

# A Reconstruction of African Religion through Adinkra Symbology

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Failure to seriously engage African culture is the root of much of Africa's challenges today. Fela, the giant of Afrobeat music, makes this point on his *Why Black Man Dey Suffer* album.<sup>1</sup> He points out that the reason we Africans cannot reach our collective potential as a people is that we have lost, among other things, our connection with our ancestral roots. Emmanuel Katongole makes a similar point from political theology when he writes, "Africa's inception into modernity is a lie. Modernity claims to bring salvation to Africa, yet the founding story of the institution of modern Africa rejects Africa itself."<sup>2</sup> Molefi Kete Asante makes a similar point relative to the African American experience in the US. While not completely dismissing the nihilism or Afro pessimism view espoused by such luminaries as Cornell West, Asante makes a powerful case:

If we have lost anything, it is our cultural centeredness; that is, we have been moved off our own platforms. This means that we cannot truly be ourselves or know our potential since we exist in a borrowed space. But all space is a matter of point of view or interpretation. Our existential relationship with the culture that we have borrowed defines what and who we are at any given moment. By regaining our own platforms, standing in our own cultural spaces, and believing that our way of viewing the universe is just as valid as any, we will achieve the kind of transformation that we need to participate

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1 Fela Kuti, *Why Black Man Dey Suffer*, recorded 1971, African Songs UK, compact disc.

2 Emmanuel Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 20-21.

fully in a multicultural society. However, without this kind of centeredness, we bring almost nothing to the multicultural table but a darker version of whiteness.<sup>3</sup>

Embracing one's culture is essential for human flourishing. African Christianity, however, has been operating in a borrowed space. What we have in much of Africa today is not authentic African Christianity nor political systems anchored in traditional African ideals, but rather foreign models of Christianity and government. An authentic African Christianity must engage African culture at the root level: religion. John Mbiti makes clear that, "Religion is the strongest element in traditional background and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned."<sup>4</sup> To ignore traditional African religions is to ignore the people themselves for this is what separates them as social beings from one another.

However, to engage African religion one must first understand it. Following Opoku, Asante and Mazama, and Sarpong among others,<sup>5</sup> I use religion in the singular to describe traditional African religions because while there is great diversity in religious practices or expressions among the numerous people groups on the continent, they all share enough common features to be considered as flowing from the same stream. Traditional African religion has been labeled many things—pagan, polytheistic, fetishism, ancestor worship, animism, and more—labels that demonstrate the confusion and misunderstanding that surrounds traditional African religion. Some have claimed that the African had no religion to speak of.<sup>6</sup> Others would go so far as to say that even the Akan concept of God—Nyame—was introduced by missionaries!<sup>7</sup> In this article I introduce the Adinkra symbols as what I believe to be an excellent window into the heart of African religion more broadly, and Akan religious tradition specifically.

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3 Molefi Kete Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), 8.

4 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1970), 7.

5 Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama, "Introduction," in *Encyclopedia of African Religion* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), xxi–xxx; Peter K. Sarpong, *Peoples Differ: An Approach to Inculturation in Evangelisation* (Legon, Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2013).

6 Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra, Ghana: FEP International Private Ltd, 1978), 2.

7 Opoku, 14.

## Adinkra System: An Overview

The natural tendency hardwired in humans is to make sense of the unfamiliar through the lens of the familiar. This is particularly true when dealing with cultural difference. In the case of African cultures, Christians from the west often try to make sense of African symbols through their own religious lens and, in so doing, curtail a more comprehensive understanding of the African worldview. Since Adinkra symbology will be unfamiliar to most, let me challenge you, the reader, to sit with any questions and concerns that might arise within before immediately imposing personal interpretations. Strive to comprehend the system as a cultural system. Then, and only then, should a comparative analysis be undertaken.

The word “Adinkra” in the language of the Akan people of Ghana and Ivory Coast simply means farewell, but to the Akan, this word contains much more significance. Adinkra follows in the same manner as the traditional African way of welcoming people. After offering the guest something to drink, the host proceeds to ask a series of questions about the purpose of the visit even if the purpose is very evident to both parties. In the same way of a commonly understood purpose, Adinkra is a farewell ceremony by the living for the departed, who are believed to be embarking on a journey to Asamanso (the realm of the Ancestors). Traditionally, mourners bring household items such as pillows, blankets, and the like to make the departed’s journey more comfortable. It is both a celebration of life and a send-off. Adinkra in its funereal context gives us a sense of the Akan idea of a life well-lived, as well as insights into what they believe about life after death. We can glean from these practices their belief about some of life’s pressing questions such as, what happens after death? Is there a God? And how shall we live in light of our answers to these existential questions?

Adinkra also includes a collection of symbols, a complex set of icons that captures the wisdom and worldview of a people. These visual representations of simple and complex visions of reality compress deep thoughts in iconic forms with a hierarchy of meaning. Sometimes one concept or idea can have two different icons—one concrete and the other abstract—communicating the same idea. Collectively in meaning, ritual, and symbol, Adinkra describes an important Akan cultural system, the origin of which is beyond the scope of this paper.

The symbols used in the Adinkra system have been described differently by various writers. Jasmine Williams calls them “a system of

symbols and communication based on the spirituality of the Akan people of Ghana.”<sup>8</sup> For Jon Daniel, “They are a comprehensive lexicon of visual icons created by the Akan people of Ghana and Gyaman people of Côte d’Ivoire in West Africa and devised to communicate proverbs.”<sup>9</sup> The Adinkra Dictionary describes this collection as follows:

Adinkra symbols have what is referred to as multilayered meanings. This means that they may have a variety of meanings and many different levels of interpretation. They convey deep philosophical messages about Akan social values and concepts of social behavior. The symbols reflect Akan common wisdom relating to the notion of God, quality of human relations, the spirituality of life and the inevitability of death. They tend to represent uplifting, motivating and character-building attributes of the individual.<sup>10</sup>

The symbols in the Adinkra system serve a variety of purposes in Akan society. First, in regard to clothing: originally Adinkra symbols were incorporated into the cloth of garments primarily worn during funerals. The symbols were carefully chosen to communicate something about the deceased—their bravery, generosity, or other positive characteristics. Today, however, these symbols have become part of a growing fashion trend and are used in clothing accessories such as bracelets, necklaces, and pendants.

Second, Adinkra symbols were used for decoration in homes, on walls, drums, and gates. This remains true today. Finally, these symbols serve as a means of communicating ancestral wisdom from one generation to the next. Like the wisdom literature in the Christian Bible, the Adinkra system serves as a dependable source of visible ancestral wisdom that can guide the (aspirational) way people should live today.

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8 Jasmine K. Williams, “The Language of Adinkra,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 19, 2021, <https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2011/10/26/the-language-of-adinkra/>.

9 Jon Daniel, “Four Corners—An Interview with Saki Mafundikwa,” *Design Week*, 2022, <https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/march-2013/four-corners-an-interview-with-saki-mafundikwa/>.

10 W. Bruce Willis, *The Adinkra Dictionary: A Visual Primer on the Language of Adinkra* (Washington, DC: The Pyramid Complex, 1998), 1.

## African Cosmology: An Overview

The interrelated nature of reality in Africa flows out of a theologically grounded African cosmology. While different cosmogonic narratives exist about the origin of the universe, all of them begin with God or the Supreme Being as Creator and Center. It is nearly impossible to construct a non-theological African cosmology. As Uchenna Ogbonnaya reminds us, “In all, the existence of God within the African reality scheme is beyond question since God is at the apex of the African conception of reality.”<sup>11</sup> In addition to a divine origin, here are other overarching themes found in African cosmology. As previously stated, a Supreme Being created the universe and entrusted it to humans to preserve and co-create. Because there is one Creator, there is unity in creation. African communities are collectivist. Unity, cooperation, and reconciliation are emphasized in traditional African societies. This finds expression in the African idea of Ubuntu—I am because we are.

All the disparate elements in the created order exist in a harmonic tension of unity in diversity. Ambiguity is a natural part of the human experience, and one must learn to live with and embrace this tension. A key role of humans is to maintain harmony and balance within creation beginning with self. Humans are to strive for peace and harmony with God, self, others, and creation. Amadou Hâmpaté Bâ describes lack of personal integrity as “cutting oneself from oneself.”<sup>12</sup> The Akan strive to live in harmony and balance internally and externally.

Time, as expressed in the Adinkra system, is not linear but rather circular. Past, present, and future are all connected. Ancestors from the past, those living in the present, and the future yet unborn are all connected. Death is a transitory phase, simultaneously an end and a beginning.

## Adinkra Symbols and Their Meaning

Below I present several examples of symbols found in the Adinkra system. This selection is by no means comprehensive; rather, these samples

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11 L. Uchenna Ogbonnaya, “The Question of the Nature of God from the African Place,” *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 11, no. 1 (March 9, 2022), 116.

12 Amadou Hâmpaté Bâ, “The Living Tradition,” in *General History of Africa: Methodology and African Prehistory Volume 1*, edited by Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 174.

have been chosen to shed light on important aspects of traditional African religion. So, in the spirit of Sankofa,<sup>13</sup> these symbols act as cultural invitations for the viewer to assume responsibility to learn and grow by going back and pursuing whatever new vistas and directions the symbols will lead. It is important to note that many of these symbols have corresponding proverbs.



**Gye Nyame** (“Except God”). From a theological perspective the most important of all the Adinkra symbols is *Gye Nyame*. The meaning associated with this symbol is: “The Created Order began a long time ago. There is no one living today who *knows* how and when creation begun, and no one living now will live to see the end of creation except God” (translation mine). Only the Creator (God) was present at creation and will be there at its consummation. In a culture where time is not linear and where wisdom is associated with age, this symbol speaks to the supremacy of God in everything. God is timeless. The word translated God, Nyame, describes a singular, eternal, being who exists outside of time. Although Nyame exists outside time and is all-powerful, God is personal and personable. Nyame is also “Nana,” a title for grandparents, rulers, kings, and chiefs—all of whom have capacity and responsibility as caretakers of the people. In Nyame, the personal and other, the near and the far, the grandparent and the king are all wrapped up in one person. Nyame is wholly other, yet personable.

In this cosmology, God is very much alive. God has been before the beginning of time and will be at the very end of it. He is the One who was and is and will be. No one has seen God and therefore no visual representation of God is possible. African culture reveres old age because it is believed that the longer a person lives the more they have seen, experienced, and hopefully, learned. This puts God as, far and away, the wisest of all. As such, we seek God’s advice, and counsel. What God says carries weight because God has seen it all, sees it all, and will see it all.



**Nyame Yeh Ohene** (“Nyame is King”). In Akan society where the supreme ruler is a king—Asantehene—this is an anthropomorphic way of ascribing attributes of an earthly ruler to God. A chief and by extension a king who is the head of state, town, or village has very specific responsibilities including: 1) custodian of state

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13 Sankofa as a word means “go back and retrieve.”

property; 2) interceder for the physical, social, and emotional welfare of the people through ritual prayer and sacrifices; 3) defender, protector, and “war general of the people”;<sup>14</sup> 4) judge and lawgiver. To call Nyame king is to ascribe all these qualities to him. One can say the earthly king emulates the Supreme Being (Nyame).



**Nyame Nwu** (“God will not die; therefore, I will not die”). While the emphasis here is on the immortality of the human soul, God and his Spirit in each human person is the source of that immortality. Taken together with the Gye Nyame symbol, the Akan, and by extension traditional African religion,

makes an emphatic statement about the eternal nature of God. God is the sustainer of life both in this world and the next.



**Nyame Biribi Wo Soro** (“God, there is something in the sky, let it reach my hand”). The sky where God dwells is where provisions are. The prayer and the hope is that God the Provider who has more than enough would supply the need of the supplicant. God is the one who supplies human needs.



**Nyame Nti** (“Because God exist, I will not eat grass”). This symbol is an expression of confidence in a God who is able to provide for his people. In a sense it says because God lives, I will not starve.



**Mmusuyidee** (“A good soul is like a cat; it is allergic to filth”). Mmusuyidee combines three separate words: Mmusuo (ill luck or curse) + Yi (take away) + Adee (thing), meaning the thing that removes ill luck or curses. In a cosmological system where everything is interconnected, what happens in the

spiritual realm has real consequences in the physical life of a person and in the community. It is important, therefore, to keep one’s soul clean like a cat. The implication is that a cat would not go near filth and if it does, it takes any means necessary to rid itself of even a little particle of dirt.

14 “He pledges to the people during his enstoolment that he would lead them in war.” *Osei Kwadwo. An Outline of Asante History*, 4th edition, vol. 1 (Kumasi, Ghana: O. Kwadwo Enterprise, 2022), 12.



**Nyame Dua** (“The Tree of God”). Although currently rare, this tree was traditionally planted in front of people’s homes as a reminder of God’s presence. “In Rattray’s (an early Africanist and student of the Ashanti)<sup>15</sup> day almost every Ashanti compound had its *Onyame Dua*, a triple-forked branch set upright in the ground, serving as an altar; on this a bowl for offerings rested. Such altars may still be seen, but not so commonly as formerly.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, they were used for purification and cleansing rites.<sup>17</sup>

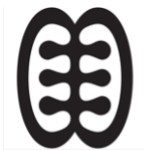
In addition to symbols that help enhance our understanding of who God is, others are related to community life. Here are a few samples:



**Owuo Akwede** (“Ladder of death”). The ladder of death is not reserved for one person. Death, in other words, is inevitable for all human beings.



**Obi Nnka Obi** (“Bite not one another”). Do not undermine one another; instead positively cheer each other on. Support one another; strive for peace and harmony. This symbol also serves as a caution against strife and provocation.



**Ese Ne Tekrema** (“The teeth and the tongue”). The local proverb states, “Even the teeth and the tongue fight.” Conflict is a natural part of life. Consider that similarly to teeth and tongue which are perfectly designed to work together, one can expect some level of conflict even in the most complementary of unions.

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15 Clifford Owusu-Gyamfi, “What Did Captain Robert Sutherland Rattray Say about the Akan Concept of Sunsum?” *Ghana Journal of Religion and Theology* 11, no. 1-2 (2021), 3-28.

16 Sidney George Williamson and Kwesi A. Dickson, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith: A Comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions* (Accra, GH: Ghana Universities Press, 1965), 87.

17 Adolph H. Agbo, *Values of Adinkra Symbols* (Kumasi, Ghana, GH: Delta Design & Publications, 2011), 26.

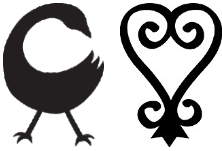




**Funtumfunefu Denkyemfunefu** (“Siamese crocodile”). Siamese (conjoined) crocodiles share one stomach, yet they fight over food. This is interpreted to mean people with shared goals do best when they work together by celebrating each other’s successes.



**Nkyinkyim** (“Twists and turns”). The road of life is full of twists and turns. This prepares people, especially the young, for the ebbs and flows of life. Because life is full of twists and turns, one must be able to adapt to changing situations or change with the times in order to survive and thrive.



**Sankofa** (“Go back and retrieve”). The local proverb states, “It is not taboo to return and retrieve something you left behind or forgot earlier.” It is never too late to correct a mistake. In a sense, for the Akan, ignorance is not bliss; it is an opportunity to learn or make up for what you missed, either because you never bothered to learn it or were never taught.



**Nea Onnim** (“The one who does not know can know if they study”). The responsibility of knowing falls on the individual. The basic assumption here is everyone can learn and be informed if they so choose.



**Nea Ope Se Obedi Hene** (“The one who wants to be king”). Saying: “The one who wants to be king must first serve others.” The leader must learn to be a servant. Service prepares future kings or rulers to lead well because leadership is ultimately about service.



**Dwannini** (“The ram”). Saying: “If you see a ram who bullies others with his horn, it is not because of the power of his horns, but rather because of what is in his heart.” The cultural meaning of this is, “Power does not corrupt; the one wielding it does.” Put differently, power is not inherently corruptible or corrupting. Those who wield it can choose to use it for good or abuse it. It is a choice that comes from the heart.

## Attributes of God in Traditional African Religion

From the above sets of symbols, we can deduce the following about the attributes of God in traditional African religion: First, there is only one God. The name of the Supreme Being (Nyame and all his other titles) has no plural form in either the Twi language of the Asante people or the Bahle in the language of the Gouro people of the Ivory Coast.<sup>18</sup> The idea of God as one Supreme Being is well-attested across the continent. Contrary to what some have asserted, this concept is an African idea, not a Western or Middle Eastern import.<sup>19</sup> If there is any “foreign” influence, that influence could be traced to ancient Egypt. There are enough conceptual, linguistic, and philological similarities to suggest such a connection. One can see Nyame, for instance, as a derivative of the Egyptian God Amen. Dompere writes:

A special day has been set aside in the name of Nyame, God Amen, for His reverence and worship. The day is Amen-Menda, shortened as Menmeneda (God’s Amen Day or Nyame’s Day), which is Saturday. Because he is a male in the Akan ecclesiastics and belief system, he is named Kwame (or Kwa-Amen-a).<sup>20</sup> This simply affirmed the linkage of Akan ancient roots of the Alkebulan of ancient Egypt or ancient Ethiopia of Kemet.<sup>21</sup>

The African concept of God as creator is well attested and needs no further comment. However, it is important to note that as Creator he is the source of all things. In our 2022 Sankofa trip to Ghana, we visited Bodomase, a small town in the greater Kumawu area. The talking drummer and the curator explained the origin of the town this way: Odomakoma (God’s title as Creator) created human beings, communities, and nations. He also created the founder of this town, Bodomase, and his Bodom tree (Bodomase literally means under the Bodom tree). What I found fascinating is that even the founding of a village or town has to be anchored in the greater creation story. Everyone and everything has

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18 Because the African approach to God is practical, these names reflect what he is and does for people rather than what he is in himself.

19 Opoku, 18.

20 I do not think adding the “a” is necessary as it has the unintended effect of changing the male name for Saturday (Kwame) to the female name for Tuesday (Kwabena).

21 Kofi Kissi Dompere, “Nyame,” in *Encyclopedia of African Religion* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2009), 466.

its origin in God, including the tree.

The traditional African understanding of God is evident in nature. The Akan have a saying that “no one has to tell a child that there is a God.” In other words, God’s deeds are so evident that even a child who is not fully developed intellectually can deduce God’s existence from what they see. In this regard traditional African religion is monotheistic. Local deities serve as intermediaries between God and people. These local deities typically have priests or priestesses who serve as their mouthpiece, much like the interpreter to the king or chief. They have no vision or prophecies of their own; they only reveal and interpret the visions and the words of the deities. These deities, it is important to note, are not God. Priests and priestesses are called by the deities, not appointed by the community.

The vast majority of the Adinkra symbols deal with human interactions, ethics, and an accepted moral code of behavior. This collectivist society emphasizes mutuality and cooperation with proverbs such as, “Treat others the way you want to be treated,” “Do not bite one another,” and “Work together since you share a common goal.” There is also a strong emphasis on knowledge and on each individual’s responsibility to fight ignorance and educate him- or herself.

Perhaps we are not prepared to say that Akan people through their practices of the Adinkra system found Jesus. But we can say with confidence that the grace of God was evident in their understanding of God. They knew God and worshiped him as the all-powerful, compassionate creator. This reality is evidenced by their worldview and how Akan society was designed. Our role then as ministers and missionaries is to work with indigenous people to identify God’s gracious hand already at work within the culture. If we approach cross-culture ministry and mission in this manner, then in the words of Pope Paul IV, we will have an authentic African Christianity, one that reflects an African culture transformed for the glory of God in Christ. This way the African, and by extension, all peoples of the world would come to the table of nations as their authentic selves and thereby fulfill the vision of Christ (Ephesians 3:10; Colossians 1:15-20). A decolonized African Christian faith could usher in an era of true mutuality and global transformation of the church. This could approximate the vision of God and would confound the principalities and powers of our polarized world today so rife with division and strife.

An imposed, translated, or even adapted non-inculturated Christianity discarded everything African. Desirous to cater to colonial powers, African Christians often bought into someone else’s idea of who they were. In

the process, the beliefs and practices of their ancestors were, sometimes voluntarily but often not, disdained and discarded. This continues today. Having bought into a lie, Africans are now discovering that they, like David, have donned an armor like Saul's that fits rather badly. This poorly fitting armor has led to a no-shame culture among politicians and fleeing the flock among some church leaders. These are behaviors that would have been frowned upon in an earlier collectivist society. As the fourteenth-century historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun brilliantly put it, "Those who are conquered always want to imitate the conqueror in his main characteristics and clothing, his craft, and in all his distinctive traits and customs."<sup>22</sup> Africa seems to have imitated primarily the worst parts of western culture. We have traded a God who is very near for a God who seems removed from the lived experiences of men and women. The once powerful God who filled both the spiritual and physical realms whose deities inspired fear and awe, is now replaced by a God we interact with mainly in our churches. The rituals that reminded us daily of God are now gone or nearly so. Africans now find themselves floating to and fro, tossed in borrowed spaces.

### **Moving Forward**

How then shall we engage traditional African religions in a way that fosters a movement of indigenous African Christianity? Perhaps a good place to start is the requisite disposition necessary for such an engagement. Tierno Bokar's advice to a young researcher aptly applies here:

If you wish to know who I am,  
If you wish me to teach you what I know,  
Cease for the while to be what you are  
And forget what you know.<sup>23</sup>

This will require great deal of humility on the part of anyone attempting such a task, but it is only humility that makes learning new ideas from foreign people possible. Additionally, one must be patient. It takes time to gain trust, without which no genuine transformation is possible. Such a person should also have a deep love for people as people, not just

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22 Adam Hochschild and Barbara Kingsolver, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston, MA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 304.

23 Amadou Hampaté Bâ, "The Living Tradition," *In General History of Africa, Vol. 1: Methodology and African Prehistory* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 203.

as souls to be won for Christ. Such a disposition encourages us to think, pray, and care for whole persons—mind, body, and spirit. To this, we must add a strong commitment to justice. Such a posture, in a very real sense, narrows the gap between Sunday and the rest of life. Any who would be engaged in such a posture must believe in the power of God through Christ to effect change in the lives of people, both in the physical and spiritual realms. As Cyril Okorochoa puts it, “To the African, power is the essence of true religion.”<sup>24</sup> This explains to a great extent the popularity of Pentecostalism in Africa today. Finally, the minister must be creative as they rely on God for insight.

An engagement with the greater likelihood of fostering an authentic African Christianity would take the following characteristics of traditional African religion seriously: “communalism, holism, reciprocity, generosity, and mutuality and interdependence.”<sup>25</sup> To this I add what I have called here the interrelated nature of reality and its implication for ministry. A genuine inculturation of the gospel will take seriously the idea of the interrelated nature of reality since in the traditional African worldview everything, including time, is interconnected. There is no strict separation between the sacred and the secular. This is not just an African tradition; it is also profoundly biblical and has enormous implications for ministry. Had the gospel been properly inculturated in the African culture, practices such as ancestral veneration could have been redeemed and fostered for the greater glory of God in Christ. An appreciation of the integrated nature of reality also encourages reverence for the elderly in a manner that is simultaneously biblical and African. So when we disparage and malign such a practice, we sever the connection that naturally exists in the culture between belief and practice.

In conclusion, I will advance that the Christianity inherited and practiced in much of Africa today is not authentically African. This is not the usual argument that “Christianity is a white man’s religion,” because such a claim flies in the face of historical evidence. Africans have played a critical role in how we think about our faith. Rather, my argument is that the Christianity in much of Africa today is not authentically African. And this poorly incarnated gospel has robbed Africans of the power of the gospel. A truly incarnated—inculturated—gospel engages a culture at its core, which for Africa is its religion, and transforms it from within. A

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24 A. O. Balcomb, “‘A Hundred Miles Wide, but Only a Few Inches Deep!’? Sounding the Depth of Christian Faith in Africa,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no. 140 (2011): 23.

25 Balcomb, 24.

truly inculturated gospel will seek to understand the theological categories of traditional African religion and the spirit that animates them. This failure has left Christianity anemic in both the public square and in the spiritual realm. As we were reminded by the head of Uganda's traditional healers' association in a recent *Wall Street Journal* article both Christians and Muslims "also believe in traditional religion."<sup>26</sup> Inculturation in an already evangelized context is going to be a difficult but rewarding. It is my hope that together we will be able to usher in a new form of Christianity in Africa that is authentically African and truly biblical. May the Lord help us in our efforts to be true to the gospel and who he has made us to be.

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26 Francis X Rocca, Nicholas Bariyo, and Gbenga Akingbule, "The Competition for Believers in Africa Is Transforming Christianity and Islam," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-competition-for-believers-in-africas-religion-market-66e5255d>.