uplift strategy.[17]

In his article, *Industrial Education*, Booker T. Washington wrote, "Our pathway must be up

through the soil, up through the swamps, up through the forests, up through the streams, the rocks,

up through commerce, education and religion!"[18] In *The Talented Tenth*, DuBois writes, "The

Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men."[19] Included in DuBois'

talented tenth was a more refined and educated African American preacher. He states, "Both by

direct work and by direct influence on other preachers, and on congregations, the college-bred

preacher has an opportunity for reformatory work and moral inspiration, the value of which cannot

be overestimated."[20] I do not argue against the emphasis on how a refined and educated African

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[16] Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ* (The University of North Carolina Press: Kindle Edition, 2007), p. 77.
[17] Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, p. 14.
[18] Booker T. Washington, "Industrial Education," *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York, NY: James Pott & Co., 1903), p. 29.
[19] W.E.B. DuBois, "The Talented Tenth," *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York, NY: James Pott & Co., 1903), p. 33.
[20] DuBois, "The Talented Tenth," p. 54.

American clergy may have positively impacted the African American Church and African Americans.   I only express how establishing this emphasis to obtain equality with white Americans negatively impacted the African American Church's contextual and indigenous adaptation of Christianity. The African American Church developing a faith practice that was more about equality with whites than worshipping God had negatively impacted some African American believers' capacity to self-theologize and self-image. African American Christians had to acquiesce to an American culture that no longer desired to cater to their unique cultural context. These presupposed standards for acceptance promoted by racial uplift caused many African American Christians to dispose of their cultural identity and unsuccessfully absorb fewer culturally familiar images of God. Classist ideologies such as the talented tenth created a line of marginalization in the African American Church that was no different from the racism of white Christian enslavers.

Holiness and the Absence of Experiential Learning

White American Christianity negatively impacted contextualization and indigenization in the African American Church through racism. The development of racial uplift negatively affected contextualization and indigenization in the African American Church through classism. The Holiness/Pentecostal movement in America during the early 20th century ultimately contributed to the third major threat against contextualization and indigenization in the African American Church. The Holiness/Pentecostal movement's focus on sanctification became a primary means of acceptance into African American Holiness/Pentecostal churches. Butler provides vital insight into the early African American Church's understanding of sanctification and its implication for the Christian life:

> "Sanctification," a term used throughout the history of Christianity but first articulated as a doctrine of "Christian Perfectionism" by John Wesley, is a theological term Wesley invoked to describe an instantaneous experience following one's conversion. The experience of sanctification, which Wesley described as "his heart being strangely warmed," ensured that the convert had experienced a second work of grace that allowed him or her to pursue the pathway of perfection. This second work of grace was freedom from sin in one's life and an infilling of God's love. Those who experienced sanctification began to call their shared experiences the "Holiness movement," a striving for Christian perfection that began to spread in evangelical circles of the nineteenth century.[21]

The sanctification movement in the African American Church was initially an appropriate type of re-indigenization of faith practice and worship expression and reclamation of the remnants of African ancestral exuberance the African American Church lost during the rise of racial uplift. For African Americans, the warming of the heart experienced by the worshipper who experienced sanctification led to uncontrollable worship expression referred to as "caught up in the Spirit" or "catching the Holy Ghost." This led to a moment of exuberance and shouting reminiscent of the indigenous African Christian worship on plantations. Once a person was sanctified and caught the Holy Ghost, they were to live a life of holiness that avoided all worldly desires. Fasting and prayer were hallmarks of the Holiness/Pentecostal Christian as they equipped them to overcome gluttony, sexual impurity, wine bibbing, waywardness, and all other sins considered unbecoming of the "Saints." However, the ideals for sanctification would soon become drenched in the same monolith, classism, and segregation that most Holiness/Pentecostal worshippers experienced at the hands of the African Methodist and Baptist elites of racial uplift. Butler states,

> Converts to COGIC often felt stifled by the practices of living the sanctified life, and older established members could never stray from the rules without losing their status within the congregation. Rules for sanctified living such as modest dress and fasting could become harsh and unyielding when deployed by church mothers with a hard-edged personality.

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[21] Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, p. 20.

> The ensuing relationships that occurred were oftentimes fraught with tensions and jealousies. Those who questioned the church mothers authority and the purpose of the sanctification rules were labeled troublemakers or unrepentant of past sinful behavior. Those who made the good faith effort to obey the various admonitions at the beginning of their lives as Saints found themselves at the lowest rung of the church hierarchy, having to work their way to trust by proving their allegiance to the purity boundaries. Those faithful to the sanctified life, however, could find themselves lifted to a place of prominence and authority, with the social capital and benefits of the church afforded to them. Of course, maintaining those benefits was a daily challenge and formed the core of the women's work to this point.[22]

The hyperfocus on the doctrine of sanctification eventually led to a religious expectation that acts of sin and "missing the mark" meant the person was not properly sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost. Just as loud and exuberant expressions of worship were unacceptable in churches that now promoted racial uplift, self-theologizing characteristics such as experiential learning and cultural mosaic were not acceptable concepts in African American Holiness/Pentecostal churches. For Holiness/Pentecostal churches, the body was the temple of God and the place where the Spirit dwells. Therefore, sexual impurity, sobriety, cleanliness, and modesty were the hallmarks of holiness and priority for the "Saint." Strict dress codes, especially for women, were enforced while prohibiting makeup to help distinguish Holiness/Pentecostal women from worldly women of the streets and nightclubs. Anything less than holiness meant the believer did not truly have the Holy Ghost, which was considered unacceptable and grounds for exclusion from the local body.[23] Marriage in some Holiness/Pentecostal churches was to only be between fellow Holiness/Pentecostal partners to help keep "outsiders" who did not have the Holy Ghost from creeping into the body.[24]

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[22] Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, pp. 75-76.
[23] Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, p. 20.
[24] Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, p. 70.

Race, Class, Holiness, and Spiritual Marginalization

The racist ideologies of enslavers, the classist racial uplift of the early African American church, and the hyperfocus on sanctification during the Holiness/Pentecostal movement produced sets of faith practice and worship expression that were anti-contextual and anti-indigenous. The primary African American Christian movements that developed from Baptist, Methodist, and Holiness/Pentecostal faith traditions produced monolithic guidelines for faith practice and worship expression that still exist today. The same monolithic faith practice and worship expression that were being pressed upon West Africans by Portuguese Catholics and pressed upon enslaved African Christians by white Protestant enslavers had been adopted by African American Christians and pressed upon their potential converts. While these faith traditions embrace evangelism and mission as vital elements of the life and expansion of the universal church of Jesus Christ, they left no room for contextualization or the characteristics of indigenous faith practice. The outcome of the lack of contextualization and indigenization in the African American Church is an increasing group of spiritually marginalized people. I developed the concept of spiritually marginalized from analyzing Acts chapters 10 through 15. From the time the Holy Spirit began to move among Gentile believers beginning in Acts 10 in the house of Cornelius, the church wrestled with how Jewish Christian's enforcement of Judaism created groups of outlying believers. These believers had experienced the move of God's Spirit but also experienced rejection by the church due to their non-compliance with Judaism. The early Jewish Christians could not perceive how Gentiles could experience God, worship Jesus, and develop churches apart from Judaism and Jewish culture. The lack of contextualization and strict Judaism of the Jewish Christians created a boundary between the church and many Gentile regions to experience God through the Christian faith. These Gentile

believers were not rejecting God, nor were they rejecting the gospel message of Jesus. These Gentile believers were rejected due to the Jewish Christian's inability to fully embrace the appropriate contextualization of Christianity. After further deliberation, the apostles agreed that Gentiles did not have to practice Judaism to become a part of the church, which was joyous news for spiritually marginalized Gentiles (Acts 15:23-31). The outcome of the Jerusalem council erased the lines of spiritual marginalization, and Gentile believers received the grace to develop the faith contextually and indigenously.

Unfortunately, the apostles' efforts between Acts 10-15 did not perpetually eradicate the lines of spiritual marginalization, and they remain problematic within the African American church. The spiritually marginalized in the African American Church are those in the African American community who exist on the outside of the church because the racism of Eurocentric Christianity, the classism of the African American elites, and the spiritual elitism of the African American Holiness/Pentecostal movement has labeled them as unfit for acceptance. These spiritually marginalized people possess a God consciousness, a God-hunger, and a God trust. However, the monolithic faith practice and worship expression of the African American Church developed during the 17th through 20th centuries have left no place for them. From the 20th century onward, the spiritually marginalized who do not fit into the contexts of Baptist, Methodist, or Holiness/Pentecostal faith traditions have not been allowed the freedom to self-image in their relationship with God; thus, they cannot find themselves in God. They seek God under pressure to see themselves in either the God of the Baptist, the God of the Methodist, or the God of the Holiness/Pentecostal church. Everything else is viewed by these dominant African American faith traditions as demonic or rebellious. The African American Church prohibits the spiritually marginalized from self-theologizing. While the core of African American church theology is

rooted in the fight for equality with whites, civil rights, and freedom from oppression, the African American Church has not allowed its theological exploration of God to develop beyond those experiences. In Matthew 16:13, Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" The answer provided by the disciples only included perspectives from past generations or inactive figures (Mt. 16:13-14). Peter's response, however, was provided from his context versus a past context. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16, NRSV). Jesus acknowledged Peter's recognition of who Jesus was as a form of self-theologizing. "And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven" (Mt. 16:17, NRSV). Peter had developed his understanding of Jesus' person from his context and allowed Jesus to reveal Himself within that context. As a result, Jesus pronounced blessings upon him. The African American Church's inability to promote similar freedom in self-theologizing has kept many from experiencing the similar blessings that Jesus bestowed upon Peter. Instead, decades of the spiritual marginalization of many people from experiencing those blessings have resulted.

The Post-Emancipation Blues Culture

From the 17th century into the late 19th century, enslavement, and the fight for the total liberation of Blacks in America was the context of the African American Church. The indigenous self-imaging and self-theologizing of the African American Church were grounded in this context, as it was generally the only context experienced by African Americans during that time. This began to change at the onset of emancipation. New freedom from enslavement brought on new challenges in the life for the once enslaved. People brought to America for the sole purpose of manual labor had obtained new freedom, though we use the term freedom loosely, to engage in

the full range of social life in North America. African Americans no longer confined by law to a master's plantation made a broader range of family, social, and occupational life and new interpersonal exploration available to them. New exposure to civic life in America and increased availability to education brought new questions and concerns to which the African American Church and its leadership were either unprepared or unwilling to respond.   The Harlem Renaissance and other movements like it created, for the first time, an openly available world of secular indulgence that rivaled the spirituality of the enslaved person.   The church was no longer the only free institution for African Americans, and religion was no longer the only widely available avenue for escape from the challenges associated with being an African descendant in America. Thus, heading into the late 19th to early 20th century, the African American Church faced an extremely intense culture clash. A new form of self-theologizing was needed to communicate God within the new African American context.

As I have already shared, African ancestral culture is rich with rhythmic expression using dance, drum, and song as expressions of life. Therefore, just as the self-theologizing of the enslaved African Christians was done heavily through the sound of the spirituals, music continued to be one of the primary methods of self-theologizing for the spiritually marginalized. The spiritually marginalized African American community during post-emancipation self-theologized in the context of discerning what it meant to be free for people who were born into enslavement. What is freedom to someone who has never known it? African Americans were now legally free. However, just as the law of Moses did not eliminate iniquity from the hearts of God's chosen people, the constitutional laws against the enslavement of African Americans did not remove hatred and racial prejudice from the hearts of former enslavers. African Americans began to

encounter enslavement in alternative forms.[25] These new forms of enslavement and racial

oppression combined with the ability to experience life beyond the plantation ultimately produced

hardships in life for which the theology of the Spirituals did not sing.

The Blues became this type of self-theologizing and, though grounded in the tradition of

the Spiritual, replaced the Spiritual for spiritually marginalized African Americans. Mississippi

Blues singer Willie James Foster expresses how the Blues originated as a derivative of the field

holler during the post-Civil War era:

> The way we sing the blues…it come from choppin' cotton and the rang of a hoe. Blues
> was originated from spirituals…you could moan thangs and wouldn't nobody know
> whatcha sayin'. You could be sayin' 'I'm gon' leave here…because the work done got too
> hard.[26]

In the self-theologizing of enslaved Africans through the Spirituals, there was a central focus on

hope in God's promises. It was a self-theologizing that refrained from challenging or questioning

God. However, the self-theologizing of the Blues was fearless in asking the questions from which

the Spirituals strayed. In his work *The Spirituals and the Blues,* James Cone quotes a line from a

post-Civil War Blues song that captures this reality in a brief but powerful lyric: "I never had to

have no money befo', And now they want it everywhere I go."[27] The Blues borrowed the sound

of the *spiritual* but added to that sound the lyrics of life beyond Sunday worship. As Blues' lyrics

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[25] Post-Emancipation, most of the formerly enslaved had no cash or capital to assist with transitioning into a free society. This caused many of the formerly enslaved to return to plantations via sharecropping. Through sharecropping, plantation owners allowed the formerly enslaved to rent land to grow crops by recouping a large part of the harvest. Many formerly enslaved women had to remain in servile positions due to being separated from their husbands through lynching, trade, or abandonment. Former enslavers used the 13th amendment loophole that allowed enslavement as punishment for even minor infractions.

[26] Honeyboy, directed by Scott L. Taradash (Free Range Pictures, 2012), accessed March 20, 2023, https://www.amazon.com/Honeyboy-History-Blues-David-Edwards/dp/B07YVJGMVW/ref=sr_1_3?crid=2TM9CF6IZXQ70&keywords=honeyboy&qid=1679327558&s=instant-video&sprefix=honeyboy%2Cinstant-video%2C110&sr=1-3

[27] James H. Cone. *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), p. 101.

continued after the fashion of the spirituals in trying to communicate God within their new cultural context, it also explored areas of life such as sexuality, romance, heartbreak, and poverty. The spiritual elitist movement of Holiness/Pentecostal categorized these as "secular" and "worldly" areas that got it in the way of pleasing God. The classist elites of racial uplift rejected these types of songs due to their potential to make Black folk look uncouth in front of White folk.

African American Women in the Early 20th Century

A similar form of self-theologizing found in Blues culture would also emerge through the spiritually marginalized African American female poets and authors beginning in the mid-20th century. The racist ideologies white Christians and churches developed promoted oppressive religious patriarchy where white men were superior and African Americans were inferior. Even more inferior were African American women. The classist ideologies developed by the early African American Methodists and Baptists continued in this same patriarchal superiority. African American bishops and pastors fought for racial equality through racial uplift while simultaneously subjecting their African American women to subservient roles in the African American Church. Butler states, "Organizations like the Urban League and churches like the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and the Baptist Church sought to instill in the African American community a strong work ethic and respect for gender norms in the service of racial pride and uplift…"[28] During the Holiness/Pentecostal movement, African American women's ability to "keep house," cater to their husbands, and raise respectable children were signs of holy living. African American patriarchal church leadership viewed the inability of African American women to perform in these roles as "missing the mark." According to Butler, "All of the COGIC

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[28] Butler, p. 66.

prohibitions regarding dress, sexuality, and marriage combined to create a closed, closely monitored community that placed the responsibility for upholding, maintaining, and modeling sanctified living squarely on the shoulders of women. This burden took its toll on women's relationships and caused estrangements from both fictive and biological family life."[29] These strict patriarchal views of God emerging from white and African American churches left many educated and freethinking African American women unable to self-image.

During the early 20th century, some African American women imagined God as an angry and rule-enforcing white man seeking to punish sinners since this summed up all their experiences with men and the church. In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker's fictional conversation between Celie and Shug Avery depicts the negative connotations many freethought African American women developed towards the church in the early 20th century.

> Ain't no way to read the Bible and not think God white, she say, Then she sigh. When I found out I thought God was white, and a man, I lost interest. You mad cause he don't seem to listen to your prayers. Humph! Do the mayor listen to anything colored say…I know white people never listen to colored, period. If they do, they only listen long enough to be able to tell you what to do.[30]

Religious patriarchy left African American women searching for God in other ways that the African American Church would consider idolatrous or ungodly, leaving many of these women spiritually marginalized by the African American Church. Authors such as Alice Walker began producing literature exploring "Who is God" from the context of the freethought African American woman who did not align with the church's model for sanctified women. Walker states,

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[29] Butler, pp. 94-95.
[30] Alice Walker, *Anything We Love Can Be Saved: A Writer's Activism* (New York, NY: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1997), p. 7.

> In day-to-day life, I worship the Earth as God – representing everything – and Nature as its spirit. But for a long time I was confused. After all, when someone you trust shows you a picture of a blond, blue-eyed Jesus Christ and tells you he's the son of God, you get an instant image of his father: an older version of him. When you're taught God loves you, but only if you're good, obedient, trusting, and so forth, and you know you're that way only some of the time, there's a tendency to deny your shadow side. Hence the hypocrisy I noted early in our church.[31]

Here, Walker states that she had to self-image and self-theologize God due to the church's hypocrisy and rejection of her. Both Walker and Celie, the main character of *The Color Purple*, are reflections of many African American women from the early 20th century and onward. These women did not fit into the elitist culture of the Baptist and African Methodist Church, nor were they holy enough to be accepted by the sanctified "Saints" in Holiness/Pentecostal. They are then left to seek God on their own. Though some, such as Walker, manage to self-theologize and self-image in ways that help them maintain a positive view of God, others are not always as fortunate and remain outside the African American Church's religious walls of spiritual marginalization.

African American HipHop Culture

Whereas Blues culture led to spiritually marginalized people during post-Reconstruction, HipHop culture experienced the same spiritual marginalization during the post-civil rights era of environmental crisis for African Americans. Note Miller and Pinn's description of HipHop culture in *The HipHop and Religion Reader:*

> …this cultural phenomenon irrupted into the urban landscapes of New York City during a decade that, according to the telos of American progress, should have witnessed the actualization of the achievements of the civil rights movement. Although the civil rights struggles gave Black people unprecedented political and social power…the decade

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[31] Walker, *Anything We Love Can Be Saved*, p. 9.

following the turbulent 1960s was marked by increasing levels of economic disparity for Blacks and Latinos situated in urban areas.[32]

The self-theologizing of the Blues culture occurred through the shattered expectation of freedom. The self-theologizing of HipHop emerged from the shattered expectations of Civil Rights as the partially fulfilled efforts of the Civil Rights era left a negative imprint on young, urban African Americans in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. It would be from this negative imprint that the sound of HipHop emerged. In Miller and Pinn's *The HipHop and Religion Reader*, Smith and Jackson describes HipHop as having a "blues-like tendency to express the raw stuff of life."[33] Holmes also directly sees the link between HipHop, the Blues, and the lament Psalms as poetic expressions of theodicy in the midst of the suffering of the innocent:

> Blues and hip hop work out their issues in the manner of the griots. They weave their stories into verbal challenges and languorous love chants. The words of rhythmic prophecy and lament spill into daily life in juke joints and on the streets. Language grapples with theodicy and aesthetics in blues and hip hop.[34]

I do not propose that all productions of HipHop art fit this description as there, of course, have been works that do the opposite. There is indeed an industry aspect of HipHop, as it was with the Blues, that ultimately controlled much of its content and compromised some of its material. Yet HipHop, in its most essential and purest form, as an extension of the Spirituals and the Blues, has been and must continue to be a voice that expresses the God-consciousness of a people who feel as if God, or God's church, has abandoned them.

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[32] Monica R. Miller and Anthony B. Pinn. *The Hip Hop and Religion Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), p. 75.

[33] Miller and Pinn, *The Hip Hop and Religion Reader*, p. 79.

[34] Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable,* Kindle Edition, loc. 2074.

Contextualization through Lament

The Blues and HipHop function according to a self-theologizing similar to the laments of scripture. Manser defines lament as "a song of mourning or sorrow" because of "bereavement, personal trouble, national disaster or the judgment of God."[35] In Ancient Near Eastern culture, laments accompanied music and included complaints of distress while imploring for God's deliverance.[36] The book of Psalms includes a collection of Psalms of Lament, in which "there is often complaint against God, especially for his lack of attention or his tardiness in intervening…often they conclude with the avowal to praise God which anticipates deliverance… the distressing situation is first described; God is petitioned to come to the aid of his people..."[37]

Examples of psalms of lament are seen in Psalms 69:3 and Psalms 120:5-7.

I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God (Ps. 69:3, NRSV).

Woe is me, that I am an alien in Meshech, that I must live among the tents of Kedar. Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war (Ps. 120:5-7, NRSV).

In DMX's *"The Convo"* and in Tupac Shakur's song *"So Many Tears,"* we find a very similar style of lament with cries concerning current conditions in desperate anticipation of God's deliverance. In "The Convo," DMX rhymes,

Why you chose the hood for me/Mean I'm aight, I just had to work hard at it

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[35] Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009), accessed March 3, 2023, Logos Bible Software.

[36] Allen C. Myers, "Lament," *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), Electronic edition, Logos Bible Software, p. 638.

[37] Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *"Psalms, Book Of,"* *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), p. 1802.

> Went to grandma for the answer, she told me that God had it/So now here I am, Confused and full of questions. Am I born to lose, or is this just a lesson
> And who it's goin' choose when it gets turned around/And will it be layin' in my own blood and on the ground.[38]

Tupac rhymes a similar lament in *"So Many Tears:"*

> And Lord knows I tried, been a witness to homicide/Seen drive-by's takin' lives, little kids die/Wonder why as I walk by/Broken-hearted as I glance at the chalk line, getting' high. This ain't the life for me, I wanna change/But ain't no future bright for me, I'm stuck in the game/I'm trapped inside a maze/See this Tanqueray influenced me to getting' crazy/Disillusioned lately. I've been really wantin' babies/So I could see a part of me that wasn't always shady/Don't trust my lady/'cause she's a product of this poison/I'm hearin' noises, think she's f----n all my boys/Can't take no more, I'm fallin' to the floor/Beggin' for the Lord to let me in to Heaven's door/Shed so many tears (Tupac Shakur, *Shed So Many Tears*).[39]

This song also begins with Tupac's rendition of the infamous 23rd Psalm:

> I shall not fear no man but God/Though I walk through the valley of death I shed so many tears/If I should die before I wake…Please God, walk with me/Grab a nigga and take me to Heaven.[40]

Lyrics by DMX, Tupac and other HipHop and Blues lyrics similar to them use terms and imagery that the African American Church considered profane and unholy. However, instances of profanity or unholiness in either Blues or HipHop culture when made during the process of self-imaging or self-theologizing are examples of the type of experiential learning and dynamic adaptation displayed by heroes of the faith such as Abraham and Moses. Abraham and Moses are biblical figures who made mistakes and engaged in acts of disobedience in their journey toward

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[38] Earl Simmons, "The Convo," by Earl Simmons, Damon Blackman, Barry Alan Gibb, Maurice Ernest Gibb, Robin Hugh Gibb, Ed Penney, Jerry Gillespie, recorded September 1996-1998, Quad Recording Studios, New York, NY, released May 19, 1998, CD.

[39] Tupac Shakur, "So Many Tears," by Eric Vandell Baker, Gregory E. Jacobs, Stevie Wonder, Tupac Amaru Shakur, recorded 1994, Soundcastle Studios, Los Angeles, CA, released June 13, 1995, CD.

[40] Tupac, "So Many Tears," CD.

developing a life of faith in God. This form of musical lament is void of monolithic faith expressions, which is why most faith leaders have overlooked the self-theologizing of HipHop artists. Faith leaders disregarded HipHop, no matter its possible theological expressions, because it does not sound like traditional gospel music. However, the music originated as a form through which some artists attempt to communicate a divine God within the context they must live.

Chapter Summary

Enslaved Africans began to embrace the Christian faith between the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The Baptist and Methodist stance against enslavement and their openness towards a contextual and indigenous faith practice during the early spread of the gospel across American plantations allowed enslaved Africans to adapt the faith to their cultural context in ways that displayed self-imaging and self-theologizing. Unfortunately, this contextualization and indigenization would only be acceptable for a short time. Three primary factors contributed to this. First, white enslavers eventually grew to fear the ancestral practices of enslaved Africans, and their lack of insider relevance led enslavers to label indigenous forms of African Christian faith practice as witchcraft and evil. Second, as more and more African Americans began to obtain freedom, a greater emphasis was placed on obtaining equality with white Americans. This racial uplift led to the attempt to abandon all elements of ancestral African culture in favor of more refined worship. Tertiary, though the Holiness/Pentecostal movement ushered in a wave of religious freedom that restored much of the ancestry lost during racial uplift, it created new boundaries of exclusion and prohibition marked by spiritual elitism and an individual's ability to live holy, or lack thereof. As these three factors created new monoliths in the faith practice and worship expression of the African American Church, they contributed to developing spiritually

marginalized groups. These groups in the African American community express their desire for a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, usually through music and the arts, but are unable to develop such a relationship because of the African American Church's inability to promote appropriate contextualization and indigenization.

The African American Church has struggled to accept any forms of self-imaging and self-theologizing that do not fit within the context of its Baptist, Methodist, and Holiness/Pentecostal origins of the 17th through early 20th century. Why has the African American Church struggled to accept other forms of self-imaging and self-theologizing? The answer is found in the African American Church not having biblical guidelines for appropriate contextualization and indigenization. The characteristics of appropriate contextualization and indigenization were made clear beginning in chapter 1 through chapter 3. I will discuss the biblical guidelines for contextualization and indigenization in chapter 4.

Guidelines for Appropriate Contextualization and Indigenization

Through chapters 2 through 3, I have established the inhibitors for appropriate contextualization and indigenization in the development of the African American Church over several periods.   In each of these instances, the error is found in the effector culture placing greater emphasis on what had developed into their cultural and religious preferences. The Portuguese desired to use Christianity to expand Portugal's kingdom into West Africa. White Christian enslavers were only interested in Christianity as a tool for further oppression and enslavement of Africans and African Americans.   The African American Church post-emancipation began to spread Christianity in a way that was focused on promoting equality with white Americans. The Holiness/Pentecostal movement in the African American Church developed and enforced religious practices that turned sanctification into isolation, rejection, and spiritual elitism.   Consequently, centuries have unfolded in the development of the African American Church during which little to no emphasis was placed upon the contextualization of actual foundational Christian concepts. Those more prominent faith traditions rejected attempts to practice faith and express worship indigenously outside of preferred Baptist, Methodist, or Holiness/Pentecostal traditions. The inability to implement appropriate contextualization and indigenization resulted in the development of spiritually marginalized people. These people desire a relationship with God through Christianity but experience rejection by the African American Church's religious and cultural preferences. As discussed in chapter 1, without appropriate contextualization by the effector culture, the receptor culture lacks the capacity for self-imaging and self-theologizing needed to develop faith indigenously. Again, practicing faith in and expressing worship towards a deity where

the practitioner cannot see themselves is challenging. What occurred in Blues culture, HipHop culture, and the free thought literature of African American women are some examples of spiritually marginalized groups that develop due to the African American Church's inability to contextualize the Christian faith and provide the tools to promote appropriate indigenous faith. The objective of this research is not only to historically analyze the failed contextualization and indigenization of the African American church that led to spiritually marginalized people. It is to use the analysis to provide a framework that will help restore contextual and indigenous practice in the evangelism efforts of the African American church to prevent further development of spiritually marginalized people.

Additionally, the African American Church's primary error in contextualizing and indigenizing the spread of the Christian faith has been placing greater emphasis on cultural and religious preferences and biases with little emphasis on contextualizing foundational Christian concepts. Therefore, the next step in the research is establishing the foundational concepts of Christianity that churches and church leaders should emphasize for the appropriate contextualization and indigenization of the Christian faith. I established in chapter 1 that appropriate contextualization and indigenization were consistently practiced in the initial spread of Christianity by the apostles during the 1st century. I will return to that period of history to establish these foundational concepts beginning with analyzing the apostolic tradition.

Apostolic Tradition in the Work of Contextualization

Regarding appropriate contextualization and indigenization during the church's 1st century, apostolic tradition acknowledges the church's preservation of the original message of the apostles

during the church's spread of Christianity. The apostles sought to preserve the original teachings

of Jesus, whom himself sought to fulfill and maintain the oracles of the witness of Old Testament

prophets (Mt. 5:17-20). The foundation for the New Testament church was established by the first

and second generations of early Christianity from which a small circle of authoritative voices

arose. These authoritative voices were either original apostles directly chosen by Jesus, an original

eyewitness of the life of Jesus and the 1st century Christian movement, or those who were close

enough to the eyewitnesses to draw from their testimonies.[1] This apostolic tradition, a tradition

that was handed to them by Jesus himself both during his ministry and after his resurrection (Acts

1:3), was expected to be preserved and passed on throughout the church's history until the

consummation of time (I Cor. 3:10; I Cor. 15:3). What further makes the apostolic witness of the

church important is its continuity with the prophetic witness of the Old Covenant/Hebrew

scriptures. Through the message and tradition of the apostles, we do not receive a new message

or tradition but a continued message and tradition of Israel's prophets within a new context, with

Jesus as the bridge and mediator of the two. Therefore, it is best to begin a discussion on the

foundational concepts of Christianity with the world's very first Christians and Christian

evangelists.[2]

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[1] Rick Brannan, "Apostolic Fathers," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), accessed March 17, 2023, Logos Bible Software.

[2] Some might argue that Jesus would be the better place to begin this discussion versus Jesus' apostles. I choose to begin with the apostles for several reasons. (1) The breadth of literature available regarding the ministry of Jesus focuses more on his redemptive work than his church establishment. (2) Though the church is built on the foundation of Jesus' redemptive work, the actual work of the church was left to his apostles under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. Jesus left instructions and teachings to his apostles for the very purpose of establishing the church. (3) Considering Jesus left instructions to his apostles, and the apostolic tradition includes the preservation of those teachings, examining the apostolic tradition is synonymous to examining the teachings of Jesus.

Contextualization: Faith Apart from Religion

Chapters 10-15 of the book of Acts provides the first narrative of efforts towards contextualizing Christianity amongst cultures outside of Judaism. Readers should immediately observe in Acts 10-15 that during the events of this pericope the apostles began placing greater emphasis on the message of the gospel and the faith of Christianity than the various religious structures and rituals of Judaism. In Acts 10, Cornelius was neither Jew nor Christian. However, the Bible describes him as a devout man of prayer and almsgiving. He was familiar with the Jewish system of worship but had not experienced full proselytizing to Judaism. Thus, it appears Cornelius believed in the God of Israel without participating in the religious practice of Judaism, which was unacceptable within Judaism. Peter expressed this type of Jewish apathy towards non-Jews in his response to God in his vision and to Cornelius (Acts 10:14, 28). However, in his vision from God and in his response to Cornelius, we learn that the establishment of Christianity meant that religious structures like Judaism were no longer the primary avenue to God. Peter said to Cornelius, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection" (Acts 10:28-29). Despite not being Jewish, God had both heard and responded to Cornelius' prayer (Acts 10:1-4; 30-13). Peter's encounter with Cornelius and hearing his testimony was confirmation that God was not giving partial treatment to those who practiced Judaism. Instead, the message of peace and reconciliation that God sent Jesus to preach to Israel was now available to all through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.   "In every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:35, NRSV), "and all who believed in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins in His name" (Acts 10:43). Peter's message of faith in Jesus spoken at

Cornelius' home is the core message of the gospel, and this message of faith became the foundation for Christianity. As other Gentiles near Cornelius' home heard the message, they responded with acceptance and were filled with the Holy Ghost like other Jewish Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit upon their conversion (Acts 10:44-46; 11:15-17). Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 11:47). When fellow Jewish Christians asked Peter why he fellowshipped with Gentiles, Peter re-emphasized that Judaism should no longer hinder the work of God amongst those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. "If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" (Acts 11:17, NRSV). Peter's encounter with Cornelius helped him realize the error in restricting the Christian faith to Judaism and Jewish culture. Correcting this error would remove the spiritual marginalization of those who desired to be in a relationship with God but did not want to proselytize into the religion of Judaism.

As Paul and Barnabas began engaging in missionary efforts in Gentile regions, they, too, began to experience the clash between Judaism and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 13:44-14:20). Acts 15:2 states that this became a severe challenge during the church's infancy, prompting a council of the apostles and elders. At the council, Peter emphasized God's desire for faith in the Lord Jesus to take priority over religion:

> "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. [8] And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (Acts 15:6-11, NRSV).

The apostle James concluded the apostolic council with the following decision as he spoke on behalf of the entire church regarding Judaism: "we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues" (Acts 15:19-21, NRSV). According to Peter and James' response, the apostles focused on the worship expression and faith practice of the believers and not their religious commitment to Judaism in their efforts to spread Christianity and establish churches in non-Jewish cultures.[3]

Identifying the Foundational Concepts of the Faith

We now focus on identifying the foundational concepts that the apostolic tradition taught should be shared as opposed to the religion of Judaism. I will begin by, first, describing religion. I describe religion as the harmonious faith practice and worship expression that guide psychological and socio-environmental behavior while expressing spiritual significance toward engaging deity.[4] I primarily developed this description of religion by building upon Neville's five components in *Defining Religion*. The five components suggest that religion is: worship, aesthetic, psychological, socio-environmental, and semiotic.[5]   The worship

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[3] James' admonishment for the Gentiles abstaining" only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood" emphasizes acts of idolatry, sexual immorality, murder, idolatrous rituals. I elaborate on speak these categories as faith practice and worship expression later in this (*see Guiding Principles in the Law of Christ*).

[4] Unfortunately, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive definition of religion since the meaning of religion can change based on various cultural and sub-cultural dynamics. I do not attempt to provide a definition of religion that satisfies all views of religion. My definition of religion presupposes a monotheistic belief in God from a Christian worldview.

[5] Robert Cummings Neville. *Defining Religion: Essays in Philosophy of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), pp. 9-11.

component identifies the ultimate or divine object of worship. The aesthetic component incorporates the various rituals and liturgical expressions of worship, including its sacraments, ceremonies, music, art, architecture, and dress. The semiotic component incorporates the various signs and symbols used by practitioners that convey meaning within the religion. Psychologically, religion integrates the components of worship, aesthetics, and semiotics into the lived experiences of the practitioner, including but not limited to emotional, interpersonal, and physical well-being. The socio-environmental component of religion impacts the practitioner's interactions with the broader community and influences interpersonal, political, vocational, and environmental ethics. When practiced in harmony, the worship, aesthetic, semiotic, psychological, and socio-environmental components possess spiritual meaning beyond those five components. I divide the description of religion into three branches. Branch one is the Deity branch and comprises the object of worship. Branch two is the Community branch of religion and comprises the socio-environmental and psychological components. The last branch includes aesthetics and semiotics, which focuses on Liturgy and the body of faith practice and worship expression of religion.

Three Branches of Religion

Branch of Religion	Component	Faith Practice and Worship Expression
Deity	Worship	Beliefs regarding the ultimate or divine object of worship
Community	Psychological and Socio-environmental	Emotionally, interpersonally, and physically
Liturgy	Aesthetics and Semiotics	Sacraments, ceremonies, music, art, architecture, and dress

Christianity does not seek to concretely define or emphasize the full scope of the Liturgical branch of religion through the spread of the Christian faith. Christianity seeks to concretely define and emphasize the branch of Deity using the foundational concepts of the Christian faith contextually through self-imaging and self-theologizing. When Christians and church leaders define and emphasize deity through foundational Christian concepts appropriately, we witness the effects of Christianity on the branch of Deity in the Christian convert's branch of Community. In other words, what the Christian believes about God because of the foundational concepts of Christianity affects how they relate to themselves and others within their socio-environmental space. The Liturgical faith practice and worship expression within branch three are developed last. The receptor culture develops them indigenously while expressing the characteristics of indigenization and guided by the foundational concepts of Christianity.

The model I have proposed here to describe Christianity's impact on religion is in concert with both the developmental model for Judaism in the Law of Moses and Jesus' new covenant development of it. Paul refers to Jesus' new covenant development of the Law of Moses as "the Law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Both the Law of Moses and the New Covenant Law of Christ introduce two guiding principles from which the whole of Christian faith practice and worship expression flow: to love the Lord thy God with all our heart and to love thy neighbor as thyself.

Guiding Principles in the Law of Moses

The two guiding principles of worship and faith, to love the Lord thy God with all our heart and to love thy neighbor as thyself, are in the Law of Moses along with individual points of faith practice and worship expression for both. These points of faith practice and worship expression are more commonly known as the Ten Commandments, and, when practiced, they cross all

boundaries of time and culture.   The points of worship expression for loving God are (1) monotheistic worship of Him, (2) observing His holiness apart from creation, (3) worshipping Him based on how He has revealed for us through the prophetic witness, and (4) intentionally reserving time and space to acknowledge and uphold the aforementioned.

Guiding Principle #1: Love the Lord God	
Worship Expression	**Commandment Listing**
Monotheistic worship	You shall have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:3).
Observing God's holiness apart from creation	You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth (Ex. 20:4).
Worshipping God based only upon prophetic witness	You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God (Ex. 20:7).
Intentionally reserving time and space to worship God	Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy (Ex. 20:8).

The principle of love the Lord God guides the religion branch of Deity for the Christian:

Guiding Principle #1: Love the Lord God		
Branch of Religion	**Component**	**Worship Expression**
Deity	Worship	- Monotheistic worship - Observe His holiness apart from Creation - Worship Him based upon the prophetic witness - Intentionally reserve time and space to worship Him

The points of faith practice for loving neighbors are (1) the transmission of the faith from generation to generation, (2) preserving the right to live and the value of life, (3) upholding faithfulness and fidelity through sexual purity, (4) abstaining from manipulation and exploitation, (5) protecting and honoring integrity and truthfulness, and (6) finding contentment in one's situation.

Guiding Principle #2: Love Your Neighbor as Yourself	
Faith Practice	**Commandment Listing**
Transmission of the faith from generation to generation	Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you (Ex. 20:12).
Preserving the human right for life and the value of life	You shall not murder (Ex. 20:13).
Upholding faithfulness and fidelity through sexual purity.	You shall not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14).
Abstaining from manipulation and exploitation	You shall not steal (Ex. 20:15).
Protecting and honoring integrity and truthfulness	You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Ex. 20:16).
Finding contentment in one's state of affairs	You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Ex 20:17).

The principle of love your neighbor guides the religion branch of Community for the Christian:

Guiding Principle #2: Love Your Neighbor		
Branch of Religion	**Component**	**Faith Practice**
Community	Psychological and Socio-Environmental	• Transmit the faith from generation to generation • Preserve the human right for life and the value of life • Uphold faithfulness and fidelity through sexual purity. • Abstain from manipulation and exploitation • Protect and honor integrity and truthfulness • Find contentment in one's state of affairs

These Ten Commandments were the foundational concepts for God's first covenant faith community. They developed as points of faith practice and worship expression for the two guiding principles and became the fundamental absolutes through which they interpreted, governed, and practiced their faith.   The subsequent Mosaic Laws became the broader liturgical, civil, and communal codes, through which the covenant people built a community of faith around the guiding principles and points of faith practice and worship expression.

Human Growth and Social Advancement

God established this model for faith practice and worship expression partly due to His expectation for human growth and social advancement. God created humanity with both the intent and the capacity to grow. God did not expect the earth He created for humanity to stay the same, nor was there an expectation for humanity to govern God's earthly creation in a stagnant manner. God created humanity in His likeness. Though the entire theological significance of being created in God's image is inconclusive, most theologians agree that humanity being made in God's image mean's that God endowed humanity with the same creative ability God expressed in original creation. We should recognize that the divine directive to "be fruitful and multiply" expresses God's expectation for growth and expansion by humans within the context of this creative ability, as well as observe that God removed Himself from the creative process immediately after He created humanity and endowed them with creative ability. God doing so suggests that God had no intent for creation to end when He took His rest from creating (Gen. 2:1-3). Humanity was to advance creation. With the creation of humanity, God has in place whom He elected to continue the work of creation.

The genealogical record of Adam contains much evidence of humanity's ability to progress and advance God's ethereal creation. Though under circumstances we would rather not have, Adam instinctively created a covering for he and his wife's nakedness (Gen. 3:7). Cain practiced agriculture while Abel grew into shepherding (Gen. 4:2). In Genesis 4, the sons of Lamech pioneered musical instruments and iron works (Gen. 4:19-22). Noah developed in engineering, carpentry, zoology, and as a mariner through his construction of the ark. However, even in life after the ark, he was compelled to develop agricultural skills (Gen. 9:20). Some historians recognize Nimrod as the first person to develop city-state urbanization and territorial boundaries.[6]

In the development of Israel as a nation, God left room for human and social progress in Israel's law codes. In Numbers 36, the covenant community had developed beyond the relevance of a particular law. Zelophehad died before giving birth to any male offspring, only daughters. The inheritance law at that time left no provision for women, which the daughters of Zelophehad did not believe was just. They approached Moses in search of legal reform. The community developed in a way that their current structure could not address. Moses consulted God for the proper way to address the situation, and through God's guidance, Moses reformed the law of inheritance. As Israel was formed as a nation of faith to bear witness to the life of faith in God to the rest of humanity, God foreknew His inclusion of Gentile nations whose cultures would not be identical to Israel. He also foreknew that humanity would progress beyond that cultural context. People of the faith would often have to readjust their expressions of faith within society. So, God provided us with two guiding principles from which flow absolute points of individual and communal faith practice and worship expression to serve as guides for doing so.

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[6] Thomas Nelson, *Chronological Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2008), pp. 14-15.

Guiding Principles in the Law of Christ

Upon the inclusion of Gentile nations and cultures through the ministry of Jesus the Messiah, Jesus endeavored to build genuine communities of faith without requiring conversion to the religious practice of Judaism. Jesus re-emphasized the guiding principles model of the Law of Moses through the Law of Christ.   When the scribes asked Jesus, *"Which is the greatest commandment,"* his response emphasized the Law of Moses in the form of the two guiding principles:

> One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mk. 12:28-31, NRSV).

It is important to mention that all four gospel writers include this emphasis in some form. Both Matthew and Luke mention a similar version of what is mentioned in Mark. John's reference has Jesus speaking to the disciples (John 13:34). On the surface, John seems to only focus on the second guiding principle of loving one another. That is because John presupposes the first guiding principle in his emphasis on the second guiding principle. For John, the love of God is what produces love for another.[7] In establishing his ecclesia, Jesus does not defer from the same model for faith practice and worship expression God used to incorporate the Israelite covenant community of faith. There was no intent to change what God did with Israel, only to spread it to

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[7] Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us (I Jn. 4:7-12, NRSV).

the broader world contextually. Therefore, Jesus emphasized to Israel, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17). Based upon the witness of the four gospel writers, the writings of the apostles, and the writings of the apostolic fathers, Jesus passed on his usage of the guiding principles to the apostles as a part of the apostolic tradition for the church.

For example, the apostle James concluded at the Acts 15 council that Christian converts should abstain from idolatry, sexual immorality, murder, and idolatrous worship rituals and ceremonies (Acts 15:19-20).[8] Though James never directly mentions the two guiding principles, it seems James drew these four categories of faith practice and worship expression from the two guiding principles:

Guiding Principles: Love the Lord Your God and Love Your Neighbor as Yourself		
Faith Practice and Worship Expression	**Commandment Listing**	**James' Categories in Acts 15:19**
Monotheistic Worship	You shall have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:3).	Idolatry (things polluted by idols)
Observing His holiness apart from creation	You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth (Ex. 20:4).	Idolatrous Ritual and Ceremony (whatever has been strangled and from blood)
Preserving the human right for life and the value of life	You shall not murder (Ex. 20:13).	Murder (whatever has been strangled and from blood)
Upholding faithfulness and fidelity through sexual purity.	You shall not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14).	Sexual Immorality (fornication)

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[8] Kenneth O. Gangel, "Acts," *Holman New Testament Commentary, vol 5,* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), p. 251.

James and the Acts 15 council only address faith practice and worship expression that were problematic within that context and time.[9] Other acts of faith practice and worship expression are not omitted or overlooked with intent for perpetual exclusion, and other acts of faith practice and worship expression would at some point be emphasized in other contexts and epochs in more detailed ways by other apostles, such as Paul, and the apostolic fathers. As I have already discussed, Paul emphasizes the Law of Christ in Galatians. He tells the church at Galatia that they fulfill the Law of Christ by bearing one another's burdens, which bearing one another burdens can only be done if they genuinely love God and love one another (Gal. 6:2). One of the earliest literary works of the age of the apostolic fathers, *The Didache*, makes a direct reference to the two guiding principles model: "There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, thou shalt love God who made thee; second, thy neighbour as thyself; and all things whatsoever thou wouldst should not occur to thee, thou also to another do not do.' "[10] The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians and the Epistle of Barnabas mentions the two guiding principles:

First Epistle of the Clement:

> Let him who has love in Christ keep the commandments of Christ. Who can describe the [blessed] bond of the love of God? What man is able to tell the excellence of its beauty, as it ought to be told? The height to which love exalts is unspeakable. Love unites us to God. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love beareth all things, is long-suffering in all things. There is nothing base, nothing arrogant in love. Love admits of no schisms: love gives rise to no seditions: love does all things in harmony. By love have all the elect of God been made perfect; without love nothing is well-pleasing to God. In love has the Lord taken us to Himself…Blessed

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[9] John B. Polhill, "Acts," *The New American Commentary, vol 6,* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), pp. 330–331.

[10] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., "The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations," in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies*, vol. 7, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), p. 377.

> are we, beloved, if we keep the commandments of God in the harmony of love; that so through love our sins may be forgiven us.[11]

The Epistle of Barnabas:

> Thou shalt love Him that created thee: thou shalt glorify Him that redeemed thee from death… Thou shalt love thy neighbour more than thine own soul.[12]

This consistent appearance of the two guiding principles in apostolic and post-apostolic literature suggests Jesus wanted the model to be preserved by his apostles just as Christ himself preserved it through the prophetic witness of the Law of Moses. The apostles preserved it through the apostolic tradition.

The Two-Ways

With the two guiding principles as guides for developing Christian faith practice and worship expression, the "two-ways" emphasis mentioned in the Didache seems to have been established in the prophetic witness and preserved through the apostolic tradition to emphasize the importance of the guiding principles. The prophetic witness in the Law of Moses regarding the two ways is found in Deuteronomy 30:

> See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and

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[11] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 18.

[12] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., "The Epistle of Barnabas," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 148.

> possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob (Dt. 30:15-20, NRSV).

Paul acknowledges the "two-ways" emphasis as part of apostolic tradition in Galatians 6, referring to them as choosing to live life in the flesh versus life in the Spirit: "Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want" (Gal. 5:16-17).   The apostolic fathers preserved the "two-ways" emphasis with the guiding principles. Examples can be found in the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas. In Paul's epistle to the Galatians, in the Didache, and in the Epistle of Barnabas each author provides a list of behaviors that are incompatible with the life of faith in the Spirit and lead to death:

Behavior Incompatible with Christian Faith in Galatians, the Didache, and The Epistle of Barnabas

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 5:18-21)	fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing
The Didache[13]	murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, witchcrafts, rapines, false witnessing, hypocrisies, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, depravity, self-will, greediness, filthy talking, jealousy, over-confidence, loftiness, boastfulness

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[13] Roberts, "The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations," p. 379.

The Epistle of Barnabas.[14]	idolatry, over-confidence, the arrogance of power, hypocrisy, double-heartedness, adultery, murder, rapine, haughtiness, transgression, deceit, malice, self-sufficiency, poisoning, magic, avarice

The Pauline list of works of the flesh, and the various list of works that lead to death in the Didache and Epistle of Barnabas include both similarities and differences. The differences are the result of context, as some works presented as an issue in one context may not have been an issue in another. In such a case, the author does not need to mention them. Likewise, Paul includes a list of works of the Spirit that lead to life: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23, NRSV). Both the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas share a more exhaustive and less condensed list of works that lead to life that are too lengthy to list here. The difference in the lists of works that lead to life are for the same contextual reasons as the list of works that lead to death. In the Law of Moses and the new covenant church's Law of Christ, the behaviors listed in the way of life and death both built upon and helped emphasize the importance of the guiding principles. Choosing the way of life is choosing a life of faith in God through the guiding principles. The behaviors listed in the way of life, or the Spirit, indicated a believer was living by the guiding principles. The behaviors listed in the way of death, or the flesh, indicated a believer was not living by the guiding principles and was headed down the path of destruction. Each of the mentioned works that lead to death in some way negatively affects the believer's relationship with God, self, and the broader community. To reject the guiding principles is to choose the path of darkness and engage in behavior that corrupts and leads to death.

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[14] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., "The Epistle of Barnabas," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, *vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 148.

Foundational Concepts for Doctrine and Teaching

In addition to these guiding principles for faith practice and worship expression, the apostolic tradition contained several foundational concepts for Christian doctrine and teaching. Examining the similarities of some key passages of scripture involving the apostles allude to early apostolic tradition, beginning with the apostles' preaching in the book of Acts.

Peter and Paul's Sermons in Acts

Peter's Sermon in Acts 10:34-43
 	
Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. *(a) You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.* That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. *(b) They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, (c) not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. (d) He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. (e) All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*
	(a) Lordship of Christ
	
	(b) Death, Burial, and
	
	    Resurrection of Jesus
	
	(c) Apostolic Witness
	
	(d) Gospel Commission
	
	(e) Prophetic Witness of the
	
	    Messiah

Paul's Sermon in Acts 13:22-33
 	
When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.' *(a) Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised;* before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his work, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.' "My brothers, you descendants of Abraham's family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand
	(a) Prophetic Witness of the
	
	    Messiah
	
	(b) Death, Burial, and
	
	    Resurrection of the
	
	    Messiah
	
	(c) Apostolic Witness
	
	(d) Gospel Commission

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the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. *(b) When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead; (c) and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. (d)And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.'*

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Collectively, five foundational concepts emerge from a comparison of these early sermons: (1) Lordship of Christ, (2) the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, (3) prophetic witness of the Messiah, (4) apostolic witness, and (5) the commissioning of the gospel.

Foundational Concepts in Hebrews

In addition, Hebrews 6:1-2 provides the most explicit direct description of foundational concepts included in the apostolic tradition:

> Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment (Heb. 6:1-2, NRSV).

Here, the Hebrew writer presents six additional concepts considered foundational concepts of the doctrine of Christ: (1) repentance, (2) faith in God, (3) laying on of hands, (4) baptisms, (5) the resurrection of the dead, and (6) eternal judgment.

Repentance and faith towards God

Repentance from dead works emphasizes the Christian concept of completely turning away from and renouncing all behavior that does not contribute to life in the Spirit and leads to the destruction of the soul. This behavior would be the same behavior mentioned under the guiding principle of love thy neighbor. Faith toward God refers to the attributes of God as revealed in the prophetic witness. When viewed together, repentance from dead works and faith towards God are reflections of the two-ways principle as the emphasis is upon the believer turning away from behaviors that lead to destruction and embracing life in the Spirit.

Laying on of hands, prophetic witness, and apostolic witness

Laying on of hands may refer to the part of apostolic tradition known as apostolic succession. Apostolic succession is a term made known to us in the writings of the apostolic fathers and focuses on the legitimacy of episcopal leadership in the church. 2nd century North African theologian Tertullian speaks very clearly about the importance of apostolic succession:

> But if there be any (heresies) which are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst Of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men,—a man, moreover, who continued stedfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter. In exactly the same way the other churches likewise exhibit (their several worthies), whom, as having been appointed to their episcopal places by apostles, they regard as transmitters of the apostolic seed.[15]

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[15]Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., trans. Peter Holmes, "The Prescription against Heretics," in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, vol. 3, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 258.

Episcopal leaders acknowledged positions of ecclesial authority through laying on of the hands (Nm. 27:18-23; Acts 6:6; I Tim. 4:14). As I asserted earlier in this chapter Jesus purposed to preserve the teachings and witness of Israel's prophets who had come before him. God's plan of redemption for humanity did not begin with the church age but included all of humanity from the first Adam to the second Adam, Jesus. Thus, preserving the prophetic witness in the apostolic tradition became a foundational concept for Christianity just as it was for Jesus, and it was signified through episcopal laying on of hands. We should, then, view the Hebrew writer's reference to laying on of hands as including apostolic tradition itself and the preservation of the prophetic witness as a part of Christianity's foundational concepts.

The practice of prayer should be included in the foundational concept of laying on of hands since prayer and laying on of hands often accompany one another in several capacities in scripture. To bestow blessings upon or petition God's blessings on behalf of another was accompanied by laying on of hands (Gen. 48:18; Mt. 19:15). Praying for healing was accompanied by laying on hands throughout the ministries of Jesus and the apostles (Mk. 1:41; Lk. 4:40; Acts 9:17; 28:8). The central emphasis is that the church as earthly representative is the channel for divine activity accomplished by God on behalf of Christ.[16]

Baptism(s) and commissioning of the Gospel

The author of Hebrews mentions baptisms next, and, interestingly, baptisms is in the plural. There is enough scriptural evidence in the book of Acts and the epistles to suggest that this plural designation of baptisms references the two baptisms of water baptism and Spirit baptism. Both water baptism and Spirit baptism were consistent components of the development of the church

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[16] Allen C. Myers, "Laying on of Hands," *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 647.

and the spread of Christianity during the Biblical record of the early church. Jesus himself ordained baptism as a foundational concept for the spread of the Christian faith (Mt. 28:19). The act of baptism brings the believer into unity with the triune Godhead and body of Christ as a pattern from the model Jesus set forth at his baptism. At Jesus' baptism, all three persons of the Godhead are present (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22). Jesus' water baptism represents the believer's immersion into the body of Christ through purification from the old way of life that leads to death while accepting the new way of righteousness that leads to life, thus, symbolizing the two-ways principle (Rom. 6:1-11). The presence of the Spirit in the form of the dove at Jesus' baptism represents the Spirit baptism that empowers the way of life for the believer (Jn. 14:16; 15:26). The voice of the Father, then, offers the assurance of salvation in respect to the Baptisms. The Baptisms consistently accompanied the spread of the Christian faith throughout the book of Acts as Jesus commissioned his apostles to make more disciples by sharing their testimony of the gospel events (Acts 8:14-17; 9:17-19; 10:44-11:18; 10:47; 19:5-6).

Resurrection, the Lord's Supper, Judgement, and the Lordship of Christ

The final two concepts mentioned in Hebrew 6:1-2 are the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. The resurrection of Jesus can be viewed as the most vital aspect of Jesus' work on the cross and holds every element of the Christian faith together (I Cor. 15:1-8). Without the resurrection, all other events regarding the gospel story fail to hold significance, especially for Gentile believers. Paul asserts the importance of the resurrection to the church at Corinth:

> If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are

not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins (I Cor. 15:13-17, NRSV).

Two essential points in the gospel message are the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the believer's heavenly inheritance, neither of which hold their credibility in the absence of the resurrection of Christ, who is the first fruit of those who shall be raised (I Cor. 15:20). The entire Christian view of salvation rests upon the resurrection. Salvation through Christ's resurrection was the final victory of God's transcendent power over the powers of this age. Thus, the resurrection is proof of Christ's decisive victory over sin and Satan (Gal. 1:3-4). The resurrection of the dead also includes the message of hope for the believer and includes the proclamation that the believer is united with Christ in his death and resurrection (I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; Php. 3:10; Gal. 2:20). Those who are united with Christ in his death shall also be united with him in his resurrection (Ro. 6:5, 8). The Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead also gives life to those who have been baptized in the Spirit (Ro. 8:11). The believer participates in the dying and rising with Christ via their death to sin and the power of sin.[17]

Since Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper so the church would retain the memory of his death, burial, and resurrection, I include it in discussion with the resurrection of the dead as a foundational concept. As the Lord Jesus ordained Baptism, he also ordained the Lord's Supper. Paul asserts that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and fully intended for the church to preserve it (I Cor. 11:23-34). The Synoptic emphasis on the Lord's Supper further validates this assertion that it was a well-known and implemented ceremonial concept. The ceremonial meal stands as a reminder to the church of Jesus' giving of his body and blood for the sake of his followers while also pointing forward to the expectation of his return (Mt. 26:26–30; Mk. 14:22–26; Lk. 22:14–20; Jn. 13).

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[17] Victor Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), p. 124

The concept of eternal judgment continues the prophetic witness of the Old Testament prophets to Israel, who testified that God would judge the deeds of the wicked nations and set up His eternal throne in Zion. The apostolic witness agrees with the prophetic witness while declaring Jesus the final judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 17:31; Php. 2:9-11). The eternal judgment includes a focus on the anticipated return of Christ, upon which Christ "will reward the righteous and punish the unrighteous. Judgment will be on the basis of deeds, the response to God's revelation, and faith in Jesus Christ. Believers need not fear the last judgment but should live godly lives in anticipation of it."[18]

Foundational concepts of Hebrews in the post-apostolic writings

Like the guiding principles and the two-ways teaching, the foundational concepts listed in Hebrews 6 are in the writings of post-apostolic literature. We may identify the Hebrews 6 foundational concepts in the Didache, The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans in the chart below:[19]

Hebrews 6 Foundational Concepts in Post-Apostolic Literature (70ad-200ad)

	Laying on of Hands and Prayer	The Ordinances: Baptism(s) and Lord's Supper	Resurrection and Judgment
The Didache[20]	Neither pray as the hypocrites; but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, thus pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, *so* on earth. Give us to-day our daily (needful) bread, and forgive us our	And concerning baptism, thus baptize ye: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if thou have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, in warm.	For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increaseth, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-

[18] Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009), accessed March 3, 2023, Logos Bible Software.

[19] The scope of this research does not provide space for an exhaustive analysis of post-apostolic literature. Therefore, I only analyzed four post-apostolic literary works with proposed composition dates within the first two centuries of the church's expansion.

[20] Roberts, pp. 379-382.

	debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one* (or, evil); for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Thrice in the day thus pray.	But if thou have not either, pour out water thrice upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others can; but thou shalt order the baptized to fast one or two days before. Now concerning the Thanksgiving (Eucharist), thus give thanks. First, concerning the cup: We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which Thou madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. And concerning the broken *bread:* We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Even as this broken *bread* was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever. But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving (Eucharist), but they who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord hath said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs.	deceiver[9] as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved[13] from under the curse itself. 6 And then shall appear the signs of the truth; first, the sign of an outspreading[16] in heaven; then the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and the third, the resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but as it is said: The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.
The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians[21]	Thus a profound and abundant peace was given to you all, and ye had an insatiable desire for doing good, while a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit was upon you all. Full of holy designs, ye did, with true earnestness of mind and a godly confidence, stretch forth your hands to God Almighty, beseeching Him to be merciful unto you, if ye had been guilty of any involuntary transgression. Day and night ye were anxious for the whole brotherhood, that the number of God's elect might be		Ye foolish ones! compare yourselves to a tree: take [for instance] the vine. First of all, it sheds its leaves, then it buds, next it puts forth leaves, and then it flowers; after that comes the sour grape, and then follows the ripened fruit. Ye perceive how in a little time the fruit of a tree comes to maturity. Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, "Speedily will He come, and will not tarry;" and, "The Lord shall

[21] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1885), pp. 5–17.

	saved with mercy and a good conscience. The apostles have preached the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from[4] God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established[6] in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry.		suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look.”
The Epistle of Barnabas[22]		This meaneth the vessel of His Spirit, which He shall glorify. Further, what says He? “And there was a river flowing on the right, and from it arose beautiful trees; and whosoever shall eat of them shall live for ever.” This meaneth,	The final stumbling-block (or source of danger) approaches, concerning which it is written, as Enoch says, “For this end the Lord has cut short the times and the days, that His Beloved may hasten; and He will come to the

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[22] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., “The Epistle of Barnabas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), pp.138–144.

		that we indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement, but come up, bearing fruit in our heart, having the fear [of God] and trust in Jesus in our spirit. "And whosoever shall eat of these shall live for ever." This meaneth: Whosoever, He declares, shall hear thee speaking, and believe, shall live for ever.	inheritance." And the prophet also speaks thus: "Ten kingdoms shall reign upon the earth, and a little king shall rise up after them, who shall subdue under one three of the kings. In like manner Daniel says concerning the same, "And I beheld the fourth beast, wicked and powerful, and more savage than all the beasts of the earth, and how from it sprang up ten horns, and out of them a little budding horn, and how it subdued under one three of the great horns."
The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans[23]	See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper[20] Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.	He was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the will and power[4] of God; that He was truly born of a virgin, was baptized by John, in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled by Him; and was truly, under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch, nailed [to the cross] for us in His flesh. Of this fruit[6] we are by His divinely-blessed passion, that He might set up a standard for all ages, through His resurrection, to all His holy and faithful [followers], whether among Jews or Gentiles, in the one body of His Church.	For I know that after His resurrection also He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, "Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit."[8] And immediately they touched Him, and believed, being convinced both by His flesh and spirit. For this cause also they despised death, and were found its conquerors. And after his resurrection He did eat and drink with them, as being possessed of flesh, although spiritually He was united to the Father.

Weekly corporate worship and fellowship

The apostles and writer of Hebrews (who may have been one of the apostles) expected

these concepts to exist as foundational, meaning that some other concepts and teachings are

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[23] Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds, "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans,"
in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), pp. 86–90.

important to the Christian faith.   However, Christ expected the apostles to begin with the

foundational concepts and mature into further developed faith concepts.   "Let us go on unto

perfection…" (Heb. 6:1, NRSV).   The apostolic tradition recognized the Christian faith as a

developmental process that should begin with establishing the foundational concepts while

introducing the believers to the more advanced instructions as the believer shows themselves

capable of absorbing (I Cor. 3:1-3; Eph. 4:11-15; Heb. 5:13; I Pet. 2:2).   Thus, weekly worship

conducted on the Lord's Day became a foundational concept within the apostolic tradition to

promote worship, fellowship, and growth in faith and doctrine (Acts 20:7-12; I Cor. 11:18).   The

Didache mentions weekly worship of Christians that resembles the model in Acts and the epistles:

> But every Lord's Day do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.[24]

Chapter Summary

After examining the apostolic tradition of the church, I establish what should be considered

foundational concepts of Christianity. First, the two guiding principles of love the Lord your God

and love your neighbor as yourself stand as the fundamental absolutes through which every

individual interpreted, governed, and practiced their faith and worship. How does a believer

express their love for God? They do so by the following: monotheistic worship of Him, observing

His holiness apart from creation, worshipping Him based on how He has revealed for us through

the prophetic witness, and intentionally reserving time and space to acknowledge and uphold the

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[24] Roberts, p. 381.

aforementioned. How does a believer practice and express their love for their neighbor? They do so by transmitting the faith from generation to generation, preserving the right to live and the value of life, upholding faithfulness and fidelity, abstaining from manipulation and exploitation, protecting and honoring integrity and truthfulness, and finding contentment in one's own situation. To live according to these guiding principles was choosing to live according to God's Spirit, thus, leading to an appropriate Christian life. To reject the guiding principles is to choose the path of darkness and engage in behavior that corrupts and leads to death.

In addition to these guiding principles for faith practice and worship expression, the apostolic tradition held several foundational concepts for doctrine and teaching: the Lordship of Christ, prophetic and apostolic witness, commissioning of the gospel, the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, repentance, faith and obedience to God, apostolic succession, prayer, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal judgment or eschaton. The apostles and the early church used weekly corporate worship and fellowship to provide instruction to Christians regarding these concepts. It is from these foundational concepts for doctrine and teaching that many other teachings may flow, which the scope of this research does not provide space to cover exhaustively. Nevertheless, Jesus provides a fundamental framework for the appropriate contextualization and indigenization of the Christian faith from these guiding principles and foundational concepts through apostolic tradition. By focusing on these guiding principles and foundational concepts, an effector culture may provide the tools for self-imaging and self-theologizing to a receptor culture. The receptor culture will experience the characteristics of indigenization as they embark upon the journey toward Christian faith practice and worship expression. Weekly and regular fellowship on the Lord's Day helps preserve the apostle's tradition and promotes worship, fellowship, and growth in faith and doctrine. Through weekly and regularly worship, Christian

converts learn how to adapt the faith dynamically through experiential learning. By appropriately contextualizing the Christian faith's guiding principles and foundational concepts, the effector culture can safeguard itself against attempts to replicate or enforce its cultural preferences and liturgy. By equipping the receptor culture with the guiding principles and foundational concepts, they develop their Christian aesthetics and semiotics in ways that do not negatively impact their worship of God or relationship with the community. This provides a model for the African American Church to appropriately contextualize and indigenize the Christian faith through evangelism and mission without developing spiritually marginalized people in the process. The next step in this research is to develop a practical curriculum model that African American churches and church leaders can use to learn and implement the guidelines for contextualization and indigenization presented in this chapter.

Conclusion and Practical Response

Chapters 1 through 3 established that contextualization and indigenization have always been necessary and expected components of establishing Christian communities of faith and practice. In addition, failed or obsolete attempts at contextualization and indigenization in evangelism and missions continue to harm the development of the African American Church. Chapter 1 provided working definitions for contextualization and indigenization while clarifying the two points of emphasis of self-imaging and self-theologizing. Observable characteristics of a self-imaging and self-theologizing faith reveal that experiences with God and expressions of worship towards God may be insider relevance, experiential learning, dynamic adaptation, cultural mosaic, relational balance, liturgical diversity, and linguistic transpose. Chapter 2 explained how these characteristics of self-imaging and self-theologizing were expressed in the early spread of the faith under the leadership of the apostles but would begin to experience suppression due to the church's Constantinian shift and the rise of papal primacy. The suppression of these characteristics of self-imaging and self-theologizing would continue as Christianity entered West Africa, only to resurface between the 17th and 19th centuries on slave plantations in North America as enslaved Africans embraced the Christian faith. Chapter 3 explained how enslaved African Christians practiced the Christian faith on slave plantations and how that faith developed into the cultural faith identity of the earliest African American faith communities, which laid the foundation for the development of contextual and indigenous African American churches. However, the racist ideologies of enslavers, the classist racial uplift of the early African American Church, and the hyperfocus on sanctification during the Holiness/Pentecostal movement produced sets of faith practice and worship expression that were anti-contextual and anti-indigenous. These counterproductive approaches to faith practice and worship expression resulted in the development

of spiritually marginalized communities alienated from the very relationship with God that such communities need. These spiritually marginalized people desire a relationship with God but do not fit into the contexts of traditional Baptist, Methodist, or Holiness/Pentecostal faith traditions that emerged during the development of the African American Church.

Whereas the African American Church's inability to develop faith practice and worship expression contextually and indigenously resulted from the African American Church not having clear biblical guidelines for appropriate contextualization and indigenization, chapter 4 provides such biblical guidelines. Chapter 4 presents a conceptual analysis of biblical guidelines for appropriate contextualization and indigenization with an emphasis on the replication of foundational concepts of Christianity rather than traditional religious preferences in the work of evangelism and mission. These biblical guidelines begin with the two guiding principles of love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself as being fundamental absolutes for faith practice and worship expression. Along with these two fundamental absolutes, the apostolic tradition given to the apostles by Jesus held several foundational concepts for doctrine and teaching that the church must preserve.

When churches and church leaders focus on this biblical guideline for contextualization and indigenization in evangelism, they will decrease the tendency to replicate non-contextual religious practice and increase the capacity to replicate the foundational concepts of the Christian faith. This conceptual analysis is towards preventing further spiritual marginalization due to anti-contextual and anti-indigenous faith expressed in chapters 2 and 3 and to develop appropriate representations of contextual and indigenous Christianity presented in chapter 1. Therefore, a ministry training certificate program will introduce churches and church leaders to these biblical guidelines and equip them with the tools to develop contextual ministry implementation models.

Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program

The Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program equips preachers and leaders for 21st Century ministry within the church and marketplace while emphasizing biblical literacy, theological exploration, effective preaching, clarity in vocation, and leadership development. The Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program is designed to address the issue of spiritual marginalization by exploring the work of contextual theology and equipping preachers and ministers with the necessary tools for appropriate contextualization. As a result, we may reach the spiritually marginalized and guide them into a deeper relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Active participants in the Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program will complete a 5 (five) course curriculum during one academic year from August through May in a 3 (three) semester, 6 (six) week per course format. The curriculum focuses on understanding contextual theology, practicing contextual preaching, and developing multimedia ministry literacy for effective 21st Century ministry. Participants who acquire all identified program learning outcomes with at least 70% proficiency will receive a Certificate in Contextual Theology and Ministry. Participants who successfully complete the Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program will be recognized in commencement at the Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program Annual Conference. This conference will also serve as the transitory conference from one cohort to the next.

Program Narrative

The purpose of the Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program is to equip preachers and leaders for 21st Century ministry within the church and the marketplace while emphasizing biblical literacy, theological exploration, effective preaching, clarity in vocation, and leadership development. As an extension of our mission, the Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program will publish books, e-books, and video material to promote our 5 areas of biblical literacy, theological exploration, effective preaching, clarity in vocation, and leadership development.

Included in our purpose is the development of the Handbook for Contextual Theology and Indigenous Ministry in the African American Church. This curriculum will be designed to:

I.   Introduce the biblical precedent for contextual theology while defining contextualization and indigenization

II.   Explain the work of contextualization and indigenization in the field of Christian evangelism and mission as well as their implications.

III.   Recognize the difference between Christianity as a religion and Christianity as a faith and explain its implications for evangelism and mission.

IV.   Explain the characteristics of contextualization and indigenization.

V.   Identify the keys to appropriate contextualization and indigenization

VI.   Explore the historical developments of contextualization and indigenization

Program Design

The Contextual Preaching and Ministry Certificate Program will be offered in a hybrid format with both online and in-person courses. Online courses will be offered through the Moodle Cloud LMS platform. Our curriculum will offer the following courses to current and aspiring preachers, ministers, and pastors:

I. Contextual Theology (Fall I): an analysis of biblical and historical models for Christian practice and worship within diverse cultural settings, while evaluating cultural trends through appropriate contextualization.

II. The Bible as Literature (Fall II): a survey of literary genres of the Old and New Testaments focusing on the poetic and narrative art of each. The course will inform participants on how recognizing the literature of the Bible aids understanding of the Bible.

III. Contextual Hermeneutics (Winter): an exploration of sermon preparation and delivery for utilization beyond congregational and religious settings using Biblical and historical examples.

IV. A Theology of Technology (Spring I): a practical exercise towards developing a personal theology on technology and its usage towards sharing the gospel message.

V. Multimedia Ministry Literacy (Spring II): practical training in pre-production, post-production, and production software, hardware, and resources for developing quality multimedia presentations.

Methods of instructions will include but not be limited to the following: class discussions (in-person), virtual discussions (on-line), oral and group reports, audio/visual aids, computer aided instruction, and immersion courses. Participants who begin the program in Fall '23 will serve as the 1st cohort of the Contextual Preaching and Ministry Certificate Program and will be scheduled

for Spring '24 commencement. Upon successful completion of all 5 courses, program participants will receive a Certificate of Contextual Theology and Ministry.

Program Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for the Contextual Theology and Ministry Certificate Program are (separated by outcomes by target audience):

I.   For aspiring and active preachers (Target Audience 1):

    a. Dissect the foundational concepts of the Christian faith from the religious and cultural preferences of our various denominations.

    b. Understand the need to contextually reach new and diverse audiences from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

    c. Develop innovative tools and resources to share the gospel in ways that impact social justice and racial inequality.

II.   For non-churchgoers who hear sermons (Target Audience 2):

    a. Increased potential to hear the gospel message and the Christian faith apart from the religious preferences of the preacher(s).

    b. To be equipped with the tools for developing an indigenous faith practice in Christianity.

III. For multimedia ministry (Target Audience 3):

    a. Generate different methods and mediums to share the gospel message through media (social media, audio and video, etc.).

    b. Develop basic competency in content creation software (YouTube, MetaSuite, Adobe Creative Cloud and Apple iWorks).

    c.   Formulate and implement a media ministry plan for personal or corporate use.

Through consistent participation and successful completion of the certificate program, participants will gain a broader understanding of World Christianity and World Christians by learning to think contextually and indigenously regarding faith practice and worship expression.

Performance Indicators and Evaluation

1. Active program participation/enrollment.

   a. 12 (twelve) active participants per cohort

2. Program completion.

   a. 12 completed participants per cohort

3. All course offerings will be required to have Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) specific to the course and in compliance with the program learning outcomes. Each course offering will use weekly quizzes, unit assessments/reviews, midterm assessments/projects, and final assessments/projects as tools to assess participants acquisition of Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs).

4. Program participants will be required to complete a pre-course survey and post-course survey.

   a. Pre-course surveys will be distributed during the first week of each course offering to assess prior knowledge of subject matter.

   b. Post-course surveys will be distributed 2 weeks prior to the end of each course offering to assess knowledge of subject matter acquired during course participation.

    c. Courses, projects, and assessments that have Program Learning Outcomes for non-churchgoers who hear sermons and immersion projects within the community will have surveys and follow-up assessments to be completed by community partners and attendees affiliated with the projects.

5. As a part of the application process:

    a. Participants who are active preachers will be asked to provide a self-assessment of their preaching and sermon preparation process that includes, strengths, weaknesses, current resources, current sermon helps, and current ministry context. They will also be asked to submit a written and video copy of a recent sermon (template will be provided).

        i. Participants unable to provide responses to these items, and/or participants who were not active preachers at the onset of their participation in the program, will be equipped to develop and obtain them as a part of their ministry project.

        ii. Participants who provide responses will submit an exit survey to self-assess their improvement.

    b. Participants must submit an assessment of their preaching and sermon preparation process that includes, strengths, weaknesses, current resources, current sermon helps, and current ministry context to be completed by their senior leader (senior pastor, district overseer, state bishop, regional bishop, etc.; template will be provided).

       i.   The senior leader will complete an exit survey that expresses the participant's improvement, stagnancy, or lack of improvement (template provided).

Participants must complete all 5 courses included in the Contextual Theology and Ministry Program with at least 70% proficiency. The Contextual Theology and Ministry Program will operate on a 4.0 grading system for all coursework. Participants' program progress is evaluated according to the following grading system.

Communication of Performance Indicators

The Contextual Theology and Ministry Program will include two practical immersion projects to be completed by the participants.

I.   Contextual Hermeneutics Immersion Project A:

    a. combines the CLOs from the Contextual Theology and Ecclesiology and Contextual Hermeneutics courses. Participants will preach at least two sermons:

        i. One sermon in a church setting

       ii. One sermon in a non-church public setting

II.   Contextual Hermeneutics Immersion Project B:

    a. Combines CLOs from the Theology of Technology and Multimedia Ministry courses. Participants will produce video content (live or OnDemand) using production software

Further methods of communicating PLOs will be oral presentations, exercises for critical thinking, study questions, Quizzes, and class participation.

Program Timetable

Months 1-2 (May 2023-June 2023) will be spent developing marketing material (printed and media) for the program to distribute for the recruitment of the first program cohort, which consists of a minimum of 5 (five) program participants and a maximum of 12 (twelve) program participants. Concurrently, during the first 3 months (May 2023-July 2023) will be used to identify a program manager, executive assistive, and treasurer. The current program director has assumed foundational duties (recruiting, reporting, program content, etc.) until these positions are filled. By month 4 (August 2023) these positions will be staffed on volunteer basis until funding can be secured or maintained by the program director. Months 4-13 will consist of course offerings in a 6-week per course format over the course of 3 academic semesters, annually:

Course Title	Semester	Weeks[1]
Contextual Theology and Ecclesiology	Fall	4th full week of August to 1st full week of October
The Bible as Literature	Fall	2nd full week of October to 3rd full week of November
Contextual Hermeneutics	Winter	2nd full week of January to 2nd full week of February
Theology of Technology	Spring	3rd full week of February to 4th full week of March

Multimedia Ministry Literacy	Spring	2nd full week of April to 2nd full week of May[2]

[1]Pre-course surveys will be distributed during the first week of each course offering to assess prior knowledge of subject matter. Post-course surveys will be distributed 2 weeks prior to the end of each course offering to assess knowledge of subject matter acquired during course participation.
[2]All program participants are required to submit a program exit assessment prior to commencement. Early departure assessments will be conducted when necessary.

Month 13 will serve as the commencement month for the 1st cohort of the Contextual Theology and Ministry program. Concurrently during month 13, a program annual audit and review will be conducted to assess program learning outcomes, financial statements, and data overview. Data overview can include program enrollment, retention, and enhanced quality of preaching and ministry in accordance with program learning outcomes. Employee/position reviews will be conducted during month 13 based on job descriptions and essential job functions.

Commencement services will be held during the Contextual Theology and Ministry Annual Conference during month 13, which will also include annual reporting, professional ministry development workshops, breakout sessions on topics relative to 21st Century ministry, main speakers, etc.

Contextual Theology Course Syllabus

Introduction to Contextual Theology

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to analyze biblical and historical models for Christian practice and worship within diverse cultural settings, while evaluating cultural trends through appropriate contextualization.

Course Objectives:

The objectives for this course are to:
1. Introduce the Biblical precedent for contextual theology
2. Explain the work of contextualization and indigenization in the field of Christian evangelism and mission as well as their implications for evangelism and planting.
3. Interpret the components of the Old Testament Law of Moses contextually and in comparison to the New Testament Law of Christ.
4. Contrast Christianity as a religion vs. Christianity as a faith and explain the implications for evangelism and church planting.

Course Expectations:

Introduction to Contextual Theology is a learner-centered, participatory, online course in which each student is both a learner and a valuable source of knowledge. Course takers are expected to contribute to the intellectual climate by elevating the level of inquiry and challenge in the course. Course deliverables will be from the Moodle Learning Management System in accordance with the course syllabus in synchronous and asynchronous meeting times. Course assignments are to be completed and submitted on time, emails checked regularly for feedback and updates, and QM Standards applied to course development and design.

Synchronous Online Sessions: cohort will meet synchronously via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Time and dates TBD.

Required Text & Resources:

Holy Bible (New Revised Standard Version)

Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

Kraft, Charles H. *Issues in Contextualization*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016.

Roberts, Alexander, Donaldson, James, and Coxe, Cleveland A., eds., "The Epistle of Barnabas," in The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885.

—, ed. "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans," Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885.

—, ed. "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians," Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885.

—, ed. "The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations," in Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies, vol. 7, The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886.

Roberts, Alexander, Donaldson, James, and Coxe, Cleveland A., eds., trans. Holmes, Peter, "The Prescription against Heretics," in Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian, vol. 3, The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885.

Suggested Material:

Holmes, Barbara Ann. *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press (Kindle Edition), 2017.

Smith, Mitzi J. Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018.

Terry, John Mark, and Robert L. Gallagher. Encountering the History of Missions: From the Early Church to Today. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.

Walton, John H. Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context: A Study of Parallels between Biblical and Ancient near Eastern Texts. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989.

COURSE CONTENT		
Module & Assignments	Points	Objectives & Outcomes
MODULE 1: Introduction to Contextual Theology		
Read chapter 1 in Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible.* Read chapters 1-3 in Kraft, Charles H. *Issues in Contextualization*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016. Read the Introduction in Handbook for Contextual Theology and Indigenous Ministry in the African American Church. Complete and submit the Introduction Assessment		1. Define contextual theology. 2. Define the immutability of God and explain the relationship between the immutability of God and contextual theology. 3. Identify how God may be communicated or experienced within diverse contexts. 4. Provide at least 5 other examples of contextual experiences with God given in scripture.

Module 2: Contextualization and Indigenization		
Read chapter 2 in Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. Read chapters 4-6 in Kraft, Charles H. *Issues in Contextualization* Read Chapter I in Handbook for Contextual Theology and Indigenous Ministry in the African American Church. Complete and submit the Chapter I Assessment		1. Define contextualization and indigenization in the work of evangelism. 2. Identify and explain the seven characteristics of developing indigenous faith.
Module 3: Survey of Early Contextual and Indigenous work in 1st to 4th Century Christianity		
Read chapter 3 in Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. Read Chapter II in Handbook for Contextual Theology and Indigenous Ministry in the African American Church. Complete and submit the Chapter II Assessment		1. Summarize the ecumenical patriarchal pentarchy of the early church and its role in the contextual and indigenous spread of Christianity. 2. Explain the concept of catholicity and its impact on the work of contextualization and indigenization. 3. Identify early anti-contextual and anti-indigenous trends in the church's history.
Module 4: Examining Anti-Contextualization and Anti-Indigenization in the Development of the African American Church, pt. 1		
Mid-Term Assessment: submit completed proposal template for the Final Assessment Read chapter 4 in Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. Read Chapter III in Handbook for Contextual Theology and Indigenous Ministry in the African American Church. Complete and submit the Chapter III Assessment		1. Relate the failed spread of Christianity in West Africa with anti-contextualization and anti-indigenization. 2. Identify characteristics of contextualization and indigenization in Native American and early African American Christianity
Module 5: Examining Anti-Contextualization and Anti-Indigenization in the Development of the African American Church, pt. 2		
Read chapter 5 in Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. Read Chapter IV in Handbook for Contextual Theology and Indigenous Ministry in the African American Church. Complete and submit the Chapter IV Assessment		1. Identify the four primary stages of the development of the African American church. 2. Summarize important tropes that appear in each stage of the African American church's development and their relevance to contextual theology. 3. Explain how important tropes in the African American church's development impacted the work of

		Christian contextualization and indigenization. 4. Explain spiritual marginalization as a consequence of anti-Contextualization and anti-Indigenization.
Module 6: Survey of Apostolic Tradition and Foundational Christian Concepts, pt. 1		
Read chapter 6 in Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible.* Read Chapter 4 in Handbook for Contextual Theology and Indigenous Ministry in the African American Church. Complete and submit the Chapter 4a Assessment Suggested Readings: "The Epistle of Barnabas" "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans" "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,"		1. Summarize apostolic tradition and prophetic witness and their role in appropriate contextualization. 2. Contrast Christianity as a religious and Christianity as a faith practice. 3. Recognize the guiding principles and foundational concepts of Christianity.
Module 7: Survey of Apostolic Tradition and Foundational Christian Concepts, pt. 2		
Read chapter 7 in Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible.* Read Chapter 4 in Handbook for Contextual Theology and Indigenous Ministry in the African American Church. Complete and submit the Chapter 4b Assessment Suggested Readings: "The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations (Didache)" "The Prescription against Heretics" Select chapters from the New Testament		1. Summarize apostolic tradition and prophetic witness and their role in appropriate contextualization. 2. Contrast Christianity as a religious and Christianity as a faith practice. 3. Recognize the guiding principles and foundational concepts of Christianity.
Module 8: Final Project		
Participants will preach/teach and record two sermons/teachings: • One in a church setting • One in a non-church public setting Both sermons/teachings should display knowledge course material regarding contextual theology: • self-imaging and self-theologizing • characteristics of indigenization		

• apostolic tradition and foundational concepts
 	
Participants must submit 3 Contextual Ministry Assessments:
    • Self-Assessment assessing participant's own development in the field of contextual theology and ministry (templates will be provided).
    • Senior Leader Assessment assessing participant's own development in the field of contextual theology and ministry since their participation in the course (templates will be provided).
    • Congregant or Community Leader Assessment assessing participant's own development in the field of contextual theology and ministry since their participation in the course (templates will be provided).		

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