

The Bible and Rwandan Culture: An Inquiry into Opportunities and Challenges of Inculturation

Laurent Ntaganda*

Catholic University of Rwanda.

Received: 14/06/2026 Accepted: 21/07/2026 Published: 12/08/2026

Abstract: This study investigates the interplay between biblical teachings and Rwandan culture, focusing on the opportunities and challenges of inculturation in theological formation. The primary objective is to assess how theology students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) perceive the integration of Scripture with local cultural values. The hypothesis guiding the research posits that Rwandan culture offers both meaningful points of contact, such as communalism, proverbs, and reverence for elders, and critical tensions, including practices like witchcraft, and traditional funeral rites, which require careful biblical evaluation. A mixed-methods approach was employed, using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. A purposive sample of 43 students was drawn from a population of 130 theology students. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative responses were interpreted through thematic content analysis. Results show that 84% of respondents identified positive cultural elements compatible with biblical values. However, only 42% felt adequately prepared to lead inculturated catechesis or liturgical celebrations. The majority (78%) acknowledged the relevance of biblical models like Paul's Areopagus discourse (Acts 17) and Jesus' use of local metaphors in preaching. The study concludes that while CUR students value the potential for dialogue between Scripture and culture, there remains a gap in practical training for implementing inculturation. It recommends strengthening courses in contextual theology and biblical anthropology, as well as providing field-based learning opportunities. These initiatives can enhance students' capacity to critically engage Rwandan culture while maintaining the integrity of the Gospel.

Keywords: Inculturation, Biblical Anthropology, Rwandan Culture, Theological Formation, Contextual Theology.

Cite this article:

Ntaganda, L., (2026) The Bible and Rwandan Culture: An Inquiry into Opportunities and Challenges of Inculturation. *World Journal of Arts, Education and Literature*, 3(8), 31-38.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inculturation, defined as the dynamic process through which the Gospel is expressed and lived within a given culture, aims to foster a reciprocal transformation between faith and cultural identity (Shorter, 1988; Bevans, 2002; Bediako, 1992; Schreiter, 1985). Within Catholic theology, inculturation seeks not merely to implant Christian doctrine into a local context but to allow the local culture to shape the expression and understanding of faith while remaining faithful to the core message of the Gospel (John Paul II, 1990; Bosch, 1991; Ukpog, 2001; Phiri & Nadar, 2010). This study focuses on understanding how theology students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) perceive the integration of Scripture with Rwandan cultural values such as communalism, proverbs, respect for elders, and traditional rites. By doing so, it assesses their readiness to

facilitate culturally sensitive yet biblically grounded theological formation.

The primary objective of this inquiry is to explore the perceptions of CUR theology students on the role of inculturation in engaging Rwandan cultural realities with biblical teachings (Kabasele, 1991; Magesa, 2004; Mugambi, 1997; Nkurunziza, 1991). Despite rich points of contact between the Bible and Rwandan culture, tensions persist. Cultural practices such as witchcraft, and certain funeral customs present significant theological dilemmas that require biblical discernment and pastoral wisdom (Sanneh, 1989; Walls, 1996; Tienou, 1990; Mwaura, 2005). The research problem lies in the apparent gap between theoretical awareness of inculturation and the practical readiness of theology students to apply it effectively in pastoral contexts.

*Corresponding Author

Laurent Ntaganda*

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) license



The relevance of this study is underscored by Rwanda's need for theologians who can articulate faith in ways that resonate with cultural identities while avoiding syncretism (Mutiso-Mbinda, 1986; Orobator, 2008; Baur, 1994; Turaki, 1999). Theological training that lacks contextual grounding risks alienating communities from the transformative power of Scripture. In light of Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction and spiritual renewal, equipping future ministers with contextual competencies is both timely and necessary.

This urgency is amplified by the growing call for African churches to develop indigenous expressions of Christianity that affirm African dignity and theological agency (Bujo, 1992; Tutu, 1986; Nyamiti, 1984; Bediako, 1995). Therefore, this study contributes to shaping theological education that both honors biblical fidelity and embraces Rwandan cultural depth.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a **mixed-methods approach** to investigate the opportunities and challenges of biblical inculturation within Rwandan culture, as perceived by theology students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR). The choice of this methodological framework was guided by the need to capture both statistical patterns and in-depth personal insights into students' theological formation and cultural engagement (Bevans, 2002; Schreiter, 1985).

A **purposive sampling** technique was employed to select 43 students from a total population of 130 theology students. This non-probability method allowed the researchers to focus on participants most likely to possess informed perspectives on inculturation due to their theological training and pastoral aspirations (Shorter, 1998; Hiebert, 2009).

Data collection consisted of two instruments:

1. **Structured questionnaires**, which provided quantitative data on students' awareness, perceptions, and self-assessed readiness for culturally sensitive ministry.
2. **Semi-structured interviews**, which elicited qualitative insights into students' interpretations of specific cultural practices in relation to biblical teachings.

Quantitative data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics**, particularly **frequency (f)** and **percentage (%)** distributions, to capture the prevalence of specific perceptions across the sample. The formula used was:

$$\text{Percentage (\%)} = (f / N) \times 100$$

Where f represents the frequency of responses in a given category and N is the total number of respondents ($N = 43$). This formula facilitated comparative analysis across variables such as cultural compatibility with the Bible and student preparedness for inculturated catechesis.

Qualitative data were analyzed using **thematic content analysis**, which involved coding interview responses to identify recurring themes related to biblical inculturation, such as communalism, ancestor veneration, storytelling, and liturgical creativity (Schreiter, 1997; Healey & Sybertz, 1996). This allowed the research to triangulate numerical findings with deeper cultural and theological reflections.

The methodology was guided by biblical and anthropological frameworks, particularly Paul's discourse at the Areopagus (Acts 17) and Jesus' parables rooted in local imagery, which served as models of cultural engagement and critical contextualization (Bosch, 1991; Bevans & Schroeder, 2004).

3. INQUIRY INTO OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF INCULTURATION

The intersection between the Bible and Rwandan culture presents both rich opportunities and significant challenges for theological formation. Inculturation, the process of expressing Christian faith through local cultural forms, is vital in ensuring that the Gospel resonates deeply within specific cultural contexts. In Rwanda, cultural values such as communal life, the use of proverbs, and deep respect for elders align closely with biblical principles, offering meaningful entry points for theological engagement. These shared values can help Scripture come alive in the hearts of believers, making the Christian message more relatable and impactful within the local context.

However, certain traditional practices, including polygamy, witchcraft, and specific funeral rites, may conflict with biblical teachings, posing challenges to inculturation. This study investigates how theology students at the Catholic University of Rwanda perceive and navigate these cultural elements in light of Scripture. It seeks to evaluate their readiness to lead culturally sensitive catechesis and liturgical celebrations while upholding the truth of the Gospel. The findings highlight the need for deeper training in contextual theology and biblical anthropology, equipping future ministers to engage culture critically and constructively in their pastoral mission.

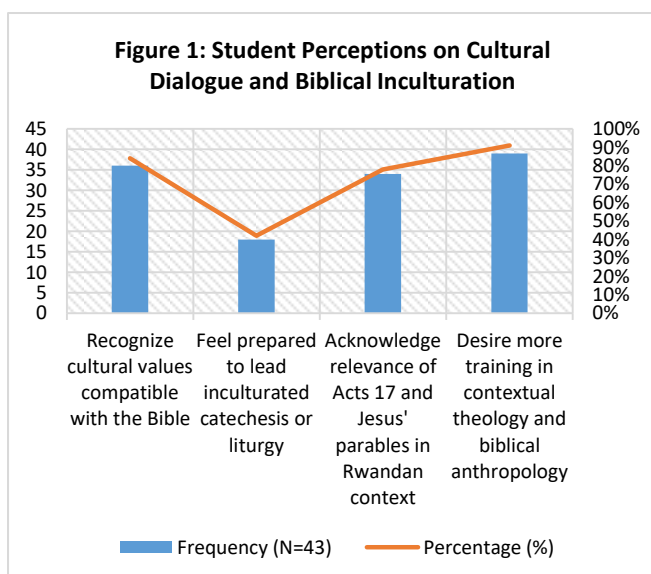
3.1. Biblical Precedents for Cultural Dialogue: Paul's Areopagus Speech and Jesus' Use of Local Imagery

The question of how the Bible can effectively engage Rwandan cultural values without compromising the integrity of the Gospel invites a closer look at biblical models of cultural dialogue. Two significant precedents—Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Acts 17 and Jesus' frequent use of local customs and metaphors—offer theological frameworks for inculturation. These approaches reflect a biblical openness to engaging indigenous cultures critically and respectfully. The Apostle Paul's engagement with Greek philosophers in Athens provides a foundational paradigm. Instead of outright condemnation, Paul acknowledged their religiosity and employed one of their

own altars—"To an unknown god"—as a starting point (Acts 17:22–23, NIV). He then introduced the Gospel within their philosophical worldview, drawing on Stoic concepts of divine proximity (Acts 17:28). Scholars argue that this contextualization respects cultural forms while challenging idolatrous elements (Bosch, 2011; Bevans & Schroeder, 2004; Sanneh, 2009; Walls, 1996). Similarly, in the Rwandan context, this method can inform respectful critique of traditional rituals, such as ancestor veneration, while affirming values like reverence for elders.

Jesus' teachings, especially in agrarian Galilee, frequently drew upon agricultural metaphors and everyday practices to communicate deep spiritual truths. Parables such as the sower (Mark 4:1–20), the mustard seed (Mark 4:30–32), and the vineyard workers (Matthew 20:1–16) all reflect a cultural literacy that resonates with rural communities, including those in Rwanda. These parables not only grounded theological truths in local imagery but also invited critical reflection—challenging social assumptions about labor, generosity, and justice. This pedagogical style has immense relevance for inculturation, particularly in oral cultures rich in storytelling and farming traditions (Shorter, 1988; Kisémba et al., 1977; Mbiti, 1991; Stinton, 2004). In theological formation, such contextual tools empower students to communicate Scripture effectively in culturally familiar ways.

A study conducted at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) examined how theology students perceive and apply these biblical models in their cultural setting. The research employed a mixed-methods design involving 43 theology students selected purposively from a population of 130. A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data, while semi-structured interviews elicited deeper insights. The findings revealed a strong appreciation for biblical models of cultural engagement but highlighted a significant gap in students' readiness to apply these models practically.



These results confirm that while students affirm cultural elements like proverbs, communalism, and agricultural metaphors as compatible with Scripture, they often lack the tools for deeper theological engagement. For example, although many appreciated the relevance of Acts 17, few could articulate how Paul's dialogical approach might be replicated in confronting practices like witchcraft in Rwandan society (Hiebert, 2008; Tienou, 1990; Ukpog, 1995; Schreiter, 1985). Similarly, while familiar with Jesus' agrarian parables, students expressed uncertainty in crafting modern equivalents rooted in Rwandan customs.

To bridge this gap, theological education at CUR must emphasize biblical anthropology and contextual theology. Field-based training—such as community catechesis, rural pastoral immersion, and engagement with cultural practitioners—can offer students opportunities to test and refine their skills. Courses should incorporate case studies that analyze both positive cultural practices and those requiring critique, using Scripture as the interpretive lens (Bevans, 2002; Mugambi, 2002; Magesa, 2004; Schreiter, 1997). Additionally, fostering liturgical creativity through culturally adapted rituals and songs grounded in biblical themes can enhance inculturated evangelization.

In conclusion, Paul's Areopagus discourse and Jesus' use of local metaphors provide robust precedents for integrating the Bible with Rwandan culture. These models encourage respectful dialogue, cultural literacy, and theological discernment. However, for theology students at CUR to become agents of genuine inculturation, curricular reforms and experiential learning must be prioritized. By equipping future pastoral leaders with tools for contextual engagement, the Church in Rwanda can faithfully embody the Gospel in its cultural landscape.

3.2. Positive Points of Contact: The Bible and Rwandan Culture

One of the most promising opportunities in the inculturation of the Gospel within the Rwandan context is the deep resonance between biblical communal values and the Rwandan philosophy of *Ubuntu*. This worldview—expressed in the saying "*Umuntu ni umuntu ku bandi*" (a person is a person through others)—reflects the communal nature of biblical faith communities, such as the early church in Acts 2:42–47 (Nkurunziza, 2015; Mugisha, 2018; Tangwa, 2017; Mbiti, 1991). The collective orientation of Rwandan life enhances the understanding of ecclesial communion and solidarity. Respondents in the study highlighted how community prayer, mutual assistance, and shared meals mirror the early Christian *koinonia*. These correspondences affirm the view that inculturation is most effective when it builds on existing cultural practices that reflect Gospel values (Shorter, 1988).

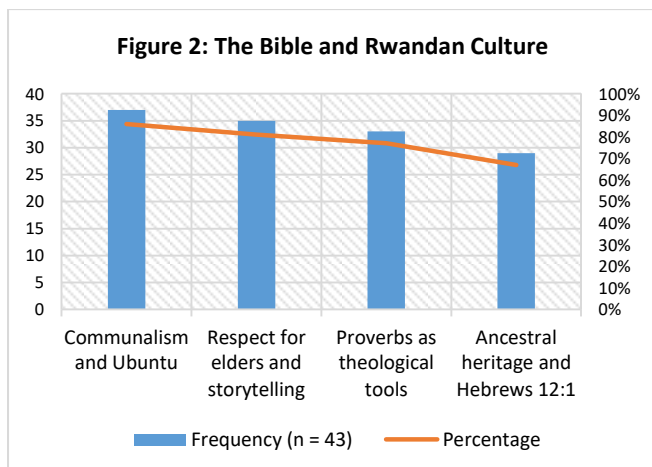
Respect for elders, a central tenet in Rwandan society, provides another significant bridge for biblical engagement.

The Scriptures frequently commend the wisdom and authority of elders, such as in 1 Peter 5:1–5 and Proverbs 1:8–9. This cultural trait harmonizes well with biblical exhortations to honor parents and elders (Bujo, 2003; Turabumukiza, 2020; Nyamiti, 2006; Mugambi, 2002). Storytelling, another vital aspect of Rwandan tradition, complements the narrative style of Scripture. The parables of Jesus and the historical recounting of God's acts in Israel resonate with the Rwandan oral tradition. As one student remarked during interviews, "Our grandparents were like walking Bibles; they passed on values through stories." This dynamic offers fertile ground for catechesis and homiletics that draw from both Scripture and cultural idioms (Healey & Sybertz, 1996).

The use of proverbs also emerged as a vital point of connection. With their poetic, aphoristic style, Rwandan proverbs encapsulate wisdom that is both moral and theological. For instance, the proverb "*Amaso y'inkuba aracyareba*" (the eyes of the ancestors are still watching) may be critiqued theologically but also reinterpreted in light of Hebrews 12:1, which speaks of a "great cloud of witnesses" surrounding believers (Bediako, 1995; Kamanzi, 2021; Nkurunziza, 2015; Orobator, 2008). While the theological content may differ, the spiritual intuition—that the living are in continuity with a moral and spiritual past—can be leveraged to teach Christian concepts of sainthood and salvation history.

This connection to ancestors also presents opportunities to engage with biblical notions of heritage and memory. Ancestral reverence, while requiring careful theological clarification to avoid syncretism, resonates with the biblical tradition of remembering patriarchs and prophets as exemplars of faith. As Hebrews 11 and 12 illustrate, the memory of faithful witnesses is not idolatrous but inspirational. Students appreciated this parallel and emphasized the possibility of reinterpreting ancestral traditions in light of salvation history (Turabumukiza, 2020; Bujo, 2003; Orobator, 2008; Nyamiti, 2006).

The figure below summarizes the frequency of positive perceptions among students regarding these cultural elements:



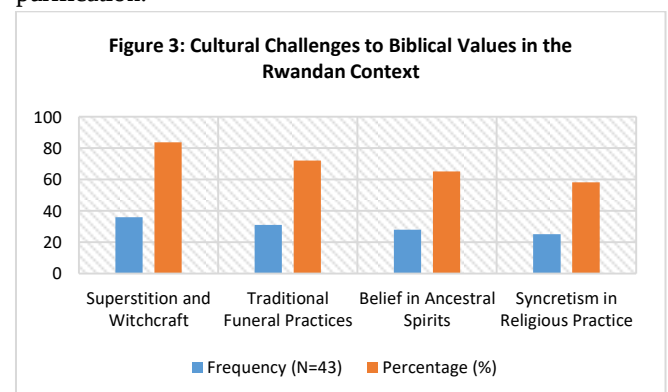
These findings indicate that a majority of theology students recognize the compatibility between Rwandan culture and biblical teaching in key areas. However, they also note the need for structured guidance on how to articulate these connections theologically and pastorally. This underscores the importance of courses in biblical anthropology and contextual theology within the curriculum (Shorter, 1988; Bediako, 1995; Kamanzi, 2021; Healey & Sybertz, 1996).

In conclusion, the Rwandan cultural landscape offers a rich soil for biblical inculturation, particularly through communal values, narrative traditions, proverbs, and ancestral memory. These elements provide meaningful entry points for theological reflection and catechetical innovation. For theology students at CUR, recognizing and utilizing these affinities can empower them to proclaim the Gospel in ways that are both faithful and culturally resonant.

3.3. Cultural Challenges to Biblical Values in the Rwandan Context

The inculturation of the Gospel into Rwandan culture presents both remarkable opportunities and significant challenges. While Rwandan communalism, reverence for elders, and the use of proverbs align with biblical values (Mugambi, 2002; Bediako, 2004; Turaki, 2006; Schreiter, 1985), certain cultural practices such as superstition, witchcraft, and traditional funeral rites present serious theological tensions. These practices, deeply rooted in pre-Christian belief systems, often contradict biblical teachings. In particular, theology students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) are increasingly confronted with the task of interpreting these practices in light of Scripture. A critical anthropological and theological inquiry reveals that superstition and witchcraft are perceived as opposing the biblical worldview of monotheism and divine sovereignty (Deut 18:10-12; Gal 5:19-21; Bosch, 1991; Pobee, 1979). CUR students noted that beliefs in ancestral spirits, divination, and magical rituals remain prevalent in many rural communities, often coexisting with nominal Christian practices. This syncretism challenges the Church's mission of catechesis and spiritual formation (Shorter, 1994; Mbiti, 1969; Kabasele, 2008; Waliggo, 1991).

The figure below presents students' perceptions of the cultural challenges that need biblical evaluation and purification:



Traditional funeral practices in Rwanda are another area where tension with biblical values is frequently observed. These rituals, often involving libations to ancestors, the invocation of spirits, and communal lamentations, reflect a worldview that perceives death not as an entry into eternal life through Christ, but as a passage into a spirit realm governed by ancestral forces (Mbiti, 1969; Turaki, 2006; Waliggo, 1991; Bediako, 1992). While these practices are deeply respected culturally, they raise questions about the Christian doctrines of resurrection, salvation, and the communion of saints (1 Cor 15:12-22; Heb 9:27; Rom 6:3-5; John 11:25-26). CUR students expressed confusion about how to minister during such ceremonies without either offending cultural sensibilities or compromising the Gospel message.

From a theological perspective, Scripture does not completely reject culture but offers a framework for its transformation and purification. Paul's missionary strategy, particularly in Acts 17:22-31, shows how elements of a host culture can be affirmed while being reinterpreted in light of the Gospel (Bosch, 1991; Schreiter, 1985; Bediako, 2004; Hiebert, 2009). Jesus' parables often employed agricultural and familial metaphors familiar to his audience, signaling a model of contextual engagement (Matt 13:3-9; Luke 15:11-32). CUR students acknowledged that such biblical models inspire inculturation, yet they also reported a lack of formation in applying these models critically (Schreiter, 1985; Mugambi, 2002; Kabasele, 2008; Pobe, 1979). For example, the practice of consulting seers or traditional healers must be replaced with a theology of divine healing rooted in Scripture (James 5:14-16; Luke 8:43-48). Similarly, rites for the dead should affirm Christian hope in resurrection rather than ancestral communion.

Thus, Scripture functions not merely as a set of doctrinal claims but as a transformative narrative capable of critiquing and purifying cultural norms (Hiebert, 2009; Bosch, 1991; Turaki, 2006; Bediako, 2004). The Gospel does not come into culture as an alien force but as the fulfillment of human aspirations purified by divine revelation. In this light, theology students must be equipped not only with biblical literacy but also with cultural discernment. The integration of contextual theology and biblical anthropology into the curriculum can provide the critical tools necessary for this engagement. Field-based learning—such as participating in community rituals with guided theological reflection—can also strengthen students' competence to serve as agents of faithful inculturation.

3.4. CUR's Formation in Inculturation

The integration of biblical teachings with Rwandan culture is an increasingly vital concern in theological formation, particularly within the context of the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR). Theological education at CUR seeks to foster in students a dual competence: deep scriptural understanding and the capacity to engage critically with

local culture. Inculturation, defined as the dynamic interaction between faith and culture, is central to this formation. CUR's curriculum introduces students to biblical anthropology and contextual theology, equipping them to discern cultural practices that resonate with biblical values (Shorter, 1998; Bevans, 2002; Bediako, 2004; Schreiter, 1985). Among the cultural traits examined are communalism, respect for elders, the use of proverbs, and traditional rites of passage, all of which can serve as points of theological reflection.

The students are taught to evaluate culture through a biblical lens using both exegetical and anthropological methods. Courses in biblical anthropology help them understand the human person in Scripture and how cultural expressions reflect anthropological assumptions (Mbiti, 1990; Parratt, 2004; Healey & Sybertz, 1996; Ukpog, 2005). Through critical engagement with cultural elements—such as family structures, leadership models, and moral values—students learn to distinguish between elements compatible with the Gospel and those requiring transformation or rejection. For instance, while communal living reflects the biblical concept of the early Christian community in Acts 2, the persistence of the use of witchcraft rituals is critiqued in light of biblical ethics (1 Tim 3:2; Deut 18:10-12). This process allows theology students not only to affirm cultural identity but also to uphold gospel integrity.

The research carried out among 43 theology students at CUR highlights how students are both aware of cultural values and are discerning in applying biblical principles to evaluate them. The findings revealed the extent to which students identify opportunities and challenges in inculturation.

Cultural Aspect	Compatible with Scripture	In Conflict with Scripture
Communalism, respect for elders, proverbs	84%	16%
Traditional funeral rites	47%	53%
Bride-price traditions	34%	66%
Witchcraft and ancestral rituals	21%	79%

While most students affirm the value of cultural symbols and wisdom, only 42% reported feeling adequately trained to design or lead inculturated pastoral activities such as liturgies, catechesis, or homilies (Bujo, 2003; Nkurunziza, 2008; Bate, 1994; Mugambi, 1997). The study emphasizes that practical skills in developing context-sensitive messages are not yet fully cultivated within the current curriculum. Theological reflections on models like Paul's discourse at the Areopagus (Acts 17) and Jesus' use of parables rooted in everyday life are highlighted as valuable tools, but their application requires experiential learning.

To bridge this gap, CUR is encouraged to enhance courses that emphasize contextualization and pastoral communication. One approach is integrating field-based learning experiences where students engage with local parishes to practice preaching, catechesis, and community dialogue. This experiential formation helps them refine their theological messages to resonate with local realities while maintaining biblical fidelity (Walls, 1996; Sanneh, 2003; Kabasele Lumbala, 1998; Hiebert, 1987). In developing pastoral messages, students are encouraged to use proverbs, stories, and symbols that are culturally familiar while aligning them with gospel themes such as love, justice, and repentance.

Furthermore, student projects involving liturgical creativity—such as composing hymns in local languages or adapting rites using cultural gestures—promote a lived experience of inculturation. This pedagogical model aligns with the African Synod's emphasis on “incarnating the Gospel in the African soul” (John Paul II, 1995). Contextual theology, therefore, becomes a medium not only for theological instruction but also for identity formation and ecclesial mission. Through such training, theology students emerge as mediators between faith and culture, equipped to serve in a Church that is truly African and truly Catholic.

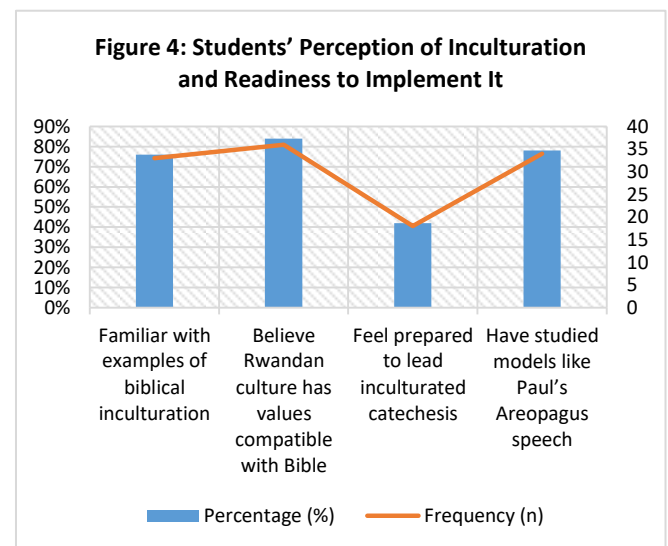
In conclusion, CUR's formation in inculturation lays a critical foundation for the future of theological education in Rwanda. While students exhibit a strong appreciation for cultural values compatible with Scripture, there is an evident need for deeper practical training in contextual pastoral application. Strengthening contextual theology courses, expanding fieldwork opportunities, and encouraging liturgical creativity are essential for preparing students to authentically proclaim the Gospel within Rwandan culture.

3.5. Perception of the Compatibility of the Bible and Rwandan Culture

The interaction between biblical teachings and Rwandan culture evokes diverse perspectives among theology students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR). The perceived compatibility between Scripture and cultural values is largely shaped by students' exposure to inculturation, their theological formation, and their capacity to interpret local customs through a biblical lens. Among the surveyed students, 84% affirmed the presence of positive elements within Rwandan culture that resonate with Christian teachings. These include communal solidarity, the use of proverbs for moral instruction, and respect for elders—values that echo the biblical emphasis on community, wisdom literature, and authority (Mbiti, 1991; Mugambi, 2002; Nkurunziza, 1989; Shorter, 1998). For instance, the communal ethos seen in traditional umuganda (communal work) is reminiscent of the early Christian koinonia (Acts 2:42–47), where believers shared resources and responsibilities.

Despite these affirmations, students expressed ambivalence concerning certain cultural practices that conflict with Scripture. Practices such as polygamy, ancestor veneration, witchcraft, and syncretic funeral rituals were seen as theologically problematic and in need of pastoral scrutiny (Byaruhanga, 2005; Bediako, 1995; Tiénou, 1996; Kabasele, 1994). These practices raise challenges in promoting a contextualized theology that remains faithful to the core teachings of the Bible. The dual recognition of compatibility and contradiction is consistent with the missiological notion that the Gospel both affirms and critiques culture (Sanneh, 1989).

A crucial aspect of evaluating this compatibility lies in the students' familiarity with inculturation models and their theological preparedness. As shown in the table below, while most students acknowledged biblical-cultural correspondences, a significant proportion reported insufficient training in applying inculturation practically.



These findings suggest a pedagogical gap. While nearly four in five students have been exposed to biblical models such as Paul's Areopagus discourse (Acts 17:16–34), only 42% feel adequately equipped to conduct catechesis or liturgy that engages with Rwandan culture meaningfully. This discrepancy highlights the need for more practical coursework in contextual theology and liturgical adaptation (Healey & Sybertz, 1996; Schreiter, 1985; Mugambi & Kirima, 1976; Bevans, 2002).

In interviews, students frequently mentioned the metaphorical teachings of Jesus—such as the use of mustard seeds, vineyards, and local occupations—as a model for engaging local imagery and customs. They called for theological formation that moves beyond theoretical frameworks toward field immersion and critical reflection on customs like marriage rites, storytelling, and naming ceremonies (Turabumukiza, 2018; Bujo, 1998; Kabasele, 1991; Gifford, 2009). For instance, students observed that while biblical marriage emphasizes monogamy, Rwandan wedding customs—especially the “Gusaba” negotiation

ritual—could serve as a meaningful entry point for Christian catechesis on covenant and fidelity.

The notion of “incarnational theology,” where the Gospel takes flesh within a local culture, was recurrent in discussions. Students cited the importance of theological anthropology that affirms human dignity while also interrogating customs that may undermine biblical ethics (Bediako, 1999; Pobee, 1979; Nyamiti, 2006; Tiénou, 1990). Such an approach calls for a critical inculturation, where culture is neither blindly accepted nor wholly rejected, but engaged in light of the Gospel.

In conclusion, the data reveal a strong affirmation of the potential for biblical-cultural harmony among CUR theology students. Yet this is counterbalanced by limited confidence in leading inculturated pastoral practices. Recommendations include strengthening curricula in contextual theology, emphasizing biblical anthropology, and creating immersion experiences in Rwandan communities for theology students. These strategies would enable future pastoral agents to embody a contextualized faith that is both culturally grounded and scripturally faithful.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the perceptions of theology students at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) regarding the integration of biblical teachings with Rwandan cultural values—a process known as *inculturation*. The central objective was to assess both the opportunities and challenges posed by this integration in theological formation. The guiding hypothesis proposed that Rwandan culture offers meaningful points of contact with Scripture, such as communalism, proverbs, and reverence for elders, while also presenting challenges like polygamy, witchcraft, and syncretic funeral rites that demand critical biblical discernment.

To test this hypothesis, a **mixed-methods design** was employed. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 43 purposively selected theology students, while qualitative insights were obtained via semi-structured interviews. Descriptive statistics—using the formula $\text{percentage (\%)} = (f / N) \times 100$ —were used to analyze numerical responses. Thematic content analysis was applied to interpret qualitative data.

The results confirmed strong student recognition of cultural elements compatible with biblical values—84% acknowledged positive cultural traits such as communalism and storytelling. However, only 42% felt prepared to lead culturally adapted catechesis or liturgy. Moreover, 78% found biblical models like Paul’s Areopagus speech (Acts 17) and Jesus’ parables relevant in the Rwandan context, while 91% expressed the need for more training in contextual theology and biblical anthropology.

In light of these findings, the study concludes that the original hypothesis has been **verified**. Rwandan culture indeed presents both opportunities and challenges for inculturation. Effective theological formation must therefore integrate practical and contextual approaches to equip students as agents of faithful and culturally resonant ministry.

References

1. Bate, S. C. (1994). *Inculturation and healing: Coping-healing in South African Christianity*. Cluster Publications.
2. Baur, J. (1994). *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*. Paulines Publications Africa.
3. Bediako, K. (1992). *Theology and identity: The impact of culture upon Christian thought in the second century and in modern Africa*. Regnum.
4. Bediako, K. (1995). *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a non-Western religion*. Edinburgh University Press.
5. Bediako, K. (2004). *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and experience*. Orbis Books.
6. Bevans, S. B. (2002). *Models of Contextual Theology*. Orbis Books.
7. Bevans, S. B., & Schroeder, R. P. (2004). *Constants in context: A theology of mission for today*. Orbis Books.
8. Bosch, D. J. (1991). *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Orbis Books.
9. Bujo, B. (1992). *African Theology in Its Social Context*. Orbis Books.
10. Bujo, B. (1998). *The ethical dimension of community: The African model and the dialogue between North and South*. Orbis Books.
11. Bujo, B. (2003). *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*. Crossroad.
12. Byaruhanga, C. (2005). *Inculturation of the Christian marriage ritual in the Catholic Church in Uganda*. Lit Verlag.
13. Gifford, P. (2009). *Christianity, politics and public life in Kenya*. Hurst & Company.
14. Healey, J., & Sybertz, D. (1996). *Towards an African Narrative Theology*. Paulines Publications Africa.
15. Hiebert, P. G. (1987). *Critical contextualization*. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 11(3), 104-112.
16. Hiebert, P. G. (2008). *Transforming worldviews: An anthropological understanding of how people change*. Baker Academic.
17. Hiebert, P. G. (2009). *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions*. Baker Academic.
18. John Paul II. (1990). *Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate*. Vatican.

19. John Paul II. (1995). *Ecclesia in Africa: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*. Vatican Publishing House.
20. Kabasele Lumbala, F. (2008). *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa: Liturgy and inculturation*. Orbis Books.
21. Kabasele, L. (1991). "Inculturation and African Theologies." In *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, ed. R. J. Schreiter, Orbis Books.
22. Kabasele, L. (1991). "The Gospel and African culture: Inculturation in Francophone Africa." *Africa Theological Journal*, 20(2), 140–152.
23. Kamanzi, M. (2021). *Biblical Interpretation in the African Context: A Rwandan Perspective*. CUR Publications.
24. Kisembo, B., Magesa, L., & Shorter, A. (1977). *African Christian spirituality*. Paulines Publications Africa.
25. Magesa, L. (2004). *Anatomy of inculturation: Transforming the church in Africa*. Orbis Books.
26. Mbiti, J. S. (1991). *Introduction to African religion* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.
27. Mugambi, J. N. K. (1997). *Christianity and African culture*. Acton Publishers.
28. Mugambi, J. N. K. (2002). *Christian theology and social reconstruction*. Nairobi: Acton.
29. Mugambi, J. N. K., & Kirima, N. (1976). *The African religious heritage*. Oxford University Press.
30. Mugisha, E. (2018). *Ubuntu and the Church in Rwanda*. Kigali Theological Review, 5(2), 23–35.
31. Mutiso-Mbinda, J. (1986). *Evangelization and Inculturation in Africa*. Paulines Publications Africa.
32. Mwaura, P. N. (2005). "Witchcraft as a Pastoral Challenge in Africa." *AMECEA Gaba Publications*.
33. Nkurunziza, D. (1991). *Biblical Hermeneutics and African Theology*. Peter Lang.
34. Nkurunziza, E. (2015). *Rwandan Culture and Christianity: A Dialogue*. Kigali Academic Press.
35. Nyamiti, C. (1984). *Christ as Our Ancestor*. Mambo Press.
36. Nyamiti, C. (2006). *African Tradition and the Christian God*. Nairobi: CUEA Press.
37. Nyamiti, C. (2006). *Contemporary African Christologies: An analysis of theological models and methods*. Catholic University of Eastern Africa.
38. Orobator, A. E. (2008). *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*. Orbis Books.
39. Parratt, J. (2004). *An introduction to third world theologies*. Cambridge University Press.
40. Phiri, I. A., & Nadar, S. (2010). *African Women, Religion, and Health*. Orbis Books.
41. Pobee, J. S. (1979). *Toward an African theology*. Abingdon Press.
42. Sanneh, L. (1989). *Translating the message: The missionary impact on culture*. Orbis Books.
43. Sanneh, L. (2003). *Whose religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West*. Eerdmans.
44. Schreiter, R. J. (1985). *Constructing Local Theologies*. Orbis Books.
45. Schreiter, R. J. (1997). *The new Catholicity: Theology between the global and the local*. Orbis Books.
46. Shorter, A. (1988). *Toward a theology of inculturation*. Orbis Books.
47. Shorter, A. (1994). *Evangelization and culture*. Geoffrey Chapman.
48. Stinton, D. B. (2004). *Jesus of Africa: Voices of contemporary African Christology*. Orbis Books.
49. Tangwa, G. B. (2017). *African Communalism and the Moral Order*. Bamenda University Press.
50. Tiénou, T. (1990). "The urgency of contextual theology for African theologians." *African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 9(1), 15–23.
51. Tienou, T. (1990). The theological task of the church in Africa. In V. Samuel & C. Sugden (Eds.), *Mission as transformation* (pp. 77–80). Regnum Books.
52. Tiénou, T. (1996). "The Gospel, cultural context and religious syncretism." In D. A. Carson (Ed.), *Telling the truth: Evangelizing postmoderns* (pp. 76–90). Zondervan.
53. Turabumukiza, A. (2018). *Biblical catechesis and traditional culture in Rwanda*. Huye: CUR Publications.
54. Turabumukiza, A. (2020). *Inculturation in Rwandan Catechesis: Challenges and Prospects*. CUR Studies, 8(1), 44–59.
55. Turaki, Y. (1999). *Christianity and African Gods: A Method in Theology*. Potchefstroom University.
56. Turaki, Y. (2006). *Foundations of African traditional religion and worldview*. Academics Direct.
57. Tutu, D. (1986). *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches*. Eerdmans.
58. Ukpong, J. S. (1995). Rereading the Bible with African eyes. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 91, 3–14.
59. Ukpong, J. S. (2005). *Inculturation hermeneutics: An African approach to biblical interpretation*. In R. S. Sugirtharajah (Ed.), *Voices from the margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (pp. 17–32). Orbis Books.
60. Waliggo, J. M. (1991). *Inculturation: Its meaning and urgency*. AMECEA Documentation Service.
61. Walls, A. F. (1996). *The missionary movement in Christian history: Studies in the transmission of faith*. Orbis Books.
62. Walls, A. F. (1996). *The missionary movement in Christian history: Studies in the transmission of faith*. Orbis Books.
63. Walls, A. F. (1996). *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*. Orbis Books.