
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE CONTENT OF SALVATION IN AFRICAN THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACTS

African church theology or "Theology African" the market is now flooded with article that try to define these terms, some people are even afraid that any of these terms connotes a pollution or syncretism of theology as they understand it in the western traditions of the church. There are three main area of African theology today which sincludes written theology, oral theology, and symbolic theology. Written theology is the privilege of a few Christians who have had considerable education and who generally articulate their theological reflection in articles and so far few books, mostly in English, French, Germany or another European languages .Oral theology is produced in the fields , by the masses, through songs, sermons ,teachings, prayers, conversation ,e.g. It is theology in the open air often unrecorded. Often heard only by small group and generally lost to libraries and seminaries. Symbolic theology is expressed through art, sculpture, drama, symbol ritual, colors, number e t c The word "syncretism "has become a bogey word, used to frighten all who would venture to do Christian theology in the context of the world views and religions, but is syncretism not in fact a positive and unavoidable process, Christian theology and practice have always interacted with the religion and philosophical presuppositions of the various periods .practice like the observance of Sunday, distributions of Easter eggs ,and the festival of the Nile in the medieval church are instances of the acculturation of Christianity .Evidence of this process is increasing In African. African theology attempts to takes due account of the African to whom the faith is addressed. It takes notes of African's cultures, as a religion, and civilization. It advocates the right of African to ponder on Christianity and its truth in their own terms, All these and many more like theology of the cross, concepts of salvation, missionary theology, church and liberation, and salvation as a whole will be examine in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

African theology refers to particular school of African theologians who have attempted to articulate Christian theology from the perspective of the African cultural context. Although there are very old Christian traditions on the continent, in the last centuries Christianity in African has been determined to a large extent by western forms of Christianity, brought by colonization and mission. This colonization and mid 20th centuries when African theology as a theological discipline came into being .This movement began to protest against a negative colonial and missionary interpretation of the religion and culture in African. Realizing that theology is a contextual phenomenon .African theology stands on the shoulders of the early Africa independent church that broke away from missionary church in the 19th centuries or

early 20th centuries .African Christian begun to read the scriptures using their own cultural lens, which of course resulted in some interpretation that did not always agree with how western theology interpreted things. Representations are scholars such as Idowu. and Mbiti who analysis and interpretation of ATR and point its relation to the Christian faith .Exponents of frican theology include Jonh Mbiti,Bolaji Idowu, Kwesi Dickson, Jonh Pobee, Kwame Bediako and Gabriel Setilaone.

African church theology `Theology African' the market is now flooded with articles that try to define these terms, some people are even afraid that any of those terms connotes a Pollution or syncretism of theology (as they understand it in the western traditions of the church. There are three main area of African theology today which includes written theology, Oral theology, and symbolic theology. Written theology is the privilege of a few Christians who have had considerable education and who generally articulate their theological reflection in articles and so far few books, Mostly in English, French German or another Europeans Languages. Oral theology is produced in the fields, by the masses, through songs, sermon, teaching, prayer, conversation, e.g. it is theology in the open air often unrecorded. Often heard only by small group and generally lost to libraries and seminaries. Symbolic theology is expressed through art, sculpture, drama, symbol ritual, colours, number e.t.c.

The word `syncretism ` has become a bogey word, used to frighten all who would venture to do Christian theology in the context of other world views and religions, But is syncretism not in fact a positive and unavoidable process? Christian theology and practice have always interacted with the religion and philosophical presupposition of the various periods. Practices like the observance of Sunday, distributions of Easter eggs, and the festival of the Nile in the medieval Church are instances of the acculturation of Christianity. Evidence of this process is increasing in Africa. African theology attempts to takes due account of the Africans, to whom the faith is addressed.

THE CHURCH AND THE LIBERATION

African theology realize that our countries are free but they are liberated, African now recording sound of their national anthems African rejoice seeing bright and flags in sky. These are able symbols of freedom but also a remembrance of the finished task; to liberate Africa from ignorance, poverty, disease and others we should not confuse freedom with liberation, freedom is exemption for external control while liberation is inner ability to handle freedom, In Africa, The new elites has its hands tied because of the economic, political and military support they received from abroad. Friends, students of African affair again speak of new socialism. Markets where we are no less depend on European especially traditional intellectual than we are economically freed.

The church is no exception, Africa is ripe for a theology of liberation, and our theology should then be rooted in the soil and connected to the Africa. Liberation in Africa is tightly political terms, recent history has taught us that theology was able to liberate African; Angola had

achieved their liberation through area struggle. People in Nubia and South Africa seem to tread along the same road. Politicians in these countries have the right to say "if blood of Jesus Christ is the seed of the church, the blood of freedom fight is the foundation of our self lord".

CONCEPT OF SALVATION

Soteriology in the Greek language it means 'Doctrine of salvation' or more exactly the way of salvation, it emanated from Greek word SOTERIA from saviour i .e. SOTER in Latin SALUS in the Greek word, salvation was typically associated with the bestowal of various blessing and gift, while in the Old Testament it was conceived of more as deliverance from enemies. The Hellenistic world identified certain persons (real or any theology as saviour on the basis of the benefit that they brought Augustus for peace [Pax Romania] Asclepius for healing and is for mastery oversea Mankind destroyed relationship with the ultimate reality necessitated the need for salvation, salvation from religions perspective can be approached from three principal dimension.

1. Ritual Dimension;-Right performance of ritual is central to soteriology — for example baptism ushered into the church neophytes, it symbolic death to sin and birth to righteousness. The most essential soteriological function of ritual is to open up lines of communication with the ultimate.
2. Institutional Dimension: A group united by the faith may claim some kind of monopoly in relation to salvation. Thus, as Christian belief that without church there is no salvation.
3. Ethical Dimension; Morality may have an oblige relationship to soteriology. The good person in the Calvinist tradition for example, may show some symptoms of being saved; but this salvation is not by good works by contrast, religions of self help give more importance to moral action as part of the means of gaining salvation
4. Africans also taking part in the redemptive plan of God In the life of Jesus, there are two remarkable instances worth remembering: when Jesus was still a baby, Jesus came to Egypt on a refugee (MT: 2:13-15): we (Africans) were again honoured, on the way to Golgotha when Simon Cyrene became the only man to help Jesus carry his cross (MT: 27:32); the planting of the church in Acts of Apostles did not exclude Africa. An Ethiopian travelling from Jerusalem to Gaza met Philip and was baptised (Acts 8:26- 39) throughout church history the contribution of the theologians from North Africa has been outstanding. In modern times, in spite of our material poverty, Africa and people of Africa descent show encouraging promises for the development of an authentic African theology. Also, it is our responsibility to stress that God's revelation is address to all people; that God is free to choose to whom he reveals himself (Acts 10:35) we can be knowledgeable or ignorant, rich or poor, tall or short, man or woman, with God we are the same He uses people's gifts for his glory and honour. In addition, our theology should spring from people and go to the people, in this age of mass production, imported manufactured goods and lavish consumption, it is easy to forget that culture is intrinsic; Amilcar Cabral pointed this by saying "Culture is one means of collecting

together people even a weapon in the struggle for independence: Theology that does not take culture seriously is doomed to failure.

Christian theology in Africa has represented the views of the dominant cultures and created incentives for Africans to fit unto the accepted stereotypes: Authority flows from whites to black; from missionaries to Bishops, to Patrons, to Deacons, to Catechist, to believers. The closer Africans are to the missionaries and European exports. The more important they became in church hierarchy, in institutions of higher learning, and before secular powers! South Africa is a favourite case study, for better or worse what happens there will affect the whole of Africa. It is in South Africa that you find the most Christian per square kilometre it is there also where black people are mercilessly victimised by whites. The white government, which call itself Christian, admits a high members of deaths in detention, forbids people of different races to married, treats all Africans in white areas as temporary migrants, reserves skilled jobs for whites, use the Bantus rents as reservoirs of cheap labour provides the country's people with racially segregated education, gives white south Africans one of the highest standards of living in the world and silences any person opposed to apartheid"

MISSIONARY THEOLOGY; what is the aim and goal of mission work? To this question one can give three general answers, which become the various schools of thought: One school, the aim of the Mission work is the Conversion of the infidel. For a second school it is the establishing or implant of the church. For a third school it is giving birth to and helping it to grow properly, this means help it to assume its proper role and responsibility in communion with Christ and all other local churches. Developed and defended in particular by the Missological School of thought, this kind of theology polarized missionary reflection for several centuries, right up to the start of the twenty centuries for a long time it has embodied the proper and specific goal of missionary activity. The essential task of the missionary is to proclaim the gospel, to be the herald of Christ's good news solidly grounded on the adage, EXTRA ECCLESIAN (ROMANAM) NULLA SALUS, theology centred on disqualify the cultural and religious traditions of Africans peoples. The theology is theoretical or theoreticians of this theology were imbued with excessive zeal of defend the oneness of Christianity and to distinguish it from what was commonly but improperly called: "Paganism". This tended to forget that she serving God is Omnipresent, that there exists a universal revelation above and beyond the bounds of any "special" revelation (the Jude Christian one) and that salvation can be obtained through non ecclesistical channels as diverse on the various ideals and humanism nurtured by human beings. Another disadvantages of the theology deserves mention fashioned on the basis of a dualistic anthropology, this particular theology ran the dangerous risk of disregarding the concrete, historical dimension of the integral salvation brought by Christ

SALVATION AS WHOLENESS

Buthelezi points out that the traditional African world view emphasized the wholeness of life: all life was sacramental and therefore was the meeting place of man with God. He argues

that the biblical picture of man teaches that man is related to God Created in His likeness and that God has given man dominion over the created world. It has often rightly been said that the African has a sense of the wholeness of life. The traditional African religion was characterised by the motive of wholeness of life. In fact, it is more correct to say that religion and life belonged together far from being a department of life, religion was life, As a result of this, and traditional religion lacked institutional symbols which mark it off from daily life. The continuity of fellowship between the living and the dead was analogue to the interplay between the natural and the supernatural worlds. Life was such a whole that not even death could distinguish it. The concept of the wholeness of life is important, not just because it happens to reflect a traditional African insight, but also because it is related to some of the modern concerns in theology.

JESUS AS A MEDIATOR OR INTERMEDIARY AS A SAVIOUR REDEEMER

In most African societies the idea of a mediator or intermediary is a common thing. Among the Akans of Ghana, the King or the Chief does not generally speak directly to the people and the people normally do not approach the king or the chief directly except through the "Linguist". The linguist receives and transmits the message from the king to the people and vice versa. The social order expects this of everybody. The king or the Chief also mediate between the living and God. This idea therefore makes the intermediary role of Christ among the members of the indigenous African Christian churches meaningful. Christ has played the role of traditional intermediary, who preserves due order in our approach to God. This concept of Christ is very different from the classical Christian idea of a mediator, who not only provides communications, but also removes the barriers of sin, is far removed from the African understanding of God and therefore of Christ. This does not in any way suggest that the African has no notion of sin and guilt; but what it says simply is that the African has no notion of sin and guilt; but what it says simply is that the African does not see the mediatory functions of Christ as being that of pleading for him before God for forgiveness of sin.

There is more than ample evidence to show that the main preoccupation of many African Christians is redemption from physical dilemma or evil forces. The idea of deliverance is the commonest theme in the hymns, prayers, and catechisms of these indigenous African churches. They address themselves to complete personal and community deliverance from the forces of evil, witchcraft, death, drought, floods, sickness or any epidemic. This idea ties in with the traditional African concepts of religion and therefore God and Christ -god in this respect becomes the final arbiter to whom we African turn, when all "help and comfort flee". His saving power and response is acknowledged when danger or calamity is over and the need is provided. African languages have sayings and proverbs pregnant with meanings of God's or Jesus' saving power, the concept of saving is a very dynamic one and it is manifest in time of desperate need. It is this traditional African notion of God's intervention to rescue people which are finally maintained by the African Christians in their experience of the saviour, or redeemer. This concept of saviour or redeemer is applied by many African Christians, indiscriminately to God or Jesus Christ. The theology of saviour or redeemer is expressed

vividly in their hymns, for the theology is invariably lived and acted rather than reflected upon. Let us look at a few lines of their hymns (of Akan).

| AKAN | ENGLISH |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A gyaee | father (God I hope in you) |
| Mani dawoso | Giver of life I hope in you |
| Ma mida woso | with you on my side |
| Agyenkwa Nyame Agya ee | I fear no death |
| Mani dawoso Ayee | Nor illness |

John Parrat (1987) on liberation — closely related to the African Christian, concept of Christ as saviour is the firm believes that Jesus is a liberator. Liberator here must be understood in his totality, as removal of all that which keeps the African in bondage, all that makes him less than what God intended him to be. It connotes the total idea of liberation from fear, uncertainty, sickness, evil powers, foreign domination and oppression, distortion of his humanity! Poverty and want. In belief, it embraces religions, political socio-economic, spiritual and mystical, personal and societal concerns of the African convert. Jesus Christ therefore, by implication liberates the African Christian from disease! Human and natural disasters from tribalism, racism and any mysterious and inhuman political domination. JNK Mmnganbi declared not just one of the issues but rather all issues are aimed at liberating the African from all forces that hinder her from living fully as a human being. In the African context and in the Bible. Salvation as theological concept cannot be complete without liberation as a socio-political concepts.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

An African thought

(1) Death is an occasion for seeking more life; since death makes people in the spirit and thus members of the spirit world, the dead are believed to be in a position to grants boons. At death message may be given to them in fledging spirit to take to the world of the dead, These messages are illustrative of the African concern for life: they are concerned with health, children and generally those things which would strengthen the effectiveness of the petitioners as contributors to the maintenance of society is equilibrium. Where reincarnations beliefs are held, prayers may be said petitioning the spirit to ensure that when the dead person returns to this existence he would be more successful in life. In any case, death becomes an occasion for seeking greater life. (2) Death affect the whole man In African societies, death affect a much wider social group than the deceased immediate family. The ritual in connection with death saves to re affirm the sense of solidarity of the larger group. The African believes that death binds up relationship in society, revitalizing the living and underscoring their sense of community. Throughout the period of the rites there will be a congress of people coming together. In the light of this understanding Jesus and Rural Society made the rural society in Palestine his main concern. He become popular among country folk because at last there had come to their midst a leader who following the prophetic tradition, had begin to proclaim a message of total liberation, alleviating their

physical suffering without asking for a fee, and preaching message of hope which was relevant for all people. We shall have and state three lessons from the ministries of Jesus concentrated on the needs of the rural society to whom he ministered. He began by showing that he was sincerely concerned to alleviate their physical suffering as well as enhance their spiritual freedom - he was concerned to bring about liberation and salvation to moral society, having won their confidence, he was freely visited by the people with problems. He did not let them down. Likewise, the church to day in Africa is challenged to make it available and relevant to rural society, so that many fulfil the demands of Christian discipleship. Jesus integrated physical liberation and spiritual salvation. There was no clear distinction between the physical and the spiritual in the ministry of Jesus. Faith enhanced physical healing, and physical healing accompanied spiritual wholeness. This integrated approach ought to be promoted in the church. Jesus worked with a community of disciples drawn from among the rural people. Likewise the church in its ministry should work in full collaboration with local leaders in the society it will prevent the early day marked a simple strangle for human dignity. If black men were truly Sons of God, then we should not sit in the back of the bust or suffer second-class citizenship in any form. The streets and the shops become places of Christian witness. Wherever the dignity of man was threatened, it become necessary to witness that before one can be restore, he will be buried in confrontation with injustice eventually served to break down the legal structure which denied men the dignity to which God's children are entitled.

CONCLUSION

The concept of saving is a very dynamic one and it is manifest n time of desperate need. It is this traditional Africa motion of God's intervention to rescue people which is finally maintained by the African Christian in their experience of the saviour redeemer. With all this proves, the work critically examines the concept of salvation from the African tradition point of view even in African languages, they have sayings and proverbs pregnant with meanings of GOD'S or Jesus saving power. Infact, it is paramount to see on this paper that Africans should advocates the right to ponder on Christianity and its true in their own ters and realizing that the theology is a contextual phenomenon.

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