

WHY STUDY AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION?

By

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Abstract

African traditional religion has variously been criticised as quaint or obsolete religion which belongs to the people of yore. Some school of thought prefer to view it as a setting back of the clock of religious education, saying it is about time the old religion is dumped into the garbage can where it belongs. Some critics believe that thinking about traditional religion at all is plunging our generation into Stone Age. Some still hold that gazetting African traditional religion as a subject of study in schools is more deadly than poison, since it is a calculated attempt to drag people into mortal sin. Some still think that since Islam and Christianity have come with sweeping force of conversion and as a matter of fact doing very well momentarily; struggling to study ATR is simply becoming a nuisance and forcing a lot of converts back to what they have abandoned. However, in as much as the above vaunted opinions are not really bad, it is good to note that all the advocates of the abolition of African traditional religion are up against their root and the history of their religion. This will only mean spiting the forbears of our religion and indeed God who created them and ordered that we should emerge from them – the author of our religion. This is why this work decides to probe into the Africa's religious past so as to reread it into the religious life of the present generation through traditional process. This will enable us to discover the vital clarion evocation of "God of Our Fathers" from both the OT and NT as traditional outcry linking the past and the present human generations. Here then, we'll appreciate African traditional religion as a necessary linkage between the ancestors and their progenies. We'll then come to the conclusion that African traditional religion is an indispensable value every African child must study with the intensity it deserves.

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1. Preface

One of the contributing factors of religious elasticity is its traditional foundation and the traditional impact on the environment. From its inception

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religion germinates and grows and actualizes itself in tradition. That is why Geertz (1966:3) understands religion as a cultural system where religion is a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms."It is in this vein that iPad dictionary identifies tradition as "the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc., from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or by practice; a story that has come down to us by popular tradition" (iPad Dictionary, 2015).Speaking particularly of the tradition of the Catholic Church, McBrien (1994:63), views tradition from two perspectives. "In the wider meaning," says he, "the word, tradition, refers to the whole process by which the Church literally '*hands on*' its faith to each new generation."According to him, the handing on happens when we are preaching, catechizing, teaching, or displaying some devotional gestures like 'the sign of the cross,' and the like. When inculcating Christian doctrines and even teaching the Bible itself, we are handing on tradition. McBrien further explains the narrow meaning of tradition as referring to the *content* of the Church's *post apostolic teaching*. Citing the Second Vatican Council he averred that the wider meaning of 'tradition' was generally accepted as when "The Church, in its teaching, life, and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that it is itself, all that it believes" (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, n. 8). Then, with hyperbolic stress he asserts: "The Church's tradition is its lived and living faith" (McBrien, 1994:63). He goes further to distinguish the uppercase of tradition from the lowercase tradition. According to him, the uppercase Tradition is the living and lived faith of the Church; whereas the lowercase with plural 'traditions' are customary ways of doing or expressing matters related to faith (McBrien, 1994:63).

Moreover, Mary Boys cites Jaroslav Pelikan, to identify tradition as the living faith of the dead and traditionalism as the dead faith of the living; explaining the difference between them as what gives Tradition a bad name. When we think of tradition as the "living faith of the dead" we discover its rooting in human experience (Boys, 1989:193). But Shils (1981:12) insists that the most basic integral aspect of tradition is "the handing on from one generation to the next that which human actions have created." He then enumerated what has been handed on as follows: material objects, beliefs about all sorts of things, images of persons and events, practices and institutions. It includes buildings, monuments, landscapes, sculptures, paintings, books, tools, machines. It includes all that a society of a given time possesses and which already existed when its present possessors came upon it and which is not solely the product of physical process in the external world or exclusively the result of ecological and physiological necessity. That is why it is right to say that tradition is a

“reservoir of community experience,” it is a “saga of experiences and their interpretation” (Shils, 1981:12).

Mary Boys further differentiates between the ‘content’ – that which is handed on – and the ‘process’ of handing on. According to her, there is both a *traditium*, the material being transmitted, and a *taditio*, the process of passing material from one generation to the next. She explains further that it is through this process of transmission that the current living community connects with people in other times and places. Thus, in the words of Edward Burke, tradition mirrors a “partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born” (Cited in Boys, 1989:194).

In theology, whereas the Jews interpret tradition to mean the body of laws and doctrines, or any one of them, held to have been received from Moses and originally handed down orally from generation to generation; the Christians understand it to be a body of teachings, or any one of them, held to have been delivered by Christ and His apostles but not originally committed to writing (iPad Dictionary, 2015). Citing Joseph Cahill, Mary Boys classifies theology in this connection as five categories of religious traditions, namely: a body of literature; visual art forms; aural art forms; historical formulations and theological formulations (Boys, 1989:201). Often, Catholics do confuse ‘traditions’ which are for example the obligatory celibacy for priests of the Roman rite; with the ‘Tradition’ with uppercase. In this regard, some conservative Catholics often make nonessential tradition a matter of orthodoxy, for example, the sign of the cross before the sign of peace during the liturgy. The liberals on the other hand treat essential tradition like the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist with levity; as if it is nonessential and therefore dispensable. Until the scholars and the teaching office of the church sort out the main Tradition and traditions, Catholics must learn to recognize the essential and nonessential matters of the faith.

2. Traditioning in Progress

Furthermore, Mary Boys, suggests that tradition should further be understood as both conserving and liberating in its environment. On the one hand,” says she, “it refers to thread which a person or group desires to have preserved; on the other, it applies to the situation in which an “artefact” is freed from its moorage in the past in order to be applied in a new context.” Thus, speaking in the case of the Bible, James Barr points out that while “the Bible seems on the facial level to narrate the past, on a deeper level it speaks of the future and for the future” (Boys, 1989:194). That is what the tradition does too. Hence, tradition is the past preserved and later represented anew. This is why we can

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say that the process of composing the bible is the key model of the dynamics of traditioning. Because, it is a known fact that at various moments in their history, Israel and early church preserved interpretation-laden memories about constitutive events, such as the Exodus and the death and resurrection of Jesus. These traditions served as building blocks for each community to recreate itself in changed circumstances. Second Isaiah (Is 40–56) reappropriated Exodus imagery to console the exiles in Babylon in the sixth century B.C. E. Even though the Exodus had been Israel's "root experience," the "mother memory," Isaiah dared to put the image to new use: and even greater thing would be done by the God who had freed the exiles' ancestors in Egypt over seven hundred years earlier (Is 43: 18-19): Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Boys, 1989:194).

And because Ezekiel remembered his people's origins, how the Creator breathed life into the dirt and fashioned it into a living being, he can console Israel that its dry bones will rise (Ez. 37: 11b-14): "Behold, they say, "our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off." Therefore prophesy, and say to them;"Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your grave, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves. O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you and you shall lie, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the Lord has spoken, and I have done it, says the Lord" (Ez. 37: 11b-14). And because the disciples of Jesus know these traditions, they understood Jesus as the one who, like God, makes all things new. The Fourth Gospel tells of the risen Jesus returning to the upper room, greeting his disciples with peace, and then breathing upon them, thereby recalling the creation event in Gen. 2:7 and launching the image of the recreated community (Jn. 20:22). In like manner Mark and Matthew preserve a saying "new wine is for fresh skins" (Mk 2:22; Mt 9:17) to commemorate this idea of old translating into new. Moreover in the New Jerusalem of the book of Revelation, Jesus says, "Behold, I make all things new" (21:5) (Boys, 1989:194).

Moreover, because, the members of the early church were so steeped in tradition, their image for a faith-filled future was that of the new creation. For instance, Paul the apostle, reminded the Corinthians: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he [she] is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2Cor. 5:17). To the Galatians, preoccupied by past strictures, he wrote: "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but

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a new creation” (6:15). In the same letter he quoted a baptismal confession that served as the key theological self-understanding of the Christian missionary movement; “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (3: 28). “In the community of the new creation, whatever distinctions still exist are insignificant; a new kinship has been formed that obliterates distinctions with regard to nationality, political status, and sex and gender roles. All the baptized are equal” (Boys, 1989:194). Hence, Achtemeier, (1980:30) summarizes the process of handing on traditions as follows:

As new situations arise they are understood in the framework of traditions that grew out of past situations, but these in turn are then reinterpreted for the present...Hence, although the past informs and thus shapes the future, the past is also open to the dynamic process of growth and interpretive change. As a result, each successive new generation has an enlarged traditional base from which to draw its own understanding of itself and its new situation (Achtemeier, 1980:30).

3. Traditioning as a Continuity Linkage

Here then, lies the importance of Isaac the son of Abraham and Jacob his grandson, not so much on any military prowess or political astuteness they have achieved. Rather it was on the ancestral linkage line through which the covenant promises of God are passed on. For as the genealogical record demonstrates, the right of Israel to special relationship with God and to the land promised to Abraham (Genesis 25-36) (The Teacher’s Commentary (1987)). Thus, the technical phrase used as a general designation of the God of the patriarchs are ostensibly the theological sign of connection between the patriarchs and their progenies. Hence, we have ‘God of our Fathers formula.’ The “burning bush” episode (Ex. 3) identified the “God of the Fathers” with Yahweh. Although, it is the witness of Exodus 6:2-3 that the “God of the fathers” was not known by the name of Yahweh, but as “El Shaddai” (God Almighty). Nonetheless, when Moses was faced with the prospect of telling his people of the name of the God who sent him, he was commanded by God to tell them that it is “Yahweh (the Lord), the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you” (3:15)(Sutherland, 2003: 663).

That is why the biblical witness is consistent with the use of the formula to emphasize the continuity between the God who is revealed to Moses and the God who guided the patriarchs and even by a different name. Similarly, the same formula “God of your fathers “or God of our fathers” used consistently in the Old Testament functions to link the author’s generation to the God of

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earlier generations, especially with reference to the promises to the patriarchs (Deut. 1:11, 21; 4; 1; 6:3L 12:1; 26:17L 27: 3). In contrast abandonment of this historic connection is also emphasized in (1Chron. 12:17; 2Chro. 20:33; 24:24; 29:5; Ezra 7:27). In the New Testament the formula is transformed to mark the continuity between the historic Israel and Christianity. The God who was revealed in Jesus Christ is the same as the God revealed to patriarchs (Mt. 22:32; Mk. 12: 26; Acts 3:13; 5:30; 7:32; 22:14) (Sutherland, 2003: 663). Thus, Peter and the other apostles testified: "We must obey God rather than men! The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead – whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him" (Acts 5:29-32). Paul further witnessed as follows: "However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man" (Acts 24:14-16). The preceding has demonstrated due obedience to the voice of continuity which displays the foundation and the continuation of the religion of the people of God. The same obedience goes with the Africans when they scholarly analyse the traditional religion of Africa. They establish in the final analysis that African religion is traditional and as such rooting from the African forebears and handed on to the current Africans. They demonstrate that the present Africans did not invent or are trying to invent a new religion when for instance they are invoking God as Christians or Muslims. Rather they are evoking their ancestral religion which made the African who he/she is. They demonstrate that the God of our fathers is the God of the present Africans in whichever it might have metamorphosed whether in Islamic fashion or Christian fashion. It is one God and one religion. Now we are going to demonstrate how this plays out in African context as we discuss the traditional religion.

4. African Traditional Religion as a Continuity Linkage

Accordingly, when African Traditional Religion is discussed or studied, it is chiefly for the purpose of understanding the Africa's past in order to build the current African present, so as to look forward to a glorious future. It is for the purposes of knowing our religious history and appropriately making use of it. African traditional religious study aims at linking the past with the present. It is to keep the history of African people intact without breach or abrogation. God of our Fathers repeatedly heard both in OT and NT as

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demonstrated above, is the obvious voice of the present generation evoking the God of the ancestors to streamline the religion of the past with the present generation; and by so doing, they are demonstrating the continuity of their authentic past. This is exactly what the Africans do when they discuss or study and imbibe the religious history of their progenies—we are re-representing our religion emanating from our great, great ancestors to the present moment of Africans. This attitude has been so assimilated that Africans are said to be living their theology whereas the Western world study theology. Typically, this behaviour demonstrates that the present generation is not inventing a new God or new religion. Rather it is consolidating, and further developing Africa's religious heritage.

Africa's heritage is the environment where traditional religion permeates all the departments of life, to the extent that there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and nonreligious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life (Mbiti, 1969: 2). In the words of Mbiti, Africa inherits a religious environment where every member of the community is so suffused with religion that each and every one of them carries religion "to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony, and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament"(Mbiti, 1969: 2).

Moreover, traditional religion is not primarily for the individual, rather it is for the community of which every individual is a part. It is the witness of Mbiti that African religion is so palpable in the life of the community that in traditional society there are no people who can claim to be irreligious. In point of fact, to be human in African society is to belong to the whole community, and "to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community." According to Mbiti, no African person can deliberately detach him/herself from the religion, "for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence."Hence, to be without religion in African context is tantamount to total annihilation of oneself in life and complete blotting out oneself from the entire African society. Since no African can dream of a life without religion, it becomes extremely difficult for an African to exist without religion(Mbiti, 1969: 2). Hence Africa is said to be notoriously religious (Mbiti, 1969:1).

African traditional religion therefore, is "the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans in various forms

and various shades and intensities, nakedly in most cases, but also, in some cases, under the veneers supplied by Westernism and Arabism; it is also a religion which is receiving a new vitality in certain areas in consequence of nationalism plus inspiration by other religions” (Idowu, 1973: x). The religion is traditional because it is what African ancestors handed on to their progenies. While the inroads of western religion like Christianity and Islam have forced it to modify as it grows, it is nonetheless the most practiced religion among the Africans. This is because the religion fundamentally formed the beliefs and morals of Africans. It is the religion that necessarily gave the vocabularies of religion to African children. Those basic vocabularies never changed even in their new religions. As a matter of fact instead of changing as some missionaries worked very hard to get them changed the vocabularies wound up to be the basic building blocks for the new religion; such that the word ‘God’ itself in all local biblical translations are unavoidably the traditional religious words. Hence, the word ‘God’ in Igbo bible is Chukwu or Chineke otherwise it will not be an authentic Igbo bible with its original theological word for God. The same thing is Yoruba, Olorun, or Tiv Aondo and many other local tribes in which the translation has been effected.

Moreover, this religion forms the African worldview. By this we mean that the very sheer way Africans see and conceive the world is formed by religion. For according to Geertz 1966:3) religion as a cultural symbol, synthesizes the people’s ethos, that is, the people’s nature or character and quality of their life, in moral and aesthetic style. He adds that religion further synthesizes the people’s mood and their worldview, so as to harmonize the people’s picture of the way things in sheer reality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order (1966:3). Thus, religion is the basic stuff from which the people of Africa are raised to understand the world and everything in it. It is the fundamental intellectual orientation of an individual or people of Africa encompassing natural philosophy, basic existence and normative themes, values, emotions and ethics (Chidili, 2012:35). That is why, Africans generally are raised to believe that the universe was created by God and not moulded by a potter or crafted by a carpenter. While no African claims the knowledge of how God created the universe, yet, every African concurs to the fact that the world was created by God. Hence, it is a deep sited belief among Africans that God is the explanation for the origin of the universe which consists of both visible and invisible realities.

5. Beliefs as Tradition

Furthermore, beliefs are integral parts of religion our forebears bequeathed to us Africans. Generally, beliefs deal with religious ideas. For example, religious

beliefs are topics like God, spirits, birth, death, the hereafter, magic, medicine, witchcraft, and so on. Whenever we come across these mentioned African beliefs, we are definitely dealing with African religion, although, religion by definition is much more than its beliefs. The beliefs as our cultural patrimony are handed down from generation to generation, sometimes with modifications. Without them no religion can inspire its followers. Even when people are converted from African Religion to another religion, they retain many of their former beliefs since it is hard to destroy beliefs from childhood. While some of the beliefs in African Religion resemble beliefs in other religion, some are totally different, hence the beauty of unity in diversity in African religion (Mbiti, 1975: 26).

Certainly, beliefs have a lot of influence on people. Though some beliefs can be opposed to reality and at times flatly false, yet people stick to them firmly and act accordingly. This is often attributed to the erroneous consciences formed and transmitted by the forebears. But with wider exposition and education, these errors are corrected with time, though some accept the corrections, others stick to their erroneous beliefs. Obviously, this forms the mainstay of erroneous conscience and erroneous behaviour. Anyway, what is obvious is that whichever system of belief one adopts influences him/her immensely. Since beliefs deeply influence people's behaviour, it implies that a profound understanding of any person or group must necessarily involve the study of that person's or groups' beliefs. Moreover, there are beliefs in other areas of life like politics, economics, science, and so on which are not religious. Since beliefs are so important to human life, it appears that every human being holds one belief or the other so as to run a well ordered daily life. For example, if a student does not believe that his education can improve his/her wellbeing in life he/she will never venture to study. If a traveller does not believe that his vehicle will convey him/her to his/her destination he/she will never dare to travel. But because these common beliefs are with us all the time, life progresses finely for us (Chidili, 2012:4-5).

6. Moral Behaviour as a Tradition

Moreover, the whole range of moral behaviours and values are inherited from our forebears. Morals are integral parts of African religion bequeathed to us by our ancestors. They are those aspects of religion which deal with the ideas that safeguard or uphold the life of the people in their relationship with one another and the world around them. African morality covers topics like truth, justice, love, right and wrong, good and evil, beauty, decency, respect for people and property, the keeping of promises and agreements, praise and blame, crime and punishment, the rights and responsibilities of both the

individual and his community, character, integrity, and so on (Mbiti, 1975:36). Africans believe that God gave moral order to people so that they might live happily and in harmony with one another. Through this moral order, customs and institutions are developed in all societies, to safeguard the life of the individual and the community of which he is part. Moral order helps people to work out and know among themselves what is good and evil, right and wrong, truthful and false, beautiful and ugly, and what people's rights and duties are. They help people to live with one another, to settle their differences, to maintain peace and harmony, to make use of their belongings, to have a relationship with their total environment. Each society is able to formulate its values because there is moral order in the universe. These values deal with relationships among people, and between people and God and other spiritual beings, and human relationship with the world of nature (Mbiti, 1975: 36).it is on these therefore, that Africans relied to develop their beautiful mannerism and judicious society.

Since values and morals are socio-religious behaviours, they are liable to change as time roles by. Hence, while we can claim that the ability to understand values and morals are bequeathed to us, those values and morals are bound to change with time, just like a living language does. This is why we have some differences in some values and morals of some Africans but what is true is that all of them are basically the same. It is also true that while they change as the living conditions of people change, they always remain a necessity in human life (Chidili, 2012: 7).

7. Revelation as Tradition

Furthermore, the detractors of African traditional religion would prefer to argue that the only religion worthy of its name is the religion based on God's climactic revelation in Jesus Christ which is Christianity; all other ones should be consigned to the rubbish hip of manmade religion. But Idowu (1973:56) considers such suggestions as "a deliberate or unwitting flying in the face of truth." Because according to him, "If revelation indeed means God's self-disclosure, if he has left his mark upon the created order and his witnessing within man—every man—then it follows that revelation cannot be limited in scope and that it is meant for all mankind, all rational beings, irrespective of race or colour" (Idowu, 1973:56). For as Paul the apostle has unambiguously established in Romans, saying, 'Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made (Rm. 1:20)' "The tendency is perfectly understandable, because for primitives as for the man of all pre-modern societies, the sacred is equivalent to a power, and in the last analysis,

to reality. The sacred is saturated with being. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacy” (Eiade, 1957:12). Hence, it is not an accident that it is recorded in (Acts 17:26-28) that God ‘made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us; Paul quotes with approval from ‘some of your poets’: In him we live and move and have our being’ ...for we are indeed his offspring. Thus, “in every part of the world, therefore, what in general terms is known as worship is a result of one central impulse – that of ‘one divine personal will seeking all the time to make itself known’ (Idowu, 1972:56). Thus, citing (Farmer, 105, 109), Idowu concludes as follows:

The one personal God...making himself known, keeping a grip on men...this implicit sense of the one Living God...when it became explicit, did so in a form conditioned by the general mental level...of ideas...In this also, we can see the self-disclosure of God in a form appropriate to man’s stage of development and historical situation. Belief in the High God was the primitive man’s way of apprehending and responding to, and expressing, the self-revealing pressure upon him the one God (Idowu, 1972:56).

Thus, it is unarguably certain that our ancestor’s faith which was handed down to us is the resultant effect of the impulse of ‘one divine personal will seeking all the time to make itself known,’ to humanity. This is what we consider an authentic religion – an authentic religion revealed to them in their own time and realised through reflection on the cosmos. African religion is therefore a revealed religion like other revealed religions of the world; and is as genuine as any other revealed religion. Its genuineness is even seen in the African Christians who must continue to worship Christ through the vocabularies developed by the religion. If in fact anyone tries to avoid it by any twist of fate, it will mean that all local translations will lose their intended theological meaning which was wittingly intended to deepen the faith of the votaries. Hence, they must of necessity stand on the root of African traditional religion to reach one God revealed in Jesus Christ.

8. Conclusion

The foregoing has analysed the African traditional religion and discovered it to be the linkage between the ancestors, the living Africans and the yet to be born Africans. It discovered among other things that the traditional religion is the root of all African religion both past and present. It further discovered that the present Africans can hardly form any meaningful character or faith

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without the basic articulation of their traditional root. This is true of the Jewish religion from where Christianity took its origin. Hence, we can say that as the early Christian church depended on the God of their ancestors to validate their new found faith in Christianity, so our African Christians solidly stand on our ancestral traditional God to authenticate the genuineness of our faith in Christ. For as this work has demonstrated, various evocations of “God of our Fathers” from both the Old and the New Testaments are a valid signs of continuity between the God of Ancient Jews and the present Jews and the Christian faith which emanated from Judaism. Hence this linkage is what the present Africans do when they invoke their Ancestral God in Jesus Christ. As Paul the Apostle freely explained with approval that the ancestral God raised Jesus from dead (Acts 5:30), so he wittingly explained that God revealed in Jesus Christ is the same God who had been in the foundation of their ancestral faith. Thus, we can say from this work that as the tradition of the Jews is valid for the subsequent Jewish generations, so is the African tradition genuine to current African generation. And as the early church discovered their ancestral God in Jesus Christ so we the current Africans discover Jesus Christ as the emanation of the original God revealed to our ancestors. So as the Jews discovered one God in Jesus emanating from their original one God believed by their ancestors so do we—the Africans of today. Hence, Baudin says, “In these religious systems, [African] the idea of a God is fundamental; they believe in the existence of a supreme, primordial being, the lord of the universe which is his work...”(Cited in Idowu, 1973:140). And in the words of one of the early researchers in African Religion, R. S. Rattray:

...it is true that this great Supreme Being, the conception of whom has been innate in the minds of the Ashanti, is the Jehovah of the Israelites. It was He who of old left His own dwelling above the vaulted sky, and entered the tent of dyed skins where His earthly abode and his shrine was, when He came down to protect the Children of Israel in their march to the Promised Land (Cited in Idowu, 1973: 141).

Hence, we robustly conclude this essay saying, “this is our faith, this is the faith of our ancestors—the faith in which one true God is revealed in the mind of our ancestors; the faith which they handed down to the present Africans, through the process of traditioning;” to serve as a linkage point from one generation to another. Hence, we study African traditional religion to validate this invaluable religious history of Africa.

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