

**BLOOD IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR AN AFRICAN
CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATONING
SACRIFICE OF CHRIST**

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ABSTRACT

God at sundry times and in the diverse manners has been dealing with his people. He laid down rules and regulations for them to follow so that they might be able to maintain their relationship with them. At the same time, he gave them instruction on what to do when the relationship is broken and this is by sacrifices e.g. sin offering, atonement. However, sacrifices are not only to right a damaged relationship but also for thanksgiving e.g. Feast of the first fruit. In some of these sacrifices, blood is shed and without the shedding of blood in such sacrifices there is no remission of sin.

In the same way, out of the conscience of an African man emanates the issue of various sacrifices to their deities for various purposes like appeasement, thanksgiving seeking for favour. Some of them also involve the shedding of blood especially atonement sacrifice (Èbọ Ayẹpinnu).

The importance of blood in both the Judaic and African Traditional Religion (Yoruba) sacrifices is very much emphasised and therefore given a prominent place. God at the fulness of time, abolished the Judaic sacrifices because the blood of animals cannot take away sin. He then gave his only Son Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin instead. Jesus shed his precious blood for the remission of man's sin. The sinless man died for the sinful man. The efficacy of the blood of animal is rendered nil as that of Christ is fully and without controversy efficacious. If God abolished that he directly instituted, how much more than the one that came out of the conscience of man. It means

that African traditional religion sacrificial systems are also abolished leaving all men to acknowledge the atoning sacrifice of Christ for their total salvation.

An African Christian can no longer look back into his former sacrifices but appreciate and appropriate the atoning sacrifice of Christ. He has put his hand on the plough and cannot look back if he is to inherit eternal life.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

An African Christian is a Christian because of his faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. He must recognise that the kind of atonement in his former religion (ATR) can be compared with that of the Jews in the Old Testament, that of the Old Testament was instituted by God but his own through the conscience of his forefathers. The New Testament rejected all the Old Testament sacrifices because their efficacy was temporary. This implies that those of the Yorubas too have been condemned because of their similarities. The Judaic sacrifices were under the Old Covenant but when the new has now come, the old must give way. The new that has been instituted by God is the giving of his only Son Jesus Christ to shed his blood for the eternal Salvation of mankind. Both the Old Testament and the ATR sacrifices are shadows of what is coming but apart from being shadows, sacrifices in ATR is to demons and not to God. Since the African man has been delivered from the beggarly elements he cannot afford to go back to serve them anymore. Jesus Christ was chosen of God to redeem man by his once for all atoning sacrifice, he is the Creator and as the Creator is higher than the creature. He is more qualified to save the lesser who are sinners. It is only the sinless that can save the sinner, so Christ is the only substitute for sinners. Also, it is seen that the Yoruba atonement is for their immediate community and temporary, likewise the Jewish', but Christ's self-sacrifice is for the whole world and also perfect and permanent.

It is very important and of a necessity for an African (Yoruba) Christian to believe that his salvation is only by grace through faith alone and not by trusting oneself or doing good works, personal merit, human effort, obeying God, or

controlling the flesh or even by sacrifices - even though ATR stresses good work and moral life here and now. He must believe that salvation has three phases, which include the past, present and future. In the past when we first trusted Christ as saviour, He saved us from the penalty of sin (Romans 8:1) In the present, while trusting in Christ, He is delivering us from the power of sin in our lives through sanctification by the Holy Spirit. (As much as the African Traditional Religionist stresses strong moral life yet most are immoral and this is because they lack the power to be moral.) In the future we shall be saved from the very presence of sin when our bodies shall be changed and we shall be like Him (Romans 8:23; John 3:1-3). More than that, God even now provides us with all things to enjoy (Psalms 16:11; 1 Timothy 6:17).¹

All these are accomplished and will be accomplished through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. An African Christian must therefore appreciate and appropriate the atoning sacrifice of Christ. He cannot afford to look back for he has already put his hands on the plow and he cannot and should not look back if he must reach the goal of the Master's call in his life (Luke 9:62) He must continue to plow in Hope. (1 Corinthian 9:10)

RECOMMENDATION

Jesus gave an instruction to teach those who believe things he has commanded his disciples in Mathew 28:19-20.

It is very compulsory for the church to take this command very seriously. The church should organise systematic and serious Bible studies for new converts. These studies should also be graded according to the converts' background. The teachings of those

¹ Gehman, p. 254

from real traditional or Islamic background should be taught by experienced people in those areas. Above all knowledge and experience, prayers must be given its proper place for them and the Holy Spirit must also be allowed to do his work on them.