

## Church and Culture: An Exploration of Challenges and Opportunities for Contemporary Ecclesial Communities

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### Abstract

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This article explores the complex relationship between the church and culture. It examines how Christian communities today might embrace cultural variety while retaining their theological beliefs through church-culture dialogue. It discusses how the church has related to the surrounding culture. The study suggests that Christian communities should critically reflect on their assumptions and principles to comprehend how their beliefs relate to modern culture. Also, Christian communities should be humble and open to learning from others to promote genuine dialogue and understanding. This paper concludes that church-culture engagement must continue with constant discussion, self-reflection, and critical engagement with cultural diversities. Contemporary Christian communities must respond to prevailing challenges such as pluralism, secularisation, technological change, moral concerns, and political issues.

**Keywords:** Church and Culture, Theology and Culture, Christianity and Culture, Worldviews

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### I. Introduction

As Christian communities engage with broader cultural contexts, they are presented with a variety of obstacles as well as opportunities.<sup>1</sup> To successfully navigate this confluence, one must be aware of the complexity of cultural variety and difference, a careful balance of tradition and adaptation, and the commitment to engage in continual discourse and engagement between the church and culture. The historical backdrop of the church's relationship with culture can give modern Christian communities valuable insights into the

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<sup>1</sup> Neely, Alan. *Christian Mission*. (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2020): 372.



issues they face and potential opportunities.<sup>2</sup> The church has always fought to sustain its long-held beliefs and practices while adapting to changing cultural norms and values. The church has also shaped cultural ideals, especially in art, music, and literature.

Communities that identify as Christian in today's society encounter significant obstacles when attempting to understand the relationship between church and culture. The preservation of traditional beliefs and practices faces substantial obstacles from secularisation, the growing plurality of society, and the cultural relativist ideology.<sup>3</sup> Adapting to society's changes while being faithful to the church's doctrine is a struggle. Cultural norms may conflict with Christian values. Concurrently, Christian communities have an excellent opportunity to connect with culture in relevant and potentially revolutionary ways. Christian communities can develop a more in-depth understanding of various cultural contexts and participate in a discussion that fosters greater understanding, empathy, and mutual respect if they engage in cultural exegesis, missional participation, and interfaith dialogue. An exegesis of culture provides a critical interpretation of cultural activities and artefacts to understand the values and assumptions beneath them.<sup>4</sup> Christian communities might better comprehend contemporary cultural practices and strive towards finding common ground if they engage in cultural explanation and try to learn more. Missional engagement is actively searching for opportunities to interact with other cultural contexts in a way that transforms and benefits. It necessitates not merely conforming to the cultural norms but also making an active effort, via the mission and witness of the church, to change those cultural norms.<sup>5</sup>

The interfaith discussion aims to deepen understanding and empathy between diverse communities and foster a sense of shared humanity and purpose. This article tries to provide insights and guidance for modern Christian communities on the issue of church and culture. It highlights the significance of sustaining an ongoing dialogue between the church and culture, cultivating a posture of humility and openness to learning from the viewpoints of others, and

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<sup>2</sup> Whitehead, Andrew L., and Samuel L. Perry. "How culture wars delay herd immunity: Christian nationalism and anti-vaccine attitudes." *Socius* 6 (2020): 84.

<sup>3</sup> Brewer, LaPrincess C., and David R. Williams. "We've come this far by faith: The role of the Black church in public health." *American Journal of Public Health* 109, no. 3 (2019): 385.

<sup>4</sup> Kalkan, Ümit, Fahriye Altınay Aksal, Zehra Altınay Gazi, Ramazan Atasoy, and Gökmen Dağlı. "The relationship between school administrators' leadership styles, school culture, and organizational image." *Sage Open* 10, no. 1 (2020): 126.

<sup>5</sup> Bag, Surajit, and Jan Harm Christiaan Pretorius. "Relationships between industry 4.0, sustainable manufacturing and circular economy: Proposal of a research framework." *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* 30, no. 4 (2022): 871.



engaging in critical self-reflection to understand the underlying assumptions and values that form the foundation of Christian beliefs.

### **Understanding Culture**

Culture is generally a way of life, but scholars have elaborately defined it. It is a set of basic rules (that guide the way of life) that the members of a society agree upon. Culture explains the mode of human existence, functioning “as a basic design for living, a meaning system, a social regulator, and a provider of a positive self-esteem for its members.”<sup>6</sup> It is “the common, learned way of life shared by the members of society.” It includes all human products, social institutions and systems, behaviors, feelings, values, and attitudes known to and shared by a social group.<sup>7</sup> Also, it includes people’s value systems, their “norms of behavior, sense of meaning and purpose, customs, social institutions and social and historical reference points as well as ways by which the values and mores of the culture are transmitted from one generation to the next, or from one group to another, by socialisation, education and social communications.”<sup>8</sup> Other components include languages, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organisation, inherited artifacts, and technical processes.<sup>9</sup> These aspects distinguish one group of people from the others. Therefore, when we talk about the church or Christianity interacting with culture, it means interacting with the various components of culture.

## **II. Historical Context**

The church’s relationship with culture is multifaceted and has changed over time. The church has wrestled with balancing its doctrine with changing cultural norms. Different Christian communities and traditions have handled this tension differently. This challenge was evident in the early church’s relationship with Greco-Roman society. Some theologians advocated for a complete wall between the Christian church and the rest of the world while condemning

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<sup>6</sup> C. S. Caleb Kim. *Cultural anthropology from a Christian perspective*. (Eldoret: Utafiti Foundation, 2019): 43.

<sup>7</sup> George M. Foster. *Traditional societies and technological change*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (NY:Harper and Row Publishers, 1973): 11.

<sup>8</sup> Stan Chu Ilo. “Contemporary African cultural values: A challenge to traditional Christianity,” *Africa Ecclesiastical Review* 49, no. 3-4, (Dec. 2017): 198

<sup>9</sup> Niebuhr, R. *Christ and culture*. (NY: Harper & Row, 1951): 32.



Roman civilisation.<sup>10</sup> Others took a more reconciliatory stance, aiming to connect with Greco-Roman Culture and discover areas of overlap between Christianity and the larger civilisation.

In his quest to understand how Christian identity can be expressed in a religiously pluralistic context, Kwame Bediako, in his seminal work, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa*, compares the theological approaches in the second century and in modern Africa.<sup>11</sup> The second-century Christians in the Graeco-Roman culture faced numerous attacks because Christianity was seen as a foreign religion and categorised under *religio illicita*. Therefore, Christians had to define who they were in relation to their former Graeco-Roman religious background and Judaism. They had to wrestle with how to be a Christian and a Roman simultaneously. Put differently, does Christianity destroy (discontinue) or affirm (continue) one's past background?

On the one hand, Bediako analyses four writers representing two main approaches: continuity and discontinuity. The first approach (continuity), propagated by Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, sought to reconcile philosophy and biblical teachings. This approach argues that Christianity completes what was partially revealed in the Graeco-Roman tradition or philosophies.<sup>12</sup> In that sense, Christ interacts with the culture. Bediako relates Justin and Clement with modern African proponents for continuity: John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu, and Mulago gwa Cikala.

On the other hand, Tertullian and Tatian (67-115), like Byang Kato in the modern African context, argued for radical discontinuity from the Graeco-Roman tradition to the Christian faith. Tertullian's primary concern was "to protect the truth from being adulterated by the world than to validate the relevance of the truth to the world."<sup>13</sup> Comparatively, Justin's position emphasised the church's role in redeeming culture, but Tertullian's view emphasised the purity of the church over anything else.

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<sup>10</sup> Vinzent, Markus. *Writing the History of Early Christianity: From Reception to Retrospection*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.pg 94.

<sup>11</sup> Kwame Bediako. *Theology and identity: The impact of second-century fathers on Christian thought*. (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992): 6, 31-33.

<sup>12</sup> Bediako, 142-207.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.



Bediako commends the critical and positive outlook given by Justin and Clement of Alexandria to the Hellenistic traditions. They did not discard the Graeco-Roman cultural traditions at wholesale but sifted through them (using the gospel) to determine their positive and negative aspects. It is a view that is central to this paper. Clement, for instance, saw some elements of the Hellenistic tradition as stepping stones for the gospel. These discussions in African Christian theology circles are helpful because they discuss how Christianity should interact with culture. It is critical to determine how the gospel fits into the local culture, “The Gospel always relates and adapts to the local culture in order to become fully rooted and a transformative force in that context.”<sup>14</sup>

The church unified medieval Western Culture and shaped social, political, and intellectual life. It dominated European culture through the Scholasticism, Renaissance, and Protestant Reformation periods. Protestant reformers challenged Roman Catholic theology and practices during the Reformation, which changed the church-culture connection. It caused religious turmoil and instability as tribes and cultures adopted distinct theological and cultural orientations.<sup>15</sup>

The rise of secularism, globalisation, and technological advancements complicates the church-culture relationship. Christian communities have many challenges and opportunities in this complex environment. The growing diversity of religious traditions, worldviews, and cultural relativism challenges Christian beliefs and practices.<sup>16</sup> Despite these challenges, many Christian groups seek meaningful and life-changing cultural engagement. They attempt to maintain their theological commitments while at the same time fostering more profound understanding, empathy, and mutual respect between many cultural and religious traditions via continual discourse and participation. Exegesis of culture, which interprets cultural artifacts and activities through the lens of Christian theology, is one method for engaging with culture.<sup>17</sup> This approach allows Christian communities to engage with culture critically and constructively, finding areas of agreement and disagreement while remaining committed to their theological commitments. Missional engagement is another possible technique. This

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<sup>14</sup> Stephanie A. Lowery. *Identity and ecclesiology: Their relationship among select African theologians*. (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2017): 64.

<sup>15</sup> Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church: Vol. 2*, 2022, 247.

<sup>16</sup> Boren, Braxton. "Word and mystery: The acoustics of cultural transmission during the Protestant Reformation." *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 439.

<sup>17</sup> Cumpsty, Rebekah. *Postsecular poetics: Negotiating the sacred and secular in contemporary African fiction*. Taylor & Francis, 2022, 53.



method entails actively looking for opportunities to interact with other cultural situations in a manner conducive to spreading the Christian message.<sup>18</sup> This strategy demands Christian communities to intentionally engage with culture, striving to understand the cultural context and discovering ways to transmit the Christian message effectively. Christian communities interested in engaging with cultural variety and distinction can also use interfaith discourse as an additional essential instrument. They can increase their understanding of other worldviews and their capacity for empathy and respect for individuals whose beliefs differ by conversing with members of other religious traditions.

To summarise, dealing with the relationship between church and culture is an intricate and ongoing task that calls for close attention to historical context, the variety of cultural traditions, and theological commitments. Christian communities can develop methods for effective interaction with culture by addressing the problems and opportunities given by this intersection. In the end, continual conversation and engagement between the church and culture have the potential to produce a more just and equitable society in which various cultural and religious traditions can live and thrive. The church must adapt to cultural changes to remain relevant and successful. Christian communities can continue to shape their culture if they balance their commitment to theological tradition with an openness to cultural change.<sup>19</sup>

### **Possible Relationship between Christianity and Culture**

Niebuhr summarised approaches to culture in five categories. First is Christ against the culture view, which renders Christ as opposed to culture; hence, Christians have nothing to do with depraved culture.<sup>20</sup> This separatist view, portraying Christ as opposed to culture, leads to withdrawing and isolating oneself from the world.<sup>21</sup> Second, Christ of culture view brings Christianity and culture together. It sees nothing wrong with culture; Christ enters culture and becomes part of it. It distorts the identity of Christ.<sup>22</sup> Third is the Christ above culture

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<sup>18</sup> Dei, Daniel. "An integrated approach to theological contextualization in Africa." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 46, no. 3 (2019): 9.

<sup>19</sup> Severn, Paul. "A history of Christian pilgrimage." *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 19, no. 4 (2019): 329.

<sup>20</sup> Niebuhr, R. *Christ and culture*. (NY: Harper & Row, 1951): 40.

<sup>21</sup> C. H. Kraft. *Christianity in culture: A study in dynamic biblical theologizing in cross-cultural perspective*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979): 104.

<sup>22</sup> Niebuhr, 43.



paradigm, where Christ identifies with the culture but is above it.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Christ can be seen as unconcerned with worldly affairs. The fourth view is Christ and culture in paradox; here, Christ and culture are irreconcilable and are opposed to each other.<sup>24</sup> Christ the transformer of culture, is the fifth view. Here the primary role of Christ is seen as a converter/redeemer of human beings within their cultural contexts, and Christians are to transform cultures.<sup>25</sup> Proponents of this view seek to transform the values and goals of secular culture and redirect it to God. Christians are called to change the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. The last view is correct because it appreciates that cultures have both positive and negative elements; at the same time, it respects the position of Christ as outside cultures and his role not as a destroyer but as the one who transforms cultures.

### III. Contemporary Challenges

Contemporary Christian communities have struggled to respond to the growing trends of pluralism, secularisation, technological change, and ethical concerns. The subsection below explores each of these topics.

#### Pluralism

Pluralism is a philosophical and social concept of accepting and recognising diversity within a society or a particular context. It acknowledges that different individuals, groups, cultures, and perspectives can coexist and contribute to a society's overall richness and well-being. In political philosophy, pluralism emphasises accommodating and respecting different beliefs, values, and interests. It recognises that no single perspective, story or ideology can fully represent the complexity and diversity of society; "All stories are equally valid, being so validated by the community that lives by them."<sup>26</sup> Pluralistic societies aim to provide equal opportunities, rights, and freedoms to all individuals and groups, regardless of their backgrounds or beliefs. Christian communities should engage in meaningful interactions with people of different views and values in today's diverse and pluralistic world. They must recognise the importance of diversity and try to understand and value the many perspectives

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<sup>23</sup> Niebuhr, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>26</sup> James W. Sire. *The Universe Next Door*. Fifth edition. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009): 217.



and values of those around them. Christians can also build bridges by talking to and working with other religious and cultural groups to achieve shared values and goals.<sup>27</sup>

### **Secularisation**

Increasing secularisation is another critical obstacle to contemporary Christian communities. It has become increasingly difficult for Christian communities to impact prevailing culture due to decreased religious belief and practice in many parts of the world. Those who believe their opinions are being sidelined or rejected by mainstream culture may find this aspect particularly challenging.<sup>28</sup> Some aspects of secularism include individualism, prioritising one's personal goals, interests, and freedom to live the way one wants. Also, consumerism, an aspect of the postmodern culture, is characterised by an overwhelming desire to acquire material possessions and seek fulfilment in material possessions instead of God.<sup>29</sup>

Christians must learn to reject what is not compatible with the gospel. Christian groups must proactively interact with secular culture by understanding and engaging with nonreligious worldviews and recognising the importance of logical thought and fact-based arguments in today's culture. Participating in cultural projects on social justice and environmental conservation is another method to integrate one's beliefs and ideals into society.

### **The Evolution of Technology**

The rapid advancement of technology has created new opportunities and challenges for Christian communities.<sup>30</sup> Positively, technological improvements have made Christian groups' communication and outreach easier. They can use social media to evangelise and build community. However, it has also created new types of distraction and addiction, making

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<sup>27</sup> Tomalin, Emma, Jörg Hausteiner, and Shabaana Kidy. "Religion and the sustainable development goals." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 17, no. 2 (2019): 102.

<sup>28</sup> Park, Julie J., Jude Paul Matias Dizon, and Moya Malcolm. "Spiritual capital in communities of color: Religion and spirituality as sources of community cultural wealth." *The Urban Review* 52 (2020): 136.

<sup>29</sup> D. C. Chemorion. *Introduction to Christian worldview: Meaning, origins and perspectives*. (Nairobi: Nairobi Academic Press, 2014): 104, 105.

<sup>30</sup> Young, Dannagal Goldthwaite, and Dannagal G. Young. *Irony and outrage: The polarized landscape of rage, fear, and laughter in the United States*. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2020): 347.





it harder for Christians to focus on Christian missions.<sup>31</sup> Virtual communities have replaced the in-person connection and community.

### **The Moral and Ethical Problems**

Today's Christian communities face many moral and ethical concerns, from sexuality and gender to social justice and human rights. Due to their complexity and contentiousness, these obstacles can be challenging to overcome. Christian communities must constantly analyse and discuss their ideals to overcome this difficulty. They can achieve this by creating safe spaces for honest and open talks about sensitive topics and trying to understand the perspectives and experiences of individuals with diverse opinions and values. Acts of service and social justice can also help Christians demonstrate the relevance and importance of Christian values in modern society. Christians can do this by living out their faith.

### **Political Polarisation**

Due to global political division, Christian groups find conducting meaningful talks with political opponents harder. Because of this, Christian groups might experience conflict and separation because of diverse political and social views.<sup>32</sup> Christian communities can embrace humility and respect for political opponents to overcome this challenge. They can achieve this by understanding the fundamental values and concerns that motivate people with diverse political views and participating in a respectful and fruitful debate with them. Christians and non-Christians can agree on social justice and human dignity. Christians can also reach out to political opponents by emphasising shared principles and purposes.

Therefore, contemporary Christian communities face various obstacles in their engagement with culture. These challenges include pluralism, secularisation, technological development, challenges to morality and ethics, and political division. These challenges offer community growth and engagement. Christian communities can navigate these challenges and impact contemporary culture meaningfully if they are open and tolerant, engage with secular culture, use technology responsibly, reflect and dialogue about their beliefs and values, and respect those with different political views.

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<sup>31</sup> Joy, Bill. "Why the future doesn't need us: Our most powerful 21st-century technologies-robotics, genetic engineering, and nanotech-are threatening to make humans an endangered species." In *Emerging Technologies: Ethics, Law and Governance*, pp. 53. Routledge, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Whittington, Keith E. "Practice-Based Constitutional Law in an Era of Polarized Politics." *Geo. JL & Pub. Pol'y* 18 (2020): 227.



Christian communities should also engage with modern culture more intentionally and strategically by investing in education and training programs that equip Christians to engage with secular worldviews and cultural trends. It could also mean using technology and social media to reach a wider audience and engage in online discourse, adopting a Christian ministry model that emphasises outreach to the community.<sup>33</sup> Christian communities can cooperate with local organisations to combat poverty, homelessness, and addiction. Several methods are available. They can also join community cleanups, cultural festivals, and other community-building activities. Christian communities can engage culture while staying true to their calling and mission if they emphasise shared values, build bridges of understanding, and engage in meaningful and practical ways with the broader community.

#### **IV. Opportunities for Engagement**

Christian communities can engage with cultural diversity through interfaith dialogue and collaboration. Interfaith discussion involves respectful and productive contact among people of other religions to foster mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Interfaith conversation can help Christians understand other religions and respectfully express their beliefs. This could improve understanding and collaboration on poverty, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Christian communities can engage with cultural variety again through multiculturalism and diversity initiatives. Multiculturalism is the recognition, appreciation, and promotion of laws and practices that foster the inclusion and participation of people from different cultural backgrounds.<sup>34</sup> Christian communities can promote multiculturalism and diversity by accepting and appreciating their diversity and reaching out to people from different cultures. It includes supporting multicultural projects, fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, and addressing cultural and racial injustice.<sup>35</sup>

Christian communities can benefit from arts and culture participation. The arts can help break down cultural boundaries and promote cross-cultural understanding and dialogue

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<sup>33</sup> Gielen, Joris, ed. *Dealing with Bioethical Issues in a Globalized World: Normativity in Bioethics*. Vol. 14. Springer Nature, 2020: 87.

<sup>34</sup> Afsar, Bilal, Basheer M. Al-Ghazali, Sadia Cheema, and Farheen Javed. "Cultural intelligence and innovative work behavior: The role of work engagement and interpersonal trust." *European Journal of Innovation Management* 24, no. 4 (2020): 1091.

<sup>35</sup> Bier, Aliza Lasky. "Therapist experiences with religion and spirituality in treatment: A qualitative study." PhD diss., Rutgers University-Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, 2022: 437.



by providing a forum for diverse cultural perspectives and experiences. Christian communities can support local arts groups and events and encourage Christian artists to explore and express their faith through their work. This can help develop an awareness of diverse cultures and traditions and a more nuanced and inclusive view of Christianity. Christian communities can interact with cultural diversity through service and volunteering. Volunteering and serving the community need active participation in social and environmental issues.<sup>36</sup> Christian communities can commit to love, compassion, and justice by volunteering. These events allow Christian congregations to connect with people from different cultures. Community groups and nonprofits may partner to fight poverty, homelessness, and addiction. Educational and cultural exchange programs can help Christian communities embrace cultural diversity. Education and cultural exchange programs allow people from different cultures to learn from each other and engage in cross-cultural dialogue. Christian communities can promote educational and cultural interchange by funding study abroad, cultural immersion, and language exchange programs. These projects can foster cross-cultural cooperation and respect. Finally, Christian communities can interact with other cultures by promoting social and environmental justice, like fighting injustice, prejudice, and environmental degradation and promoting sustainable policies and practices.<sup>37</sup>

### **Exegesis of Culture**

Exegesis of culture seeks to understand people from varied cultural backgrounds because culture shapes our views, attitudes, and behaviours. We can study the cultural background of people we want to engage with.<sup>38</sup> This involves listening to and learning from people from different cultures, understanding their symbols, customs, and practices, and acknowledging how our cultural biases shape our worldview. Cultural exegesis can help Christian communities understand how to interact with other cultures and appreciate God's creation.

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<sup>36</sup> Day-Vines, Norma L., Fallon Cluxton-Keller, Courtney Agorsor, Sarah Gubara, and Nana Aba A. Otobil. "The multidimensional model of broaching behavior." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 98, no. 1 (2020):118.

<sup>37</sup> Abdullah, Irwan, Bambang Hidayana, Pande Made Kutaneegara, and Agus Indiyanto. "Beyond school reach: Character education in three schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia." *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 9, no. 3 (2019): 145.

<sup>38</sup> Benno van den Toren,. "Openness, Commitment, and Confidence in Interreligious Dialogue: A Cultural Analysis of a Western Debate." *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023): 439.



### **Engaging in Meaningful Interreligious Dialogue**

Interfaith dialogue is engaging in meaningful talks with members of other religious traditions to understand better their beliefs, practices, and points of view while also exploring areas where common ground exists.<sup>39</sup> Interfaith dialogue requires humility and openness since we can learn from opposing ideas. This debate could help break down religious stereotypes and build bridges of understanding and respect among communities. The interreligious discussion can also help Christians examine their beliefs and practices and strengthen their faith, which benefits both sides. Cross-cultural worship uses the music, language, and traditions of many different cultures worldwide. This can make worship more inclusive and diverse, allowing members from other cultures to offer their talents. Cross-cultural worship can also help break down cultural barriers and foster a sense of community among diverse populations.<sup>40</sup>

### **Cultural Diversity and Education**

Cross-cultural education incorporates diverse societies' perspectives and life experiences into educational programs and curricula. It may enhance students' worldviews and promote a more egalitarian and inclusive society. Cross-cultural education can help pupils comprehend and empathise with different ethnic and cultural groups.<sup>41</sup> To address cultural diversity and differences, one must listen and learn. It requires stepping outside one's comfort zone and intentionally building relationships with others different from us. Cultural exegesis, missional engagement, interfaith dialogue, cross-cultural worship, and cross-cultural education can help Christian communities appreciate God's creation and work toward a more just and inclusive society. By taking these steps, they can only promote social and cultural harmony and create a world where individuals of all backgrounds and cultures are valued and cherished.

## **V. Conclusion**

The study looked at the relationship between the church and culture. It examined how Christian communities today can embrace cultural variety while retaining their theological

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<sup>39</sup> Omer, Atalia. "Domestic religion: Why interreligious dialogue in Kenya conserves rather than disrupts power." *A Requiem for Peacebuilding?* (2021): 69.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, Roman R., William L. Sachs, Catherine Holtmann, Kaitlyn Eekhoff, Michael Bos, and Ammar Amonette. "Through One Another's Lenses: Photovoice and Interfaith Dialogue." In *Volume 10: Interreligious Dialogue*, pp. 256. Brill, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Burritt, Amanda Maree, and Katharine Therese Massam. "Interreligious dialogue, literacy and theologies of storytelling: Australian perspectives." *Teaching Theology & Religion* 23, no. 4 (2020): 271.



beliefs through church-culture dialogue. Christian communities face challenges to their beliefs and practices, technical developments that change communication and social dynamics, moral and ethical dilemmas, and political polarisation that divides communities. These things can harm Christian communities. Due to these issues, Christians must be tolerant, open-minded, and eager to have meaningful conversations with those who disagree. Maintaining doctrinal purity while adapting to changing social standards is tricky. Christian communities must critically examine their assumptions and guiding principles to evaluate their compatibility with modern culture. Christian groups can stay relevant and practical by finding common ground and adapting to changing social standards.

Christian theology is used to exegete culture. It helps Christian communities grasp present culture and its values and worldviews. Critical and constructive dialogue helps bridge the church-culture gap by identifying areas of agreement and disagreement while adhering to doctrinal principles. Christians are allowed to participate in meaningful debates, shape cultural narratives, and positively influence society when they engage in cultural exegesis.

Engaging in mission is more than just adhering to cultural norms; it requires actively trying to transform those norms via the mission and witness of the church. Missional involvement goes beyond simply conforming to cultural conventions. Christian communities should look for opportunities to interact with other cultural contexts in ways that can transform their approach to addressing social challenges, promoting justice, and positively contributing to the well-being of communities. Christian communities can have a tremendous impact on society, revealing the relevance of their faith and attracting others to their message if they engage with culture and promote constructive transformation.

Further, it is essential to participate in interfaith discourse to cultivate understanding, empathy, and respect between the Christian groups and those that adhere to other religious traditions. Finally, Christian communities can invest in education and training to help people understand non-Christian worldviews and cultural trends. In seeking to honour God to benefit their communities, the church should influence perspectives on the environment, morality, life, technology, social justice, and equity.



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