



Book Review on Soteriology: An African Outlook (A Historical Study of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation from an African Perspective)

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to demonstrate book reviews. The book that has been reviewed is Soteriology: An African Outlook (A Historical Study of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation from an African Perspective). We hope that this study can give an open excellent understanding from an African perspective regarding a historical study of the Christian doctrine of salvation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

End Time Publishing House Ltd released the book "Soteriology: An African outlook," which is a historical examination of the Christian theology of salvation from an African perspective. The first published was in 2010 and the revised edition was in 2014. The author, Samson Adetunji Fatokun (Associate Professor) is a reader in church history, doctrinal theology, and Pentecostal studies at the department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is a seasoned Pentecostal minister with a calling to teach and prophesy who is currently a visiting scholar at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. Updated from the 2010 version is the revised version. The soteriology of the Christian notion of salvation is highlighted in this book and is based on Jesus Christ, who is the architect of humanity's salvation (Banda, 2018). As a historian with a major interest in African Christianity and Nigerian Pentecostalism, Fatokun (2009) made a historical study of the Christian doctrine of salvation from an African perspective. He started by saying that Christianity is an offshoot of Judaism that features many borrowed patterns from the sacred book of Judaism. He stated that salvation in the Old Testament writings is holistic as it involves a state of entire well-being.

Here, this paper aims to demonstrate book reviews. The book that has been reviewed is Soteriology: An African Outlook (A Historical Study of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation from an African Perspective). We hope that this study can give an open excellent understanding from an African perspective regarding a historical study of the Christian doctrine of salvation

2. METHOD

This paper reviewed Soteriology: An African Outlook (A Historical Study of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation from an African Perspective).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The perspective from which old testament people conceived salvation was broad; for them, salvation includes victory in battle, redemption from exile, deliverance from trouble, enemies, and death (Clifford & Anatolios, 2005). The Israelite redemption, Hannah's answers to his plea, the development of Messianic thought, and many other examples are used by him to illustrate his position (Bailey, 1995). According to Fatokun (2009), redemption was viewed as liberation from sin's power and consequences regardless of country, language, or civilization during Jesus' earthly mission. The most crucial aspect of Jesus' proclamation during his earthly ministry was the proclamation of the gospel of salvation. He delivered a message of turning from sin to prepare for the coming of God's kingdom. Jesus' life and work are really about saving people from their sins. Throughout his ministry, Jesus makes it clear that he has the power to pardon sins. The predominant offer to humanity needs to be suited individually through repentance and conversion by faith in Christ Jesus and his atonement. Furthermore, salvation does not include only getting deliverance from sin alone but by engaging in righteous pursuits.

Finally, in chapter two, salvation doesn't include only deliverance from sin but as well engaging in righteous pursuits than relapsing into the former sinful state. To fully understand how the doctrine of salvation was preached, taught, and practiced in the early years of Christianity, chapter three explores the idea of salvation in the early church. Stating that, salvation was of major concern to the early Christians using the central feature of Paul's teaching as the activity of God's grace in forgiving, restoring, and justifying the sinners and establishing a reasonable necessity for bringing the gospel. The significance of blood in

atonement is considered in the whole of the Bible to be the chief object of atonement. From the Old Testament background, atonement is brought about by sacrifices while in the New Testament blood is considered to be very essential in atonement for sins. In the early church, the emphasis on salvation was more spiritual than material or physical. Early church fathers followed the belief that salvation must be obtained via personal repentance and faith in Christ, not through self-improvement.

Furthermore, salvation as explained by the early church made us know that salvation is not just mere mouth confession in accepting Jesus as our Lord and personal Savior; the conversion must be progressive from redemption unto sanctification until the full nature of Christ is produced in the believer's life. This book provides a brief overview of many of the theories that have been put forward at one time or another. When examining the various atonement theories, it's important to keep in mind that any theory that downplays the depravity of man's atonement is at best inadequate and at worst heretical.

Several points can be obtained:

- (i) The Ransom Theory: It is based on a belief that man's spiritual condition is bondage to Satan and that the meaning of Christ's death was to secure God's victory over Satan.
- (ii) Christus Victor Theory: this theory has been referred to as "Christ the Conqueror". In maintaining that the devil through the fall secured right over humanity, the theory stressed that in trying to exercise such right on Christ in his atoning death; the devil together with his demons were conquered by the power of the resurrection and liberation of those souls that were held captive in hell by Satan.
- (iii) The Satisfaction Theory: It contends that the atonement was a debt paid to God on behalf of sinners rather than a ransom paid by God to the devil.
- (iv) Moral Influence Theory: According to proponents of this viewpoint, man is spiritually sick and in need of healing, and he is persuaded to accept God's pardon by witnessing God's love for him. They think that Christ's death served to illustrate God's love for people and had a deeper meaning.
- (v) Example Theory: According to proponents of this viewpoint, man is spiritually alive and Christ's life and atonement were only examples of genuine faith and obedience that should serve as an encouragement for others to pursue similar lives of faith and obedience.
- (vi) Governmental Theory: This school of thought contends that sin has corrupted man's spiritual nature and that the purpose of Christ's sacrifice was to provide a substitute for the punishment for sin.
- (vii) The Accident Theory: Accident theory is more of a naturalistic and rationalistic interpretation of Christ's death. It claims that Christ's death was an accident, just as unforeseen and unexpected as the deaths of any other victims of human hatred. This idea has the weakest biblical foundation of all the dubious theories of atonement, making it the most perilous and heretical.

There are two distinct interpretations of the atonement's purview: The limited atonement maintains that its restorative power is specifically intended for those whom God has designated for salvation. The general atonement holds that the atonement made by Christ has a universal redemptive power on the condition of as many as belief in him. We can conclude by saying that the atonement made by Christ is the final proof of the love of God both in self-disclosure of his nature and its takes for human renewal and recovery of all things necessary for human salvation ([Mauchline, 1953](#)). Grace is another means of salvation apart from atonement ([Marais, 2014](#)). This emphasized the fact that humanity received the efficacy

of Christ's blood in atonement by a divine act of grace. Apostle Paul was saying "man cannot be saved by his works of righteousness but by grace". This portrays God's redemptive love which is always active to save sinners and maintain a proper relationship with him. The experiences of salvation in the early church clearly show that, before salvation can be truly experienced; there must be genuine repentance from the old ways of life and a turning to God in conversion through faith in the redemptive work of Christ.

Therefore, salvation was been experienced in the early church when people are under the conviction of the holy spirit and were aware of their sinful state before God, repented and set their hearts to abandon such practices and looked up to God for the grace of forgiveness through faith in the redemptive work of Christ Jesus. The experiences of salvation in the early church had a greater impact on the lives of the individuals concerned and the society they lived in such that they experience; (1) they became prayer warriors (2) fellowship and communion with God were activated (3) they witness the gospel of salvation to others (4) their motives changed positively. The early church believes that salvation is both present and futuristic in dimension (Casanova, 2001). They view salvation as a process in which progressive work of sanctification is required before one can say like the apostle Paul 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness " [II Tim 4:7-8]. The early church Father's aim in their teachings is that one should make heaven; saying that material prosperity is not real evidence of salvation but an alternative benefit that may or may not be given to a believer here on earth.

Therefore, every Christian is expected to remember that we are pilgrims here on earth and we must be careful not to conform ourselves to worldly things that can deny us of heaven. The early Christians in Africa and early African indigenous worshippers believe that the sin of man and one free will act of disobedience isolate us from God which resulted in death and all sorts of evils in the world (Evans, 2021). However, the difference between the two views is that; the African indigenous religion says that the original sin to which all have become partakers through birth or inheritance is absent while the early African Christians say that the traditional story about sin is similar to the Genesis account which established the separation between God and the original man die to sin. The concept of atoning sacrifice is a common idea in both early Christian doctrine and African indigenous religion. Both of them own the same claim on the importance of atonement for sin and the supreme importance of blood in the removal of sin. The Christian ideas of original or universal sin in which all humanity became partakers are strange to African indigenous religious thought. The Christian greatest ideas and concept on atonement sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of humanity is not properly placed in African indigenous religion.

The indigenous religion of Africa has provided examples of sacrifices made by some people to release their various communities from one tragedy or another. The African indigenous religion does not honor the concept of a single person taking away the sins of the "whole world" with the means of atonement sacrifice. The African indigenous religion and other world religions do not believe in the incarnation concept of someone dying as a sacrificial victim to redeem the fallen human nature (Chidester, 2018). Unbelievably, the Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria's traditional religion hermeneutics contained some information about the historical Jesus from the Gospel accounts before the arrival of Christian missionaries in modern-day Nigeria. And it was said that the oral tradition in Yoruba indigenous religion pre-date the coming of the missionaries to pre-colonial Nigeria. The Christian story presents Jesus as the Savior of the world while Ela in Yoruba traditional religion sees him as Olodumare. They

said that God sent his son not only to repair or restore orderliness to the world but that he died as a sacrificial one for the salvation of humankind.

The concept of salvation in the contemporary African church focused more on material terms in some churches in Africa today while forgetting their main duties of showing the world ways to salvation. In truth, more churches are increasing in Africa and some of these churches have wrong motives than Christ's primary vision of restoring lost souls to God. A return to the complete doctrine of salvation is needed to save the contemporary church in Africa back to its state of spiritual decay. With incorrect Bible readings in some church denominations, the contemporary African Christian idea of salvation gives individuals false assurances of salvation by giving them the wrong assumptions about what salvation is built on. To rescue the church in Africa from her theological problems and spiritual complications, there is a need for us to return to the Bible and allow the Bible to interpret itself than imposing and misleading people on what the Bible is saying (O'Keefe, 2000).

4. CONCLUSION

The book traces the Christian doctrine of salvation from early church history to the contemporary African church era. The book explores the distinctiveness of Christian teaching by examining its African indigenous religious philosophy. In the chapters of the book, the erroneous concept of salvation in the contemporary African churches both in preaching and practices while in principles and beliefs was the same as with the early church on the doctrine of salvation. Furthermore, there is a strong commitment to the material world in many African churches today, maybe as a result of an African worldview that emphasizes the enjoyment of life now as a guarantee for an eternal life of bliss. Contemporary African church leaders must revisit the Bible and early church history to re-study the Christian doctrine of salvation. They must then begin preaching and teaching the true doctrine of salvation in its entirety as a foundation for deliverance from the life of sin and progressive sanctification as a requirement for achieving eternal life with Christ after our sojourn here.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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