

NBS 15
M.Th
01-1-t

**A THEOLOGY OF SALVATION FROM AN
AFRICAN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

**A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF THEOLOGY**

BY

OLUSAYO BOSUN OLADEJO

JUNE, 1995

06 - 0995
~~95922~~

ABSTRACT

This work " A Theology of Salvation from An African Perspecture" is an attempt to interprete the biblical theological doctrine of salvation for the African Christian context.

The first chapter contains the introductory materials and a brief survey of some related literature. In the second chapter, an attempt is made to interact with the idea of salvation in the theology of some non-African theologians. It has been demonstrated that these theologians have interpreted the Christian message of salvation for their peoples and periods. They have employed languages and categories which are relevant and meaningful to their own contexts. Consequently, whereas some aspects of their ideas are helpful in formulating an African Christian theology of salvation, they are not totally directly relevant to the African context. Answers are not provided to many existential questions of the people in Africa.

In the third chapter, some contents of the traditional African worldview which relate to the people's understanding of salvation are highlighted. These include concepts of God, man, sin, death and hereafter. Our conclusion is that these concepts are essential to a development of an African Christian soteriology.

Chapter four identifies some implications of both the ideas of the non-African theologians and the elements of the traditional African worldview earlier considered for the development of an African Christian theology of salvation. The fifth chapter is particularly a development of such a theology. This researcher believes that only such a theology would remain faithfully biblical and meaningful and relevant to the African context.

In the sixth, and the last, chapter, certain conclusions are drawn from our discussion thus far and some practical recommendations made.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of our discussion thus far, we may now draw some specific conclusions.

1. The disequilibrium between the numerical growth of Christians and actual Christian character formation in Africa is not only apparent, but real. The missionary theologies which were imported into Africa became not only alien but also irrelevant to the African context, resulting in 'half baked' Christians, with one foot inside and the other outside Christianity.

The second root-cause has been the dearth of African theologians in the area of soteriology. This has led to scarcity or even non-availability of theological works which truly take the African worldview into consideration. Most of the books available are written by non-African theologians, employing categories which are alien to the African context, even though they appear faithful to their own contexts. Whereas such works provide avenues for seeing matters 'the other way', the fact that they fail to speak to the peculiar nature and needs of the African and to provide solutions to his self-identified existential problems remains real.

2. All this points to the dire need for contextualized theology in Africa generally, but in the area of salvation particularly. The problem of 'syncretism' makes it imperative, now than ever, that Christian theology of salvation must be expressed in languages, categories and forms which are meaningful, relevant and effectual to the life of the African. Any theology of salvation which fails to take the African worldview and needs into consideration in its formulation cannot but remain meaningless, and irrelevant to the African.

3. It is also true that there are some elements in the African worldview which have both direct and indirect influence on the African understanding of the nature and contents of

salvation. Such African ideas as of God, man, sin, death and afterlife hold some helpful promise for anyone who is interested in developing an African Christian theology of salvation. They cannot be successfully overlooked or even underestimated.

4. Finally, any development of a Christian theology of salvation which is both faithfully biblical and relevant to the African context must necessarily remain God-centred, holistic and comprehensive. Such a theology cannot, if it would produce results, afford any dichotomization of reality or life into the sacred and the secular. One must consistently be seen as participating in the other. Only such an understanding and presentation of the message of salvation to the African may bear enduring fruits. Anything less than that will not work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing, certain recommendations may now be made.

1. There is the need for more detailed investigations into the worldview of the African in order to identify and define the other aspects which, directly or indirectly, continue to influence the life and being of the average African.

2. The need for more writers and writings on this area (salvation) cannot be over-emphasized. It is thus recommended that African theologians, old and young, should devote time, energy and resources to studying and writing on this foundational area of theology. It is only in doing this that a good and solid foundation could be laid for further growth and development of Christian character.

3. Finally, in studying for this work, this writer discovered that it would be a worthwhile venture to investigate, more specifically, the African philosophy of life, and its implications for their understanding of the message of salvation in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This needs to be determined. Certainly, this will help us to move closer to truly formulate an African Christian theology of salvation. This work is an attempt in that direction.