Title: The use of the concept and the need for sacrifice in Yoruba Traditional religion to formulate contextual theology on sacrifice in Biblical atonement

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Abstract:

This dissertation explores how the concept of sacrifice in Yoruba Traditional Religion (YTR) can be used to formulate contextual theology on biblical atonement. It employs the method of critical contextualization proposed by Paul Hilbert.

The study shows the relevance of YTR and the elements of belief on sacrifice relevant to both Yoruba and biblical atonement. It also identifies the elements in YTR having similarities with certain biblical teachings: namely, (1) substitution, focusing on deliverance from transferable death in YTR and eternal death in biblical teaching; (2) propitiation, emphasizing the freedom from the wrath of higher beings; (3) victory, emphasizing the Orisa’s victory over the Ajogun in YTR and Christ’s victory over Satan; (4) supreme sacrifice in YTR, reflecting the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice in the biblical teaching; (5) communion, emphasizing fellowship in both YTR and in the biblical teaching; and (6) prayer, as a means of communication with higher beings in both YTR and the biblical teaching. The study also identifies the elements in YTR which are opposed to biblical teaching such as (1) sacrificing to the spirits, and (2) the sacrificing of unclean animals.
While non-compatible elements in YTR were considered unsuitable for contextual theology, compatible elements have been used on atonement in the Yoruba context as follows:

1. The biblical idea of substitution is taught, by using incurable sickness in YTR as a metaphor for sin and transferable death in YTR as a reflection of eternal death borne and overcome by Christ’s substitutionary death.

2. The biblical idea of propitiation is taught, by showing the wrath of the Yoruba divinities as a dim reflection of God’s legitimate displeasure against sin, but which is averted by Christ’s propitiatory death.

3. The biblical idea of victory is taught, by showing Orisa’s victory over the Ajogun. This is a reflection of the victory of Christ over Satan, resulting in an authentic and lasting victory over demons.

4. Lastly, the biblical idea of the sufficient once-for-all-sacrifice of Christ is taught, by using the idea of a supreme sacrifice in YTR as a reflection of the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice, which affords man the benefits of atonement, communion and prayer.