

ANSELM'S THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SALVATION IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

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ABSTRACT

African theologians arose from its consultative forum held in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria in 1965 with the decision validating extra-biblical revelation and the universality of grace, which in their view, authenticates the redemptive value of African traditional religions. Consequently, there have been clamors for the revitalization of the African traditional worship and sacrificial system among Africans. Such agitation has drawn many away from the church as they have come to embrace the traditional African system of worship. Indeed, proponents of African cultural revivalism have discredited the teachings of Christianity and have emphasized the adoption of African traditional worship system in lieu of Christianity. In their view, protagonists of African cultural and religious resurgence are out to liquidate Christianity. Without doubt, such teaching serves as a great challenge to the uniqueness of the Bible as the word of God as well as the lordship of Jesus Christ; thereby diminishing the purpose of the incarnation.

Using theological and philosophical approaches, this work shows that Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement provides one of the best approaches to explaining the essence of the kenosis of Christ and its uniqueness in effecting salvation for humankind. In the same vein, the uniqueness of the incarnation and the works that it accomplished indubitably makes Christ lord over all divinities as well as the final revelation of God to humanity and the ultimate sacrifice needed for the redemption of humankind.

Keywords: Atonement, African theologians, cultural revivalism, lordship of Jesus, kenosis

INTRODUCTION

Saint Anselm of Canterbury was a medieval scholastic who contributed immensely to Christian thinking in the fields of theology and philosophy. The concern of this paper is to highlight the theological contributions of Anselm, particularly with regard to the doctrine of atonement and its implications for the concept of salvation in African traditional religions.

Prior to the time of Anselm, the Church Fathers made various efforts to explain the concept of the atonement, but most of them were inadequate. The dominant view was that the death of Christ was a ransom, which was paid to Satan in order to effect the release of humankind from its bondage.¹ Most of these teachings were based on the understanding of the early

¹Irenaeus was one of the first thinkers of the patristic period who argued that the death of Christ was a ransom paid to Satan. Origen also believed that the death of Christ was a ransom paid to the devil. Rufinus of Aquileia in his 'mouse-trap' theory also held a similar view. Augustine as influential as he was in the development of Western theology, did not have a significant contribution to the doctrine of the atonement. Augustine, like Rufinus and Origen believed that the death of Jesus was a ransom that was paid to Satan. His greatest contributions were elsewhere, particularly in the development of the Trinitarian doctrine for the church as exemplified in his *De Trinitatis*. This is not to say that other thinkers and apologists before Anselm did not

Church Fathers and Apologists' understanding of Scriptures at the time of their writing.

In line with the above the paper is divided into five major sections as follows: a. Introduction; b. Definition of Atonement; c. An Overview of the doctrine of the atonement before Anselm; d. Anselm's contribution to the doctrine of the atonement; and e. Implications for Salvation in African traditional religions.

Definition

The New International Webster's Concise Dictionary of the English Language defines atonement as follows:

Satisfaction made, as for wrong or injury;

The reconciliation between God and man effected by Christ's life, passion and death – reparation, amends, compensation.

A synthesis of these definitions shows that the idea of atonement presupposes a situation of having done a wrong, which needs be corrected. The second definition orients one to a more theological understanding of this concept. It has to do with the work of Christ in bringing God and humankind together again after a period of separation. Both Morris (1991: 45) and Dillistone (1983: 50) agree that atonement suggests a situation of reconciliation after a prior estrangement between two parties. In its secondary meaning, (Morris : 45) posits, "atonement" as denoting "the means, an act or a payment, through which harmony was restored." The word occurs once in the King James Version of the new Testament in Romans 5:11, where the Greek word *καταλαγή* is translated as, bringing about friendship between humanity and God. The same word is translated reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5: 18. In the Old Testament, the concept conveys the implication of removal of guilt and, at a point in time in Israel's history a day was set apart every year as the day of atonement known as "Yom Kippur" (Leviticus 23: 26ff). Elaborate ceremonies are performed on this day with the intention of expiating the sins of the people. Morris (1991: 45) captures this better when he said,

Atonement is frequent only in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, but the basic idea is widespread. In the OT sin is dealt with by offering of sacrifice. Thus the burnt offering will be accepted to make atonement (Lev. 1:4), as also the sin offering and the guilt offering (Lev. 4: 20; 7: 7) and especially the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). In the NT the principle on which atonement was effected is that the sacrifice of animals cannot avail for sin (Heb. 10: 4), but has been replaced by the perfect sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9: 26; 10: 5-10).

It follows from the above that atonement could be said to be the means by which the wrong committed against God was corrected in order to restore the lost harmony between God and man. This was done through the death of Jesus Christ, which became the supreme sacrifice to broker this peace. This paper now examines views before Anselm on the atonement.

An Overview of the Doctrine of the Atonement Before Anselm

This section is devoted to a consideration of the doctrine of the atonement before Anselm. This becomes necessary so that it might give one a better understanding of how the early thinkers understood the atonement for a better appreciation of Anselm's thought. Prior to the

argue for the penal substitutionary view, but it was not as clear as seen in Anselm. It was not until Anselm that a more satisfactory answer was provided for the reason of Christ's death. For details see Louis Berkhof (1975), *The History of Christian Doctrines*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, pp. 165-70; John Hannah (2001), *Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine*, Colorado Springs: NavPress, p. 218.

time of Anselm in the medieval period, the Church Fathers had made several attempts to explain the reason for the incarnation of Christ. In their attempts to explicate this concept, however, they committed some errors that were susceptible to heresies. For the purpose of this work, three of the writings of the patristic are considered and they are Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian and Rufinus of Aquileia.ⁱⁱ

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130 – c. 200)

Irenaeus was one of the early church fathers to give a good explanation of the doctrine of the atonement and salvation. Aulen (1969: 17) noted that although he might not have been as erudite as Tertullian or as witty as Augustine, he could be said to be a formidable force in the development of the doctrine of the atonement. Unlike the Apologists, Irenaeus (1899: 309) did not fashion his argument after the prevailing philosophical method, but concentrated more on the simple exposition of the basic Christian teachings. Popular for what is known as soteriology of recapitulation, he exerted much effort in defending the Christian truth against heresies prevalent at his time. When it comes to the doctrine of the atonement, however, his work was a reference point for the next generation of thinkers.

The centrality of Irenaeus' teaching on the atonement was that the death of Christ was a ransom by which God rescued humankind from the captivity of the devil. Irenaeus (1899: 527) contended that humankind had been forcefully captured by the devil or what he called the "apostate one." The basic assumption for Irenaeus (1899: 328) was that humankind, having been captured by the apostate one, needed to be ransomed from the claws of the devil who held sway unjustly over humanity. This ransom is what the "Word of God" accomplished through his death.

Irenaeus' thought above aptly depicted a situation of enslavement for humankind and it was for this reason that Jesus died. One important point to be mentioned here is that Irenaeus (1899: 527) observed that, God in securing freedom for humanity did so without the use of force. He argued that God, being just, persuaded the "apostate one." McGrath (2001: 32) and Gustaf (1969: 27) observed that Irenaeus was criticized for being too judicial in his explication of the concept of the atonement. In other words, Irenaeus' critics accused him of expressing the notion of the atonement as a judicial and legal transaction than the work of redemption. The implication is that the atonement is treated more like a ransom than the work of redemption. Such approach as seen in Irenaeus, therefore, obscured the redemptive nature of the atonement. But as Aulen pointed out, this was more of a misunderstanding of Irenaeus' position. He observed that Irenaeus' portrayal of God's righteousness could best be seen in two ways:

First, the devil having deceitfully seized man could not be allowed to continue in that perversion because he had taken what did not belong to him. In this wise, Irenaeus opined that it was just and proper for the devil to be defeated and humanity rescued from his enslavement. Second, he observed that God exhibited righteousness in His redemptive work, demonstrating that it was not by physical brute or "external compulsion" that God rescued humankind from the hands of Satan. In essence, God acted in justice as a demonstration of one of His divine attributes. After all, humanity was also guilty having sold itself to "the apostate one" through rebellion against the authority of God. The basic point to be understood from the foregoing is that humankind sinned against God at will. Humanity's sin therefore, made it liable for its action. God was not under obligation to save humanity. He only demonstrated His grace and love. It followed from Aulen's (1969: 28) understanding

ⁱⁱ Notice that the consideration of these three is not exhaustive, but they adequately represent the dominant views of the atonement prior to the time of Anselm.

that the assertion that Irenaeus advocated a juridical doctrine of the atonement was wrong. For him, the whole idea would better be expressed in saying that God as God of justice was only observing the rules of fair play in his dealing with “the apostate one.”

It is true that Irenaeus’ argument centered on the fact of justice and fair play, a very important attribute of God. And this is even demonstrated in God’s dealing with humanity since He does not force anyone to believe in Him. This is the very nature of God, which He exhibited even in the process of redemption, choosing to take on Himself the guilt of humankind and the ultimate salvation of man. But what Aulen suppressed was the implication of Irenaeus’ statement with respect to the object of Christ’s sacrifice. God is portrayed as having paid ransom to Satan in order to rescue humanity from the grip of “the apostate one.”

The issue of the ransom paid to Satan, indeed is the greatest problem with Irenaeus’ assertion above. It is considered as the greatest problem because it infringes on the sovereignty of God. It shows God to have been at the mercy of Satan. The notion of ransom paid to Satan could be said to be a foundation upon which later thinkers built on. Many of them were bold to say that God paid a ransom to Satan, a fact that was not that open in Irenaeus; and it was this very fact that Anselm set out to correct in his explication of the doctrine of the atonement.

Tertullian (160 AD – c. 225AD)

For Tertullian (1899: 716), salvation amounts to satisfaction, a way whereby a sinner is reconciled to God. According to McKim (1988: 82), satisfaction is the “discharging of an obligation in a way that is agreeable to the one who was wronged.” Tertullian believed that such a satisfaction is made to God. This constitutes one of the strengths of Tertullian’s teaching. One would not have expected that Satan received the satisfaction as implied in Origen. Culver (2003: 5) noted, however, that Tertullian did not use the concept of “satisfaction” to explain the “God-ward meaning of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.” Rather, he considered satisfaction as a legal matter as against the work of grace in the process of redemption.ⁱⁱⁱ He taught that satisfaction is made to God through acts of penitence and good works after baptism. God credits good deeds of a person as merit to that person while the bad ones require acts of penitence, fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Thus in his understanding a person who repents from sin and comes to God makes satisfaction to God, but one who lapses into sin after salvation gives satisfaction to the devil. As McKim (1988: 81) noted, the import is that all acts of fasting, prayer and almsgiving constitute satisfaction that is made to God while self-denial and self-punishment lead to eternal life as against eternal damnation.

Tertullian placed more emphasis on the death of Christ than other thinkers before him. For instance, Tertullian (1956: 100) wrote, “Who has ever redeemed the death of another by his own, except the Son of God alone? . . . Indeed, it was for this purpose that he came to die for sinners.” By this Tertullian emphasized the work of Jesus on the cross as a demonstration of God’s love to humankind and a kind of love that cannot be compared to any human effort. Culver (2003: 5) while giving credit to Tertullian for his brilliant explication of the concept of the atonement particularly with the view that satisfaction was paid to God; and indeed, he opened the door for subsequent theologians on the teachings on the concept of the atonement, yet, it must be stated that he also laid the foundation for some negative thoughts on the development of the concept of the atonement. A good example is that of Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300 – 367), who, not long after Tertullian argued that the death of Christ entailed reparation that was paid to Satan. Hilary said for instance, that Jesus’ suffering on the cross was intended to fulfill a penal function and Christ received the penalty. Hilary first drew a parallel

ⁱⁱⁱNotice that Tertullian was a lawyer, and must have been influenced by the Roman legal system in his formulation of his idea of satisfaction.

between penalty and sacrifice of the law and interpreted the work of Jesus in that context. This no doubt was a major setback for Christian thinking because, such teaching saw Satan as being victorious over God, thus putting God in the position of one who was at the mercy of Satan. As mentioned with the case of Irenaeus, there is no hint from Scriptures either in the New or Old Testament to prove that God was at the mercy of Satan at any point in time in history. God as the source of all things could not be held hostage by His creation. God did not, and has not been known at any instance to have taken permission from Satan to accomplish any purpose or intention. God could grant permission to Satan to do certain things for His ultimate glory as the case with Job, but God does not take permission from Satan or does He have to beg Satan for anything.^{iv} God is supreme over all creation and His authority is unquestionable. The very nature of God is negatively affected when He is construed as taking permission from Satan to do anything.

In addition, Tertullian's satisfaction theory formed the basis of the doctrine of merit and the doctrine of penance. Tertullian construed the act of sin as an injury to the honor of God and this could be appeased through acts of self-humiliation. Thus, salvation is considered from the perspective of a legal and ethical transaction against the work of grace. This no doubt, contradicts Paul's teaching in Ephesians 2:8-10 that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. Tertullian's concept is susceptible to salvation by works rather than grace, which is irreconcilable with true biblical teachings. One cannot say that work is absolutely unnecessary in the life of a Christian, but the satisfaction of God cannot be attained through mere works of men or by humankind inflicting certain punishments on him or herself. It takes more than that—the works of Christ on the cross of Calvary. This is not to say, however, that Tertullian's theory of the atonement was not useful; for indeed, his teachings were later developed and used by later theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa, Hilary Poitiers, and even Anselm.

Rufinus of Aquileia

The third theory of the atonement to be considered is the mouse-trap theory propounded by Rufinus. In his understanding, Satan had secured such a serious grip on humankind that God had no means of setting humanity free. According to McGrath (2001: 334), what was practicable for God in this situation, was to deceive Satan by using the humanity of Christ as a bait and his divinity as a trap for Satan. Rufinus (1899: 550) illustrated this in the form of a fishing trip thus:

For the object of that mystery of the Incarnation . . . was that the divine virtue of the son of God, as though it were a hook concealed beneath the form and fashion of human flesh . . . might lure on the Prince of this world to a conflict, to whom offering His flesh as a bait, His divinity underneath might catch him and hold him fast with its hook, through the shedding of His immaculate blood. For He alone who knows no stain of sin hath destroyed the sins of all, of those at least, who have marked the doorposts of their faith with His blood. As therefore, if a fish seizes a baited hook, it only does not take the bait off the hook, but is drawn out of the water to be itself food for others, so he who had power of death seized the body of Jesus in death, not being aware of the hook of Divinity inclosed within it, but having swallowed it he was caught forthwith, and the bars of hell being burst asunder, he was drawn forth as it were from the abyss to become food for others.

^{iv}In the case of Job, it was Satan who sought permission to plague him. Satan would not have asked for God's permission if he could do it unilaterally. Again, the sovereignty and omnipotence of God is negatively affected if reparation needed be paid to Satan to secure the redemption of humankind.

One can deduce from the above that just like Origen, Rufinus believed that the death of Jesus was a ransom, which was paid to Satan. To accept this as a proper Christian teaching is to argue against the righteousness and truthfulness of God. Rufinus' teaching also raised serious questions with respect to the sovereignty and omnipotence of God because He could not be God if He were subordinate to a created being.

With this, it could be concluded that the dominant view of the atonement before the time of Anselm was that the death of Christ was a ransom that was paid to Satan. Even though these early thinkers and apologists did say that the death of Jesus was a victory over cosmic powers, they did not have a proper grasp of the process of Christ's sacrifice. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Gregory of Nyssa and Origen all understood the atonement to have been necessitated by the fall of man. They were, however, not certain as to the object of Christ's sacrifice. It might be logical for them to have concluded this way since human reason will surely leave one to no other option but to argue that a ransom was paid to the one who captured humankind as a consequence of disobedience. But a little stretch of one's theological understanding, particularly with respect to the nature of God, will reveal that the sovereignty of God, His omniscience, omnipotence and as the creator of all things will render such thought absurd. It will be inconceivable to suggest that God would pay ransom to the devil for any reason. Even Augustine, who believed that the death of Jesus Christ was a substitutionary atonement, showed little clarity as to the object of the sacrifice of Christ as we see in Anselm's explication. This is not to suggest that Augustine had nothing to say on the atonement, it was just that his preoccupation was directed towards his battle against the heresies and controversies of his time.

Generally, Augustine, (1887: 112) like his predecessors, had great predilection towards Satan's claim on humankind since he believed that humankind sold itself to the devil when Eve was deceived in the Garden of Eden. He too, did not really demonstrate a good grasp of the true process of redemption. They all saw the atonement as the victory of God over the powers of darkness. This then became the major focus of their argument. There is no doubt that the early church fathers' assertion in this direction was right. The early thinkers, who struggled to lay the foundation for the Christian faith and to defend the truth of Christianity however, did not properly understand the process of this victory. Moreover, this is where Anselm surpassed all those before him when it comes to the doctrine of the atonement.

Contributions of Anselm to the Doctrine of the Atonement^v

According to Heick (1985: 275), of all who had attempted to explain the idea of the atonement, Anselm stands out as the first person who was able to produce a harmonious and

^vAnselm was born around 1033 A.D. to mother Ermenberger and father Gundulf. His life was greatly influenced by his mother's piety and commitment to God. Having been so influenced, Anselm chose to become a monk on maturity. Around 1063, Anselm became a leader in the monastery in Bec as a result of his simplicity and commitment to his calling. He became the abbot of the monastery upon the death of Herlwin, the substantive abbot. In 1093, following the Norman invasion, Anselm was invited to become the Archbishop of Canterbury, which ensured the consolidation of the Norman over the English Church. Although it could not be said to be a remarkably happy moment for Anselm, it is worthy of note that his strict monastic life paid off as it enabled him to reflect on the nature of God, which culminated in his writings. Notable among them are: *The proslogion*, where Anselm discussed the existence and the character of God; and *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God became Man), which is the major focus of this paper. Anselm died during the Holy Week in 1109. See Anselm of Canterbury (1969). *Why God Became Man and the Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, trans and introduction by Joseph M. Colleran, New York: Magi books Inc., p. 1; William H. Shannon (1999). *Anselm: the Joy of Faith*, New York: Crossroads, p. 18; George Hodges (1967). *Saints and Heroes to the End of the Middle Ages*, Freeport: Books fro Libraries, p. 154; Alister McGrath (1998). *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, Malden: Blackwell, p. 113.

consistent explanation. Although Anselm agreed with Augustine in several areas of theology and philosophy, he took a radical departure from this theological and philosophical colossus when it came to the doctrine of the atonement. Anselm's contribution in this area is ground breaking in the sense that up until the time of his writing, there had not been any other explication of the doctrine of the atonement that was as clear. Anselm thus served as a good link for the explanation of the theory of the atonement between the old and the new generation. Little wonder, his theory continues to be relevant even at the present time.

In his *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm combined both metaphysical and theological understanding in the explication of the concept of the atonement. The opening section of the book depicts a response to a dominant thought at his time and it was set as a dialogue with his friend Bosso. He raised questions pertinent to the doctrine of the atonement and answered such questions in the book. Among the questions that agitated the minds of people at the time were: why did God need a mediator in order to save humanity? Could not God forgive sins of the world without necessarily asking for satisfaction? Why did God not send an angel to die for the sins of the universe instead of the God-Man? Why did God not just declare humankind free from sin as a merciful God?^{vi}

The crux of the matter for Anselm was that the death of Christ was an absolute necessity for the redemption of humankind. Anselm rejected the idea of recapitulation, as well as ransom to Satan, and unlike Peter Abelard, he did not subscribe to the idea that the death of Christ was only a manifestation of love.^{vii} For Anselm, no matter how one looks at it, the death of Christ was still a necessity in the economy of salvation. Writing from the background of feudalism that existed at his time, Anselm argued that humanity sinned or fell by disobeying God. This disobedience created a problem since humankind sinned through willful disobedience and that way injured the honor of God.^{viii} It was necessary that something be done to rectify the honor of God, which was violated by the sin of humankind. According to Tillich (1968: 166), there were two ways in which God could react to this violation, either through punishment, which would mean an eternal separation from the creator or by satisfaction so that He would forgive sin. The implication here is that the debt or satisfaction was to be paid to God and not Satan as had been earlier thought. Walker et al (1985: 327), observed that to rectify this dysfunctional state called for payment that was far above what was originally owed. This was necessary in order to take care of the problem and also not to frustrate the original purpose of God in the creation of humankind. To have left that situation unattended would mean that God was not capable of fulfilling the original purpose for which he created humanity. And it is not possible for God to fail. Anselm discussed this point vividly when he noted in his book that man ought to be elevated to his original state else, it would mean that God could not achieve His original purpose for creation; yet this could not

^{vi}Berkhof discussed these fundamental questions in detail in his book, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, p. 171.

^{vii}Notice that Justin Martyr and Irenaeus argued that the death of Christ was a recapitulation. In essence, what humanity lost with the fall was regained with the incarnation of Christ. This idea was based on the teachings of Paul in Romans 5;12. Similarly, Origen taught that the death of Christ was a ransom paid to the devil. A more dysfunctional theory was the one propounded by Rufinus of Aquileia who argued for the mouse-trap theory. See J. N. D. Kelly (1978). *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed., San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, pp. 170-74; while details of Rufinus' mouse-trap theory can be found in Alister McGrath ed (2000). *The Christian Theology Reader*, p. 334.

^{viii}Anselm taught that this willful disobedience was the epitome of unrighteousness. This also amounted to a rejection of God's purpose for humankind resulting in the need for rectitude of the wrong done to God. In this lostness, humanity maintained its free will, but only to sin. See Otto Heick (1985). *History of Christian Thought*, p. 275; John Hannah (1995). *Our Legacy*, p. 218.

be done without satisfaction. According to Anselm (1969: 26-27) the implication was that humanity ought to pay what was proportionate to its debt and God could not overlook humanity's inability to pay; and thus excuse humankind from its fallen condition.

What then will be the answer to the puzzle? Who can save humanity? Could God just pay the debt? Evans (2001: 99-100) noted that this was not possible since God was not the one who committed sin. Evans argued along this line since it will only be rational for one who owes a debt to pay his or her debt. On the other hand, humankind is trapped and the only logical solution would be that God who was, and is all knowing could only be the person who could take care of the problem. If one agrees with this line of thought, then the question becomes how could God do this? This is the very point where the God-man comes in. In other words, the one who must accomplish this purpose must be both human and divine. This is summed up in Anselm's (1969: 27) words that, "Satisfaction for sin can be made only by a God-man, able, by His divinity, to give something worthy of God, yet able, by his humanity to represent mankind. In other words, salvation and human happiness are possible only through Christ."

Part of the nature of the God-man as Anselm (1969:27), was that he must unite with humankind after the similitude of Adam to be able to restore humankind to its original position. More than that, the God-man must have something to render to God that is beyond the sin of humankind, and, at the same time must render this not out of obligation, but voluntarily. This voluntary nature of the sacrifice of Christ is well attested by Walker et al (1985:327), when they noted that the voluntary self-sacrifice of Christ did not only fulfill the requirements of satisfaction, but also deserved a reward. Only Jesus Christ qualified for this because He never sinned and no necessity was laid on Him to pay reparation for the sin of humankind. Death was the free will offering that Jesus provided rather than the payment of a debt or an obligation on His part.

One can see clearly from the above that Anselm built on the writings of the Early Church Fathers fully or at least provided a rational explication of the doctrine of the atonement as against the dramatic explication of Tertullian. More than that, Anselm appears to be *primus interperewhen* it comes to a discussion on the concept of the atonement. His thoughtful and insightful explanation of the reason why God became man plays an important role in the development of the concept of the sacrifice of Christ for humankind in the sense that he got to the root of the whole idea of the atonement better than many thinkers before him. Likewise, it could be seen that Anselm taught the doctrine of the original sin because he enunciated the fact that through the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity became sinful. One may not be wrong to conclude that this helps in no small measure in gaining an understanding of the nature of man and the way humankind can be reconciled to God. Again through this, Anselm, according to Berkhof (1991: 173) is able to expose one to the "immutable nature of God" by which one can only see that God is God of justice, as He would not permit the violation of His honor to go unpunished.

Besides, Anselm's theory of the atonement became the foundation for the explication of the process of salvation in the later medieval, as well as the Reformation era. The concept transpired through majority of writings from the medieval period through the Reformation. This was reflected in the works of Thomas Aquinas, who maintained that proper satisfaction was necessary to appease God for the sin of humanity. The Anselmian theory resonated in Aquinas' (2000: 3a, q. 48) teachings when he stated that, "a proper satisfaction comes about when someone offers to the person offended something which gives him a delight greater than hatred of the offence." Christ paid this satisfaction to God through his suffering for humankind on the cross. In line with Anselm, Aquinas noted that the satisfaction was obtained through the enormity of the love demonstrated by Christ and the value of his life

that was laid down.^{ix} McGrath (2000: 346) recounted that Aquinas reasoned that the love of Christ demonstrated in His suffering was greater in all ways than the sin of those who crucified Him. This was not unconnected with the fact that Christ was divine and that His life that was laid down surpassed the entire human race put together. This also was the main thrust of Anselm's argument that no one could accomplish the work of the atonement other than God Himself. Again, the sin resulting from the disobedience of humankind was less than the value of the life that was sacrificed for it; and this is what constituted satisfaction for God.

Anselm's theory continued to be influential during the Reformation and post-Reformation eras. For example, Luther (1963: 33-34), in his teachings on the atonement also used terminologies such as satisfaction, sacrifice, and justice. All these terms had their origin in

Anselm.^x The Reformers believed that satisfaction was made by the two natures of Christ and God was the object of the sacrifice. This was not seen in the teachings of the Church Fathers who stated that Satan was the object of the sacrifice of Christ. The Anselmian theory continues to be the dominant thought even beyond the Reformation era and continues to play a crucial role in the present time.

As good as Anselm's theory has been, it was not without defects. Hieck (1985: 276), for instance, noted that Anselm's theory was presented in a fashion that was too judicial. He treated the relationship between God and man as a relationship between a ruler and a subject. This must have been caused by the environment in which Anselm operated at the time he composed the book. As mentioned earlier, he was influenced by the feudal system that was in practice in Europe at the time of his writing. Even then, there is no way one can explain the relationship between God and humankind without a mention of a subject-ruler relationship. The Bible is replete with imageries that depict God as a ruler. God portrays Himself for instance, as ruler over Israel and indeed the entire universe. In 1 Samuel 8:7, Metts (2004: 55-57) for instance, observed that God told Samuel that Israel did not reject Samuel as ruler over them, but they had in fact rejected Him (God) as king over them. In like manner, the kind of treaty signed between God and Israel is akin to the treaty of suzerainty, which depicted God as king over the nation Israel. This theme continued through several passages of the Old Testament and can be seen as the centrality of Jesus' earthly ministry.^{xi}

The point to be stressed from the foregoing is that God remains as king over what He created. While one may agree that Anselm was influenced by feudalism, we should not forget that his thinking might transcend just a mere relationship between an earthly subject and ruler but might have thought ultimately of God as the potentate and sovereign ruler over creation. In that situation, how else would Anselm have illustrated this, but with what existed at his time

^{ix}Notice that though Aquinas built on the satisfaction theory explicated by Anselm, some differences still existed in the understanding of both thinkers.

^xLuther used these terms to mean that we cannot remit sins by ourselves but through Christ that God is satisfied. Aulen, however, argued that most of the arguments that Luther followed the line of Anselm was at best misunderstood. Aulen posited that Luther reverted back to the classic theory of the atonement. He claimed that Luther's teachings on the atonement fits more with the Patristic teaching of victory over the tyrants than Anselm's forensic argument. He noted that Luther's condemnation of the law as a tyrant makes it impossible for him to argue along the same line with Anselm. I feel nevertheless, that Aulen failed to capture the true argument of Luther. It is true that Luther argued seriously for justification by faith and thereby setting aside the law, but I do not think that he meant that the process of atonement did not involve the satisfaction and the vicarious death of Christ. We should not forget that Luther belonged to the Augustinian school and Augustine held to the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement.

^{xi} Although Metts' was not writing originally on the atonement, yet he implied in this work that the idea of God as king pervades the Old Testament and was crucial in the teachings of Christ in the New Testament.

to convey his message to his audience?

Anselm's theory also opened the gate for Roman Catholic idea of penance that was applied to the works of Christ. It is to be recalled that Anselm argued that the surplus merit inherent in Christ's death served as the extra merit needed to please God.^{xii} In addition, it showed the merits of Christ's death to the sinner as a mere external transaction, thereby neglecting the mystical union of Christ with the believer.

Besides, Peter Abelard objected to Anselm's theory of the atonement, noting that the work of Christ was exemplary. In line with this, McGrath (2000: 343) wrote,

Love is increased by faith, which we have concerning Christ because, on account of the belief that God in Christ has united our human nature to himself, and by suffering in that same nature has demonstrated to us that supreme love of which Christ himself speaks: 'Greater love has no one than this' John 15:13.

Abelard believed that what God needed was repentance and penitence, since He is a God of love. He noted that God is ready and even eager to pardon. According to Berkhof (1991: 174) the love of Christ for Abelard reawakened in humankind, liberation from the power of sin. "Thus forgiveness of sins is the direct result of the love kindled in our hearts, and only indirectly the fruit of the death of Christ." Abelard no doubt, took a subjective position on the doctrine of the atonement. Yet it must be noted that in as much as God loves, so also He can be violent in judgment. Why for instance should God destroy the whole of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:19) if God so loves and not given to judgment as Abelard would want one to believe. The fact is that though God is the God of love, He is also the God of justice who will not let sin go unpunished. It follows therefore, that Abelard completely played down the aspect of the justice and holiness of God. Considering everything from the viewpoint of love is detrimental to the justice and holiness of God neither is it a sufficient ground to prove God's purpose of redemption.

Aulen's (1969: 2) work, which was first published in 1930, is of immense importance on the doctrine of the atonement. In this book, Aulen emphasized what is known as the classical theory of the atonement. Aulen observed that Anselm repressed the old mythological account of Christ's work as a victory over the devil. Aulen (1969: 85) at the outset of his work explained that he tried to avoid the weakness in both Anselm and Abelard's works on the doctrine of the atonement. In this work, Aulen conceived the atonement as a change in the relation between God and the world; and also change in God's attitude.

A critical examination of the work of Aulen revealed that its major theme was to expose the weakness in Anselm's work. This weakness in Anselm's work, he situated in the fact that there was a drastic shift from the patristic view of the atonement to what he called the "Latin theory of the atonement." Thus Aulen (1969: 84) referred to Anselm's theory as the first "fully developed" example of the "Latin theory of the atonement." This for Aulen, was the major difference between Anselm and the classical approach enunciated by the Church Fathers. Aulen (1969: 92) therefore, concluded that the Latin theory of the atonement was a demonstration of the legalistic outlook of the medieval era. It was this major reason that

^{xii} The problem created by the Anselmian theory was that it served as the basis for the Roman Catholic teaching on penance and the sale of indulgences in the medieval era. Roman Catholic ecclesiology in the medieval period upheld the idea that when one dies, his soul is held up in purgatory, a place of transition. If one's evil outweighs his good then such a person could be prayed for through a saint who was reputed to have better works of righteousness. The extra merit credited to the account of the saint could now be used to pay for the sin of the one who is adjudged less righteous and through this the affected person is released from the purgatory to heaven. This no doubt is opposed to the idea of justification by faith as against works as enunciated by the Reformers.

served as a point of divergence between Anselm and Aulen, and continues to be the major argument of the antagonists of the Anselmian theory even in the present era.

Hopkins (1972: 197-98), for instance, argued along the line of Aulen, when he stated that the work of Anselm had been overblown by its protagonists. He maintained that *Cur Deus Homo* failed to convince readers beyond reasonable doubt of the purpose of the incarnation and, thus created an opening for other possibilities of the purpose of the *kenosis* of Christ. He observed that Anselm's explication was based mainly on the feudal analogy and not even reformulation of the theory independent of feudalism would give it a different drive and force from that which had been given to it by its protagonists. As Cohen (2004: 25) rightly pointed out, Hopkins by this submission easily aligned himself with such liberal scholars as Otto Von Harnack and Albert Ritschl, who want to dismiss the work of Anselm in *Cur Deus Homo* as clumsy and confusing under a heavy weight of feudal analogies. There is no doubt that Anselm's theory was greatly influenced by feudal imagery, but two issues need be considered quickly before this section is concluded. First the veracity of Aulen's claim that Anselm broke with the patristic tradition on the atonement and second, is whether the use of feudal imagery truly nullifies the very message of Anselm's work.

The general outlook of Anselm's work might appear as a break with the Patristic, but the question is: what aspect of the tradition? A close look at the work of Anselm showed a resemblance with the works of thinkers before him. It should not be forgotten that the concept of substitutionary atonement was found in Irenaeus, Tertullian and Augustine. In like manner, Irenaeus and Justin Martyr all used the concepts similar to what was found in Anselm. More importantly, Tertullian was the first to develop the idea of satisfaction from a legal perspective though he was not able to explicate this details as it relates to the atonement. Recent scholars such as Gasper Giles, David Bentley Hart, and Kevin McMahan have all argued that there is a great semblance in the work of Anselm and that of the Patristic thinkers. Drawing an analogy from the work of Athanasius for instance, Gasper as noted by Cohen (2004: 25) maintained that there were great similarities in *Cur Deus Homo* and Athanasius' *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*. He observed that Anselm and Athanasius are similar in their methodology and attitude toward theology.

McMahon (2001: 57) also stated that Anselm developed a Patristic theory of the atonement in *Cur Deus Homo*. He contended that the major focus of *Cur Deus Homo* was justice. In other words, he held the view that against popular thinking that, central to Anselm's argument was honor, classical justice was the crux of Anselm's thought. Again, he observed that Anselm did not only argue for the work of God in redemption, but also with the role of humanity. He noted that the Patristic writers whom Aulen commended as advocating a God-centered theory of the atonement, stressed human involvement in the process of redemption just as Anselm pointed out in *Cur Deus Homo*. He cited the example of Athanasius that, "it was fitting that God should restore humanity; and having so decided, necessary that it be accomplished by means of the Word, in whom all things were made, taking on human nature."^{xiii} In this manner, McMahon demonstrated, going a little further than Hart and Gasper that Anselm's talk about justice, debt and paying off the debt of humankind are deeply rooted in the Patristic. He proved that Anselm's theory has serious linkage to the Patristic view by using the variables of justice and the roles of humanity and divinity. It will not be wrong, therefore, to agree with Gasper and Hart that indeed Aulen misread Anselm. There is no such great departure in Anselm from the Patristic. The major difference between the so-called classical view of the atonement and the Anselmian (Latin theory) is the object of the atonement. While

^{xiii} "The Cross and the pearl," p. 63. Notice that Anselm discussed this issue in book II.8 of *Cur Deus Homo*, pointing out that God assumed human nature from the Adamic race.

the Patristic writers construed the atonement as a ransom paid to Satan, Anselm saw it as a ransom paid to God. This is the major area of departure between Anselm and the thinkers before him.

On the second question, it was seen that the major argument against the work of Anselm was that it was grossly influenced by the feudal imagery. This is true, but does this remove the true meaning and the central message of the work? My answer is no. Anselm wrote in a certain socio-political and cultural background and this is reflected in his illustrations just as the same would have been the case for anyone writing today. There is no other way Anselm would have communicated effectively with his audience without using common analogies that would be easily understood by his followers. A similar situation was found in Jesus. Jesus used parables or illustrations that were very common or representative of the cultural, political and economic situations in Palestine at his time.^{xiv} Indeed, one of the strengths of Anselm's work is his ability to explain such a fundamentally complex spiritual concept in the language of his time. Southern (1990: 222) echoed this same thought in his work when he asserted, "Anselm used feudal imagery because the feudal hierarchy provided an illustration of the order which he found in the universe."

It can thus be argued that the critics of Anselm especially those who contend that his over emphasis of the feudal relationship obscured the message of victory of Christ over cosmic powers, seem to have lost sight of the deep meaning behind the illustration of Anselm. A critical look at his work would reveal that the subject of the victory of God over evil is embedded in his work. We cannot talk about redemption from sin for instance, without the underlying message of victory over the works of the devil. Anselm was only trying to make himself clear by using such imagery; and as Campbell (1996: 256-58) rightly said, "Anselm's use of terms such as *justitia*, honor and *debitum* would have resonances with the legal and social structures of his day, thereby would have seemed readily understandable and relevant to his contemporary audience.

Implications for African Traditional Religions

The primary purpose of this paper is to discuss Anselm's theory of the atonement and how it impacts the doctrine of salvation in African traditional religions. Having considered the work of Anselm, I now turn to its implications for African traditional religions. By simple definition, African Traditional Religions is the indigenous religious practices of the peoples of Africa before the advent of Christianity. The *raison d'être* for such consideration is the resurgence or clamor for a return to the African traditional way of worship by many Africans, which has brought about an increasing global interest in the traditional religion of the Africans.^{xv} In order to do this effectively, I will first consider African understanding of the

^{xiv} See for instance, the parable of the Sower and the Mustard Seed in Mark 4.

^{xv} Recent trends in African biblical and theological studies reflect a gradual departure from traditional western theological and biblical understanding. African theologians such as John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu, David Adamo, Musa Dube and Itumeleng Mosala, to mention a few, contend that missionary enterprise in Africa is oppressive, and a continuation of western hegemony and imperialism in Africa. They argue that western methods of interpretation and theological understandings are inadequate to explain the religious feelings of Africans. For example, Mosala (1989). *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 21 rejected the Bible as the starting point for doing theology. Mosala argued that the starting point for doing theology should be the history of class struggle in a particular society. Adamo (2001). *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf Publishers, pp. 2-3, on the other hand, noted that the missionaries who came to Africa jettisoned traditional African values and replaced them with western ideas and culture, thereby creating problems for a proper understanding of theology and Bible among traditional Africans. To this end, he argued that cultural approaches to theology and biblical studies would be the most

concept of the atonement as exemplified by sacrifices vis-à-vis the idea of salvation.

Concept of Sin in African Traditional Religions

Just as the Genesis account of the Bible explained the origin of humanity and its fall, so also, African traditional religions believe that God is the source of humanity. According to Adeyemo (1979: 25), various African myths point out that man was created by God and once enjoyed good fellowship with Him, but this fellowship came to an end when humankind sinned against God. The Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria, for instance, believe that Orisa-nla, the arch-divinity was commissioned to create the physical features of man. Idowu (1962: 21) noted that the work of molding the physical form of man was assigned to Orisa-nla while Olodumare gave life to the lifeless body of humankind.

For Idowu (1962: 21), God did not only create the world and all things in it, but God continued to sustain the world and used to have fellowship with humankind. This period of good fellowship with God was known as the Golden Age, then something happened and a big gap came between God and human beings. For the Akans of Ghana, Adeyemo (1979: 58) noted that separation came between God and humanity because a certain woman was said to be pounding yam and her pestle continued to touch the sky. This act eventually provoked God and He decided to move the firmaments farther up from the reach of humankind. Sin generally, is considered as a wrong that is done either to an individual or to God and often carried bad consequences for such offenders. When it comes to the original fall, man was said to have eaten the fruit that God commanded him not to eat and this eventually led to death for humankind.

Generally, humanity in African traditional religions is considered a free moral and responsible agent. God loved humankind and wanted fellowship with humanity, but since humanity rebelled, it lost that fellowship and continued to face the consequences of such acts. Thus there are sanctions against wrongs that are done to fellow human beings. All sins are not only infringement on fellow human beings alone, but also ultimately sin against God. Arinze (1970: 34) observed that the Igbos of Southeast Nigeria, for example, believe that when one sins he or she incurs the wrath of the higher powers. Thus the society considers sin such as patricide, matricide, incest, theft, killing of sacred animals or climbing a palm tree by a woman as offences that will be punished by Ala, the earth goddess and the ancestors who are guardians of public morality. Anyone who commits such sins must approach a priest, who will then perform the sacrifices to atone for such acts of sin. Moreover, the culprit as noted by Awolalu and Dopamu (1979: 217) will definitely suffer some forms of punishment if he or she does not make atonement. Therefore, if lightning strikes a man, it is often believed that either the man or woman or his or her relative had committed a crime or sinned against the gods.

It will not be wrong to conclude this section by saying that African traditional religion has a concept of creation that is akin to that of biblical Christianity at least in terms of God as the source of all creation and the creator of humankind. Also, that sin is any act of disobedience against a fellow human being and ultimately, God. It also teaches that God is a righteous judge who punishes every act of sin accordingly. Though God is gracious, He does not allow workers of evil to go unpunished. He is therefore, to be revered and worshipped by all. But one thing that is glaring here is that African traditional religion has no explanation for how the entire human race was corrupted by the sin of the first creation. Sin in African traditional religions appear to be what an individual does and its contagious effects in terms of God's

appropriate for Africans. These factors pose great threat to an African understanding of theology and spirituality. As Byang Kato warned in Kato (1985). *Biblical Christianity in Africa*, Achimota: African Christian Press, Africa is moving towards syncretism, which poses a great threat to the church in the continent.

future punishment are absent. How then is sin removed and how does one come to salvation? This is the concern of the next section.

Sacrifices and Removal of Sin in African Traditional Religions

Since the basic underlying factor for the God-man was the problem of sin and its remission, it is logical to say that the removal of sin constituted redemption and ultimate salvation. We have established in the previous section that sin in African traditional religions is disobedience to God and an infringement on societal norms and values. Owing to this problem, African traditional religions also has various ways of dealing with the removal of such sins, whereby the offender becomes guiltless or declared righteous. The method of dealing with sin in African traditional religion is by atonement or sacrifice.

In the first instance, those who sin must confess such sins. After confession, they must approach a priest who helps in the process of the atonement. Atonement is often done through sacrifices in order that such guilt might be removed. The type of sacrifice to ward off evil or remove sin among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria is *eboetutu*, meaning sacrifice of appeasement. Olowola (1993:49) noted that such sacrifices are not eaten or offered to divinities but burnt, buried or treated with oil and exposed in a public place often at road junctions. The understanding is that sin incurs the anger or wrath of the gods and this can lead to serious problems with such a person or bring about untold hardships to the community involved. It follows therefore, that this type of sacrifice is often prescribed by the oracle or an Orisa. The ultimate sacrifice is often human sacrifice.^{xvi}

While it may be difficult for one to ascertain the efficacy of such sacrifices for the African traditional religion practitioners, the real problem is whether they are capable of removing sins permanently or if such sacrifices are sufficient in dealing with the problem of original sin. It will be recalled that the ultimate sacrifice in biblical Christianity is the sacrifice of Christ, which also was the issue Anselm considered in his work with respect to its importance and purpose.

As mentioned earlier, the ultimate sacrifice in African traditional religions is human sacrifice. In such situations, human beings were sacrificed to the gods for appeasement in times of great national crisis such as infant or youth mortality, times of drought, epidemic or the scourge of locust. As Olowola (1993:51) observed, the person sacrificed is considered a representative of the entire nation or the affected community. In essence, such a person dies vicariously on behalf of the community or the nation. In a way it is possible to draw a parallel with biblical Christianity in terms of the vicarious death of Christ on behalf of the whole universe. The question however, is whether the death of the person so sacrificed in African traditional religions takes away sin or not. Second, is whether the death of the person so sacrificed is universal. Is such sacrifice efficacious to the point of covering the sins of other nations as well? The point to be noted at this juncture is that such sacrifices in African traditional religions were meant to meet the needs of a particular time, situation or person, which implies that there was a need for another sacrifice if there were other crisis. This is why the Anselmian theory becomes important to the African traditional religions.^{xvii}

^{xvi} Oracles are often consulted when problems occur or when an individual violates the law or sins in order to determine the cause of such. Then the community of the person involved goes on to offer sacrifice. It is believed that when such sacrifices are done they atone for the sins committed and the culprit is then declared free from the punishments of the gods or the spirits. African traditional religion practitioners believe in the efficacy of such sacrifices in dealing with the problem of sin.

^{xvii} Notice that the victims of human sacrifices in African traditional religions are often treated with great honor and dignity because they consider such victims as representatives that convey the needs of the society or

Another crucial factor to be considered is the issue of the object of sacrifice in African traditional religions. The Yoruba for instance, claim to offer their sacrifices to the Supreme Being indirectly.^{xviii} Two of the members of the spirit world to whom sacrifices are offered are Esu and the ancestors. Esu, among the Yoruba, is often noted when sacrifices are offered to other gods because he is recognized as the inspector-general. He is also feared because he bears witness to all sacrifices and plays an important role in the acceptability of such sacrifices before the Supreme Being. As a result, Esu's portion is often set apart while sacrifices are being made. In the words of Awolalu (1979: 92), "Since Esu is believed to be a messenger not only to Olodumare, but also to the divinities for good or evil, it may be said that he acts as intermediary between man and the spirits to whom the sacrifice is directed." According to Ezeanya (1969: 44), in most cases, however, items of sacrifice that are often given to Esu are of less importance when compared to the one offered to the Supreme God. They are often articles like, strips of cloth, a lizard, a toad, rotten eggs, broken cowries, etc. In essence, such things constitute a recognition of the influence of Esu and not necessarily the person to whom sacrifices are offered.

The ancestors are the second object of sacrifice in African traditional religions.^{xix} Ancestors are believed to live after death and, as such, daily and annual sacrifices are offered to them. Since they are deified at times and believed to now possess supernatural powers, the living offer sacrifices to them that they may in turn receive favor from them. Such sacrifices are made for instance, during the *egungun* festival among the Yagba people of Kogi State of Nigeria. In some places, they are offered during marriage ceremonies or during New Yam festivals or even at the turn of the year. Mbiti (1970: 9) observed that serious ties existed between departed and surviving relations and efforts are often made to continue the fellowship with them through the offer of libations and giving of food and other such items to them.

In most cases, such sacrifices that are offered to ancestors are to help in appeasing or serving as propitiation for their sins. The ancestors are believed to remember them for good when they take care of them. Even in some cases, such rewards come in the form of children, prosperity, and good health.

So far we have seen in this section, what African traditional religions are all about. We have also seen the purpose of sacrifice or atonement and what it can accomplish in traditional African setting. In what way or ways then, does the Anselm's theory of the atonement impact the practitioners of African traditional religions? We now turn to this in the concluding section of this paper.

community and desires or one who bears the sins of the people, individuals within a particular society. As a result such a person is allowed to say whatever he liked or at liberty to ask for anything he wanted or wishes. The victim was always granted all requests, well fed and honored. Ironically, most of the victims used are either strangers or slaves bought from other villages or places. Cornelius Olowola (1993). *African Traditional Religion*, p. 51; P. A. Awolalu (1979). *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, London: Longman, p. 81.

^{xviii} While African traditional religions considered sacrifices to be offered to the Supreme God, they are never to be done directly as a mark of respect for God. They believe that God should not be approached directly since He is mighty and great. To this end, they believe that the spirits are created to serve as mediators between God and man and would therefore be an appropriate channel for conveying their desires. In fact, they believe that once the sacrifice is offered through the spirits, they are implicitly offered to the supreme God. The final acceptance of the sacrifice also lies with God. Often, the prayer of the petitioner is that, "may God accept my sacrifice." see Cornelius Olowola (1993). *African Traditional Religion*, p. 51.

^{xix} The two objects of sacrifice mentioned in this paper are not exhaustive. There are several other objects of sacrifice in African traditional religions, but I believe that these two will suffice for the purpose of this paper as they convey the major idea being projected in this work.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* was to show that the *kenosis* of Christ was a sacrifice to God to atone for the sins of the entire human race. He posited that the sin of Adam corrupted the whole of human race and if sin must be removed and humankind reconciled to God, there must be a person who is perfect to do it in order that the honor of God, which was injured by the reason of sin, might be restored. It becomes clear, therefore, that the object of the sacrifice of God is no other, but God Himself for the purpose of taking care of the original sin at a universal level. According to Hart (1999: 201), Anselm's theory

Focuses exclusively on what it is that we are saved from and by, rather than what we are saved for . . . It represents the first thorough going attempt in the West to unpack (by means of a secondary soteriological metaphor) the *ratio* and *necessitas* of the events to which the heart of the gospel tradition bears witness, especially in their moral aspect.

Anselm, therefore, through his theory of the atonement exposed one to the precarious condition of humankind that necessitated the incarnation of the God-man. By this, humanity is saved, the lordship of Christ is affirmed since in no other religion have we found one who is able to die and resurrect the third day as Jesus prophesied before his death. Humanity should learn therefore, to place its faith in the God of love who requires no other sacrifices from it since no amount of sacrifice from humankind is able to pay for the immense debt of sin.^{xx}

African traditional religions, on the other hand, as we have seen in the traditional religion of the peoples of Africa, practice offering of sacrifices to the gods; and believes that such acts are efficacious in atoning the sins of offenders; an assertion that challenges the lordship of Jesus because it places itself on equal pedestal with Christ as being efficient for salvation in its sacrificial system. Although African traditional religions believe in the notion of the original sin, it is doubtful if the sacrifices offered are effectual in removing sins. Spirits, divinities, and ancestors are the objects of sacrifices in African traditional religious sacrifices, but for Anselm, such would be completely wrong and incapable of removing sins.

The greatest implication lies in the fact that while Anselm's theory opens the gate for proper explication to the conservative evangelical teaching and understanding of the way of salvation, African traditional religions open the way for religious pluralism and the idea of universalism. This fact can be buttressed with the assertion of the late Professor Idowu insisted that, God cannot be localized and His salvific grace is not limited by race, color, creed, or religion. To this end, the resolution of all African churches that met in Ibadan, Nigeria in 1963 was that African traditional religions have redemptive value and therefore, should be encouraged. This, however is dangerous by biblical standards. Salvation is in no other, but in Christ (Acts 4:12).

Anselm's theory of the atonement exposes the weaknesses in the sacrifices of African Indigenous Religions. Indeed, if the process of atonement and sacrifices of the Old Testament could not remove sin permanently, then how can the African sacrificial system do so? The concept of salvation in African traditional religions is best anthropocentric. This religion does not point them to God, but is simply a utilitarian approach to religion. Sin boils down to only social ills with subsequent adequate punishment. In this case, it fails to capture the very

^{xx} Notice that the issue of the believer placing his or her faith in Christ for salvation is emphasized in Anselm's theory. He was more concerned about explaining the necessity of Christ's death. Little wonder the reformers and later evangelical Christians adapted Anselm's explication of the atonement to explain the concept of salvation. See Charles Horne (1971). *Salvation*, Chicago: Moody Press, p. 26.

reason for sin and thus cannot proffer an appropriate solution. Anselm pointed to this fact. Anselm was able to explain the source of original sin and why human beings are at danger of destruction. He also showed how this was effectively dealt with in his theory. Anselm's theory, therefore, opens the gate for the gospel message for the African traditional religion practitioner. No other sacrifice is necessary for salvation after the sacrifice of Christ.

Moreover, the African worldview is such that it involves constant struggle and battle with cosmic powers — witchcraft, sorcery, and demonic oppression among others. Continuous sacrifices to the ancestors do not give the most needed victory. They are therefore continually involved in rituals and sacrifices to these gods and ancestors. The realization that Christ died on the cross on their behalf to put an end to such sacrifices and above all to secure victory over the cosmic oppressive powers will be profitable for mass evangelization and the spreading of the gospel.

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