The Concept of Sin as Conceived in African Traditional Religion and Christianity: A Comparative View

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ABSTRACT
The comparative study explores the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), examining their distinct understandings, implications and approaches to reconciliation. Through a critical analysis of theological and cultural perspectives, this research highlights the complexities of sin in both traditions, revealing differences in definition, consequences, and redemption. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of sin across religious traditions promoting interfaith dialogue, cultural sensitivity and respect for diverse spiritual frameworks, ultimately fostering greater understanding and cooperation between different religious communities. African Religion has often been described as lacking clear concept of sin. Some scholars have held the view that morality completely disassociated from African Religion tries to analyze the truth or otherwise of such ideas and concept of people held of the African society. The study examines the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion, highlighting their distinct understandings, implications and approaches to reconciliation. The study reveals that both traditions emphasize the importance of moral accountability, personal responsibility, and the need for restoration and redemption. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities of human morality and the diverse ways in which sin and moral culpability are conceptualized and addressed in different religious traditions. The findings of this study have implications for interfaith dialogue, moral education, and culturally sensitive approaches to addressing moral issues in diverse contexts. The study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing a comparative analysis methodology to examine concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The study underscores the importance of interfaith dialogue and understanding, encouraging mutual respect and cooperation between ATR and Christianity.

KEYWORDS
Christianity, African Traditional Religion (ATR), Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background to The Study

The concept of sin is understood differently in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Christianity view sin as a rebellion against God, disobedience to his laws, and a fundamental aspect of human nature that requires redemption. Human beings were created in the image of God but sin separated them from God bringing judgment and death. Salvation is achieved through faith in Jesus Christ who redeems humanity from sin. In African Traditional Religion, sin is understood as a disturbance of the cosmic order. Sin is seen as behaviour against the society, against Cosmic order, and a breach of societal equilibrium. Sin can be committed against ancestors and divinities, and forgiveness is

often sought through sacrifices, purification, and confession. Sin is not necessarily seen as a personal guilt but rather as a communal issue that affects the entire community.
Many people lack a deep understanding of the concept of sin in different religious traditions, leading to misunderstandings and stereotypes. The complexity of sin in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity is often overlooked, resulting in oversimplification and misrepresentation. Misunderstanding about sin can contribute to tensions and conflicts between different religious communities. Limited understanding of sin in different traditions can hinder meaningful dialogue and cooperation between religious groups. Furthermore, lack of understanding in ATR and Christianity can lead to Cultural insensitivity and disrespect. Inaccurate representation or oversimplified representations of sin in different tradition can perpetuate stereotypes and misconceptions. Misunderstanding about sin can limit opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between different religious communities. These observable problem calls for concerns, and need to promote greater understanding, respect and cooperation between different religious traditions ultimately contributing to a more harmonious and inclusive society. There is this notable gap in comparative research and need to explore the similarities and differences between their conceptions in both African Traditional Religion and Christianity. Sin is often understood as a disruption of community harmony and balance, affecting not only the individual but also the community and ancestors. In Christianity however, sin is understood as a rebellion against God's will, resulting in spiritual death and separation from God. It is trite therefore to illuminate deep understanding on the concept of sin. It is crucial to grasp the moral and spiritual implications of human actions in both African Traditional Religion and Christianity. The cultural and theological insights of the study offer valuable insights into their cultural and theological contexts, promoting greater understanding and respect between them. The concept of sin is very fundamental and quite extensive study. There is a notable lack of comparative research exploring the similarities and differences between their conceptions of sin in these two traditions, potentially leading to misunderstandings and representations. Thus, without a nuanced understanding and misrepresentations of the concept of sin, there is a risk of misunderstandings and misrepresentations of these traditions.

B. Statement of The Problem

The concept of sin is understood differently in Christianity and African Traditional Religion leading to potential conflicts and misunderstandings between the two beliefs systems. While in Christianity sin relates to understanding morality and ethics, African Traditional Religion emphasizes forgiveness and redemption. Sin is seen as a rebellion against God, disobedience to his laws, and a fundamental aspect of human nature that requires redemption through faith in Jesus Christ. This views held by Christianity is sacrosanct. To an African Traditional Religion belief, sin encompasses cosmic order, a disruption or distortion of the divine order and behaviour against the society, ancestors, and divinities.
The concept of sin is a complex and multifaceted issue that is understood differently across various religious traditions. Despite the significance of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), there is a lack of comprehensive understanding and comparative analysis of the concept of sin in these two traditions. There is lack of appreciation for the nuances of sin in ATR and Christianity and it can lead to Cultural insensitivity and disrespect. The absence of a comprehensive comparative analysis of sin

in ATR and Christianity can limit opportunities for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Hence, there ought to be a comparative analysis of the concept of sin in Christianity and ATR, promoting a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of sin in these two traditions.

C. Research Questions

The following research questions guides this study:

1. What is the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion?
2. How is sin understood in African Traditional Religion and Christianity?
3. What are the implications and consequences of sin in ATR?
4. What are the similarities and differences between the concepts of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion?

D. Objectives of The Study

The aim of this research is to conduct a comparative analysis of the concept of sin in African Traditional Religion and Christianity, exploring the similarities and differences between these two religious traditions.

The objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the origin of the concept of sin in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity.
2. To investigate the definition, implications and consequences of sin in ATR and Christianity.
3. To compare the approaches to reconciliation and forgiveness in both traditions
4. To contribute to interfaith dialogue and provide insights that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of sin across religious traditions.
5. To analyze the implications of sin to the destiny of the faithful of African Traditional Religion and Christianity.
6. To discover fresh knowledge and in-depth analysis of concept of sin.

E. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study explores the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), examining the Theological Cultural and Philosophical underpinnings of sin in both traditions. The study is delimited to specific religious traditions viz-a-vis Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The study focuses on the two religions excluding other religious traditions. The study is limited to the concept of sin, excluding other related concepts such ass morality, ethics or spirituality. The scope and delimitation of the study are designed to provide indebt analysis by allowing a detailed examination of the concept of sin in Christianity and ATR. It enables Comparative analysis to facilitate comparison and contrast between the two traditions. It also considers the cultural contexts in which sin is understood and practiced. The scope of this study is limited to comparative analysis of the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). It involves the examination of the theological and cultural contexts that shape the understanding of sin in both traditions, the exploration of the implications of this study for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. The study focuses on general concepts and principles but may draw examples from specific African cultures and Christian denominations. The study is

grounded in existing theological and cultural theories, but may not exhaustively cover all perspective.

F. Significance of The Study

The study contributes to promoting tolerance and understanding between different religious groups, fostering a more harmonious and cohesive society. The study encourages mutual respect and appreciation for the diversity of religious beliefs and practices, particularly in multicultural and multi-religious contexts. The study advances knowledge on the concept of sin in Christianity and ATR. Contributing to the academic discourse on comparative religious studies, and promotes theoretical, practical, social and academic discourse.

G. Definition of Terms

The following concepts are defined for the purpose of this study:

1. Christianity: A monotheistic Abrahamic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.
2. African Traditional Religion: A diverse set of beliefs and practices rooted in the cultural and spiritual traditions of African Communities.
3. Morality: Principles concerning right and wrong behaviour.
4. Contextualization: Morality shaped by cultural, religious and social contexts.
5. Spirituality: A sense of connection to something greater than oneself, often involving a search for meaning and purpose.
6. Expression: Spirituality is expressed through religious practices, rituals and personal experiences.
7. Forgiveness: Act of pardoning or absolving someone of wrong doing.
8. Reconciliation: The process of restoring relationships or balance after conflict or wrong doing.
9. Punishment: A consequence or penalty imposed for wrong doing.
10. Interfaith Dialogue: Knowledge of different cultural religious understanding as to promote dialogue and spiritual growth.
11. Atonement: Act of making amends or reparation for wrong doing.
12. Sin: In Christianity, an act or thought that separates individuals from God, violating his laws and commandment.

In ATR, sin is often seen as a breach of communal harmony, disturbing the balance between individuals, community and spiritual

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This literature review examines scholarly perspectives on the concept of sin in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity, focuses on Nigerian contexts. It surveys works on Christian original sin, redemption through Christ and personal accountability alongside African Traditional Religion notions of communal harmony, spiritual balance and ritual

restoration in traditions. This review synthesizes literature to highlight convergences and divergence in Nigerian / African contexts.

A. Empirical and Theoretical Review of Related Literature

The empirical review highlights key aspects of sin concepts in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). In Christianity, original sin regards to inherited sinful nature from Adam's fall (Genesis 3). The personal accountability on individual sin and responsibility and redemption through Christ's atonement addresses sin (John 3:16, Romans 3: 23-25).

In African Traditional Religion (ATR), communal harmony emphasizes that sin disrupts balance within community. Ritual restoration in Yoruba is called '*Ebbo*'[i] meaning sacrifices and '*ifa'* divination guides for restoration of the victims.

Ancestors play role in maintaining order and balance[ii]. African Traditional Religion made use of oral Traditions which vary across cultures e.g Yoruba, Igbo and Efik.

In nature of sin, we have Christianity's personal sin against African Traditional Religion's communal imbalance. There is ritual / sacrifices in ATR as against Christianity redemption mechanisms. Similarly, while there are oral traditions in African Traditional Religion, Christianity is purely biblical injunction[iii].

B. Identified Gaps in Literature

This study has left a gap in knowledge especially in limiting the comparative study. There is a need for more in-depth comparative analyses of sin concepts in ATR and Christianity, exploring similarities and differences across various African cultures and Christian denominations. Cultural contextualization forms another gap. Understanding sin in ATR requires nuanced appreciation of specific cultural contexts as concepts vary across African societies like Yoruba, Efik and Shona traditions. Theological interfaces between ATR's communal harmony focus and Christianity's personal sin emphasis need further exploration, impacting interfaith dialogue and theological discussions. Dynamics of syncretism and hybrid religious practices in Africa highlight gaps in understanding how ATR and Christianity interplay in contemporary expressions. African myths and origin of sin differ from biblical narratives; more research could illuminate these unique perspectives. Finally, historical impacts of colonialism on ATR and Christianity interactions reveal gaps in addressing cultural suppression and identity issues.

C. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework:

The conceptual framework of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) can be understood through several key dimensions.

1. Theological foundation: Sin is rooted in the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve's fall (Genesis 3), leading to humanity's fallen nature.
2. Nature of Sin: Sin is seen as disobedience to God's commandments, rebellion against God, and separation from God's holiness.

3. Consequences: Sin leads to spiritual death, separation from God and need for redemption through Jesus Christ.
4. Redemption: Salvation from sin is through faith in Jesus Christ, emphasizing grace, forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

In African Traditional Religion, the following concepts are itemized:

1. Communal Harmony: Sin or transgression, is often viewed as a breach of communal harmony, affecting relationships within the community and with ancestors.
2. Cosmic Balance: Sin can disrupt the balance of the cosmic order, requiring restoration through rituals and sacrifices.
3. Ancestral Connection: Ancestors play a significant role in ATR, with sin a significant role in ATR, with sin potentially affecting relationships with ancestors and the spiritual realms.
4. Restoration: Restoration of balance often involves rituals, sacrifices and purification ceremonies to address transgressions.

Etymologically, most Hebrew words translated as 'sin' throughout the Old Testament are derived from the word 'Charta', which originally means "to miss the mark". According to Girdlestone who emphasized that "Charta" means to miss the divine aims of God. It is used 833 times in varying forms in the Old Testament, while the nouns derived from this root are used up to 352 times. The corresponding New Testament words for it are hamar tane. From 1986 while agreeing with Girdlestone that 'Charta' is missing the mark or failure to achieve a goal, argues that Charta is more than ignorance or error or erroneous thought. It can be described as wrong action. In a nutshell 'Charta' as a sin is seen as a breach of covenant.

"Awen" is another Hebrew word for sin in the Old Testament. Its liberal translation is 'iniquity', 'guilt' or "punishment". It is also used to represent sin as guilt or culpability involving deserved punishment or blameworthiness for sins of commission and omission. From (1986) opines that the root meaning of 'Awen' is to 'err'. It also means a deviation from the mark. But in common biblical usage, it is used for both "iniquity" and the burden of "guilt" that results from it.

The concept of sin is a complex and multifaceted issue that has been explored in various traditions, including Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). In Christianity, sin is often understood as a transgression or violation of God's law, resulting in separation from God and humanity's fallen nature[iv]. The doctrine of Original sin, which posits that humanities sinful nature is inherited from Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, is a central tenet of Christian theology (Genesis 3: 1-7). Christian theologians have debated the nature and consequences of sin, with some emphasizing the role of human freewill and others highlighting the impact of sin on human relationships and society.

In ATR, sin is often understood as a violation of communal norms, taboos, or moral codes, leading to disharmony and misfortune. ATR emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance and harmony in the community, with sin being seen as a disruption to this balance. The concept of sin ancestral worship, with ancestors being seen as guardians of moral order and punishers of wrong doing.

Comparative studies on sin in Christianity and ATR have highlighted the similarities and differences between the two traditions. Some studies have noted that both traditions emphasize the importance of moral accountability and the need for restoration and

reconciliation. Others have highlighted the difference in the understanding of sin, with Christianity emphasizing communal responsibility.

D. Theoretical Framework

Original Sin Theory:
The proponent of original sin theory, Augustine of Hippo in his book, "Confession of city of God" emphasized that original sin deals with humanity's fallen nature. Humanity inherits sinful nature due to Adam's fall (Genesis 3). Karl Barth viewed sin as humanity's rebellion against God's word (Church Dogmatics). John Calvin discussed sin and predestination in institutes of the Christian religion.

Doctrinal Theory:
The concept of sin is understood differently in African traditional religion and Christianity, reflecting their unique theological and cultural perspectives. In ATR, sin is often seen as a disruption of community harmony and balance, affecting not only the individual but the community and ancestors. Sin is associated with ritual impurity, spiritual consequences and the need for restoration through rituals, sacrifices and purification ceremonies. Ancestors are believed to play a significant role in maintain community balance and punishing or rewarding individuals for their actions. In Christianity, sin is understood as a rebellion against God's will, resulting in spiritual death and separation from God. It is seen as a personal act of disobedience with individual responsibility and guilt emphasized. Christianity teaches that redemption from sin is possible through faith in Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of humanity There have been various responses to the doctrinal views on sin in every society. Augustinian response (354-430) hinging upon the concept of fall of man from an original state of righteousness to sin. To him, the world was as perfect as created by God. He postulated that fall of angelic and human being according to Augustine was the origin of evil or sin. He said that "All evil is either sin or punishment for sin" Recoeur 1967 discussing this question of original sin says that nothing is less amenable to a direct confrontation with philosophy than this concept of original sin, for nothing is more deceptive than its appearance. According to who examines various African myths which highlight the fact that when God originally created man, there was harmony and family relationships between the two and the first people enjoyed only what was good.
In nearly all African societies, it is thought that the spirits are either the origin of evil or agents of evil. When human spirits become detached from human contact, people experience or fear them as evil or harmful. According to the Vugusu say that there is an evil divinity which God created well. But later turned against him and began to do evil. Mystical power is neither good nor evil in itself, but when used maliciously by some individuals, it is tag evil.

The doctrine of Original sin which posits that humanity's sinful nature is inherited from Adam and Eve's disobedience is a central tenet of Christian theology. Some Christian's tradition believes in total depravity which holds that humanity is completely corrupted by sin and unable to save itself (Calvin, 1536). Christianity also emphasizes redemption through Jesus Christ who is seen as the savior of humanity from sin (John 3: 16). Christianity also emphasizes personal sin which refers to individual acts of disobedience or wrong doing (Romans 3: 23).

African Traditional Religion (ATR) places emphasizes on communal relationships and the interconnectedness of human beings. Sin is often understood as a communal issue, affecting the entire community rather than just the individual. ATR places a strong emphasizes on ancestral worship, with ancestors seen as guardians of moral order and punishers of wrong doing. It also emphasizes the importance of avoiding taboos and prohibitions, which are seen as sources of sin and misfortune.

E. Moral Culpability

Moral culpability refers to the degree to which an individual is responsible for their actions and can be held accountable for the consequences of those actions. In the context of sin, moral culpability is a crucial concept in both Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR).

In Christianity, moral culpability is closely tied to the concept of free-will. According to Christian doctrine, humans have the capacity to choose between good and evil, and are therefore morally responsible for their actions (Genesis 2: 16-17); (Deuteronomy 30: 19). The Bible teaches that individuals will be judged according to their deeds, and that those whose sin will be held accountable for their actions (Roman 2: 6-8; Revelation 20:12-13) .

In African Traditional Religion (ATR), moral culpability is often understood in a more communal sense. The community plays a significant role in shaping individual behavior, and individuals are often held accountable for their actions within the context of their community. ATR emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance and harmony in the community, and individuals who disrupt this balance can be held morally culpable.
There are several key factors when considering moral culpability:

1. Intent: Was the action intentional or unintentional? Did the individual intend to cause harm or was it an accident?
2. Consequences: What were the consequences of the action? Did it cause harm to others or disrupt the community?
3. Context: What was the context in which the action took place? Was the individual under duress or coercion?
4. Accountability: Can the individual be held accountable for their actions? Do they have the capacity to understand the consequences of their actions?

Christian moral culpability is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been explored by theologians, ethicists, and biblical scholars. This literature provides an overview of the key themes and debates surrounding Christian moral culpability. The bible provides the foundation for Christian moral culpability, emphasizing the importance of personal responsibility and accountability. The story of Adam and Eve highlights the importance of moral choice and accountability (Genesis 2: 16-17). Moses exhortation to the Israelites emphasizes the importance of choosing life and obeying God's commands. Paul's writings emphasize that individuals will be judged according to their deeds (Romans 2: 6-8).

The doctrine of original sin, articulated by Augustine, emphasizes humanity's inherent sinful nature and moral culpability. Also the concept of freewill emphasized by Pelagius and others, highlights humanity's capacity for moral choice and accountability. Theologians

such as Thomas Aquinas have emphasized the importance of moral responsibility and need for individuals to act in accordance with their conscience.

F. Application to The Present Study

Original sin theory explains better the sin's origin and nature in Christianity while ATR deals more on communal harmony and balance theory. Generally, harmartheology suits studying sin concept in Christianity and ATR comparatively. This original sin theory is applicable to this study as it encourages interfaith understanding, cultural sensitivity in theological discussions and Nigerian / African contextual relevance.

G. Summary of Literature Review

The concept of sin in Christianity and African traditional religion reveals distinct theological and cultural perspectives. In Christianity sin originates from Adam's fall which emphasizes original sin. Sin is seen as rebellion against God, redemption through Jesus. It focuses on personal sin and salvation through faith. In African Traditional Religion in the other way, sin disrupts communal harmony affecting community and ancestors. It laid emphasis on restoring balance via rituals and sacrifices. Ancestors also play key role in maintaining harmony.

In comparism therefore, Christianity focuses on individual while African Traditional Religion focuses on community. Moreso, Christianity is Christ centered i.e, redemption through Christ, while African Traditional Religion deals on rituals.
However, the two religions, can tolerate each other through dialogue and interfaith understanding. Cultural context shapes sin in both traditions, impacting theological discussions and interfaith engagement.

The work has explored the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), with a focus on moral culpability and doctrinal views. The review has highlighted the complexities and nuances of sin in both traditions, demonstrating the importance of understanding the cultural and theological context of sin. The work has shown that Christianity emphasizes the importance of personal sin, original sin and redemption through Jesus Christ. Moral culpability is closely tied to the concept of freewill and individuals are held accountable for their actions. It also highlighted the communal nature of sin in African Traditional Religion emphasizing the importance of maintaining balance and harmony in the community. Moral culpability is often understood in a more communal sense, with individuals held accountable for their actions within the context of their community.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative theological and phenomenological approach to explore the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), focusing on Nigerian contexts. The methodology aims to foster understanding of sins, conceptualizations, highlighting cultural and theological nuances.

This study outlines the research methodology employed in this study to explore the concept of sin and moral culpability in African Traditional Religion and Christianity. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theological, philosophical, and cultural underpinnings of these concepts in both traditions. To achieve this goal, a qualitative research approach was adopted, utilizing a comparative analysis of African Traditional Religion and Christianity. This methodology allows for an in-depth examination of the similarities and differences between the two traditions, providing insights into complexities of human morality and the diverse ways in which sin and moral culpability are conceptualized and addressed. This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing a comparative analysis of Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) to explore the concept of sin and moral culpability. The research methodology is designed to provide a nuanced understanding of the similarities and differences between the two traditions.

A. Research Design

This study will employ a qualitative research design, utilizing a comparative analysis approach to examine the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. This is suitable for exploring complex and nuance topics such as sin and moral culpability. The design involves a comparative analysis of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, using a range of data sources, including theological text, scriptures and ethnographic studies.

The research design for exploring Sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) involves a qualitative comparative approach focusing on theological and cultural dimensions. It examines concepts of Sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), highlighting similarities and differences. It utilizes textual analysis of religious scriptures, theological works and ethnographic insights into ATR practices. It further considers cultural and religious contexts shaping understandings of sin in both traditions. The work contrast Christian personal sin and redemption through Christ with ATR's communal harmony and ritual restoration. There is acknowledgment of cultural and religious nuances shaping sin concepts. Recognition of diversity within Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) to avoid oversimplification. The research design further combines theological, anthropological and cultural perspectives for nuanced understanding.

Finally, this research design aims to facilitate understanding of Sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) appreciating theological and cultural dimensions and contributing to comparative religious studies.

B. Sources of Data

Textual sources include Christian scriptures (old and new testaments) for concept like original sin (Genesis 3), redemption (John 3: 16).
Theological writings provided another source. The works of Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin on Christian sin theology. African Traditional Religion (ATR) oral traditions provided another veritable source. Myths, proverbs, Ifa Corpus (Yoruba tradition), Igbo tradition, reflecting sin and moality concepts.

Also, scholarly works from theologians: E.B. Idowu (Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief), J. S. Mbiti (African Religion and Philosophy). The comparative studies or works on Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) interfaces. Ethnographic data was quite compelling in this work. Observations on African Traditional Religion practices, rituals for restoration, communal aspects play significant role. Interviews with adherents of Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) on sin perceptions were conducted.

This method of data collection includes literature review i.e, systematic review of theological texts, scholarly articles on sin in Christianity and ATR. Content analysis textual data from scriptures, theological works was employed. Ethnographic research on field works in communities practicing ATR and comparative analysis affords good method of data collection in this work.

C. Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study involves a thematic analysis of the data collected from various sources, including theological text, scriptures, and ethnographic studies. The analysis aims to identify patterns and themes related to sin and moral culpability in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The comparison of themes and patterns among the two traditions reveals both similarities and differences. Both traditions emphasize the importance of moral accountability and the need for repentance and forgiveness. The understanding of sin and moral culpability differs significantly between the two traditions, reflecting their unique theological, cultural and historical context.
The following are the types of analysis used in this study:

1. Thematic Analysis: The data collected will be analyzed thematically, identifying common themes and patterns related to the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion.
2. Comparative Analysis: A comparative analysis will be conducted to identify similarities and differences between the Christian and African Traditional Religion.
3. Coding: The data is coded using a coding scheme that identifies themes and patterns related to sin and moral culpability.
4. Data Preparation: The data is prepared for analysis by organizing and categorizing the sources.

Focus on understanding sin concepts through textual, ethnographic and comparative analysis. Identifying themes like communal harmony, original sin, redemption mechanisms. Also, examining scriptures (Bible for Christianity and ATR practices). Exploring field studies on ATR practices, communal rituals in Nigeria, and contrasting Christian and ATR views on sin and redemption. It involves thematic coding, identifying patterns like sin communal balance and redemption. Considerations given to contextual sensitivity by respecting cultural religious contexts. Acknowledgment of variations within ATR and Christianity and combine theology, anthropology for nuanced understanding.
This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the concept of sin and moral culpability in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The methods used in this study include:

Documentary Analysis:
Documentary analysis will be used to analyse the scriptures, theological texts and other relevant documents related to the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

Content Analysis:
Content analysis will be used to analyse the themes and patterns related to the concept of sin in the data collected.

Sampling:
Purposive Sampling: Purposive sampling will be used to select relevant texts, scriptures, and case studies that are representative of the Christian and African Traditional concepts of sin. Purposive sampling is used in selecting text, informants, cases relevant to sin concepts in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. There is also a theoretical sampling used in choosing data to explore themes like communal harmony, original sin and redemption mechanisms. Sampling of texts in Christian scriptures was adopted by use of Bible and ATR practices. Samples are ensured to be relevant to research questions on sin concepts. It ensures cultural and religious contexts of ATR and Christianity.
Considerations was on representativeness, ensuring a samples represent relevant aspects of sin concepts. Cultural sensitivity by respecting ATR and Christian beliefs, practices in sampling and theoretical saturation.

The outcomes of sampling include Rich data i.e, insights into sin concepts in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Comparative insights, contrasting and relating sin views across traditions. Finally, contextual understanding was done by reflecting Nigerian cultural and religious contexts.

Literature Review:
A literature review on the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) reveals several key themes and perspectives. In Christianity, sin is often seen as a separation or rebellion against God's law, whereas in ATR it is viewed as a disruption of the cosmic order or communal harmony. Studies compare sin concepts in Christianity and specific ATR traditions like Efik, Yorubas and Igbos, highlighting differences in meaning and perception. Cultural and religious contexts is deeply intertwined with African culture, leading to complexities and potential conflicts with Christian beliefs and practices. Both Christianity and ATR have concepts of life after death, judgment and punishment, though with distinct interpretations. A comprehensive literature review of existing research on sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion is conducted to provide a foundation for the study.

Comparative Analysis:
Sin is often viewed as personal transgression against God's law (Roman 3: 23). ATR viewed sin as a breach of communal harmony. Redemption of sin in Christianity is through Jesus Christ, and in ATR, restoration is done via rituals. Atonement through Jesus Christ faith-based salvation and in ATR, atonement through rituals, sacrifices and communal reconciliation. Moral framework Christianity involves commandments, scriptures-based morality. ATRA emphasizes on taboos, communal norms etc.

This is used to compare and contrast the understanding of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion highlighting similarities and differences between the two traditions.

Case Studies:
This section present case studies that illustrate the concept of sin and moral culpability in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The case studies highlight the complexities and nuances of sin and moral culpability in both traditions. The case studies demonstrate the importance of understanding the concept of sin and moral culpability in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). By exploring these concepts in different cultural and theological contexts, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of human morality. The story of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12) is a classic example of sin and moral culpability in Christianity. King David's actions including his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah are considered grave sins. In African Traditional Religion, the concept of taboos is central to understand sin and moral culpability. For example, among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, certain actions such as incest or murder, are considered taboo and are punishable by the gods. These case studies illustrate the complexities and nuances of sin and moral culpability in Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Furthermore, ancestors play a significant role in maintaining moral order and holding individuals accountable for their actions. For example, among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, ancestors are believed to punish individuals who fail to follow traditional customs and practices. This highlights the importance of communal responsibility and moral accountability. The concept of Ubuntu (Humanity towards others) is central to understanding moral culpability. Ubuntu emphasizes the importance of communal responsibility and moral accountability, highlighting the inter-connectedness of individuals and the community.

Limitations:
The study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the concept of sin in African Traditional Religion and Christianity. The data for this study are from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the Bible, Traditional African text and oral traditions as well as theological and philosophical texts related to Christianity and ATR. Secondary sources are academic journals and books on Christianity and ATR. It also includes research articles and papers on the concept of sin in traditions, commentaries and analysis of relevant texts.

These sources will provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of sin in Christianity and ATR, and will inform the comparative analysis and discussion. Instrument used for collection of data include literature review checklist (a systematic review of existing literature on the concept of sin in Christianity and ATR). Also, comparative analysis framework, a structured approach to comparing and contrasting the concepts of sin in Christianity and ATR.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

1. Limited Generalizability: The findings of this study may not be generalizable to all Christian and African Traditional communities.
2. Interpretive Bias: The researcher's interpretation of the data may be influenced by their own cultural and religious background.

3. Methodological Limitations: The study's qualitative approach may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. The study's sample size may be limited which could impact the representativeness of the findings.
5. Theoretical limitations: The Comparative framework used in the study may not fully capture the complexities and nuances of each religious tradition. The study may not fully account for the cultural context in which the concept of sin is understood and practiced in each tradition.
6. Data Limitations: There may be limited availability of data on African traditional religion which could impact the study's findings. The study may rely on biased sources which could impact the accuracy of findings.

Implications:
The study's findings have several implications for our understanding of sin and moral culpability in Christianity and African Traditional Religion as well as inter-faith dialogue and cooperation. The study's findings can inform inter-state dialogue and cooperation by highlighting the similarities and differences between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. This can help to promote greater understanding and respect between adherences of these traditions. The study's findings can inform moral education and formation in both Christianity and African Traditional Religion, highlighting the importance of teaching individuals about the complexities if sin. The study informs pastoral care and counselling in both Christianity and African Traditional Religion, highlighting the importance of providing supports and guidance to individuals who are struggling with sin. It promotes cultural sensitivity and understanding by highlighting the importance of considering the cultural context in which sin are understood.

Faith communities can benefit from a deeper understanding of sin moral culpability, and can use this understanding to inform their teaching, pastoral care, and community practices. Moral education programs can benefit from a nuance understanding of sin and moral culpability and can use this understanding to inform their curriculum and teaching methods.

IV. CONCEPT OF SIN AS CONCEIVED IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY: A COMPARATIVE VIEW

A. Concept of Sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion

From various myths we see that when God originally created man, there was harmony and family relation between the two, and the first man enjoyed only what was good. The creation of myths of Africa asserts that evil came into the world soon after order and human habitation were ensured. Both among the Yoruba and the Igbo, the human world was formed out of a watery domain of wild marshes a grey region with no living things in it. For the Yoruba, "it was the enterprising Obatala, who first thought of creating a habitable world out of the watery domain of Olorun. Olodumare permitted it and Obatala sojourned to earth by a chain, landed at Ile-Ife and succeeded in creating a world. However, while on a trip to the abode of the gods to report his success, jealously enraged Olokun flooded the new earth. The destitute man had to bargain with shrewd Eahu to carry their message to Olodumare. Orunmila intervened and the earth was saved.

Variations on the theme alleged that the sky 'as very close to men, and so was good, until a woman vouched it with her dirty fingers. The sky moved up with the protecting power of God. Suffering came into the world in the wake. In some African societies, it is said that the departure was because of importunate demand on God. He became a deus remotus for the sake of his peace of mind. The result was that the Evil one bearing the unwelcome gift of suffering came into the world and had a freer hand. In every community there are people who are suspected of working maliciously against their relatives and neighbours, through the use of magic, sorcery and witchcraft. This is the centre of evil mystical power is neither good nor evil in itself, but when used maliciously by some individuals, it is experienced as evil. This view makes an independent and external object which, however, cannot act on its own but must be employed by human or spiritual agents. Besides the myths and legends, African world-view emphasizes the dominant presence of evil. Life is, in fact, conceived as a struggle to survive the machinations of evil forces. It is only in very few parts of Africa that God is worshipped directly. He is usually left to his own grand devices though his existence is acknowledged through personal names, proverbs and ritual references man is left to combat the evil spirits by manipulating the good ones. The ancestors are important here because by death they pass into the spirit world and acquire spiritual powers. Meanwhile, since death is not really a terminus and the spirit world is only a mirror of the human world, the ancestors are conceived as always present. They die to become protectors of their families in the human world only when they are properly buried, have no grudge, are not neglected but obeyed when they give instructions. Otherwise, it is thought that they then become evil spirits. Ekwensu is the Igbo arch-evil spirit. In this case it is men who provoke the living dead to act in 'evil' ways. In African society religion binds the community together, as in all societies of the world social order and peace are recognized by African peoples as essential and sacred. The action or conduct of one man within the community can affect the other members for good or evil. In order to prevent man from becoming rebellious and thus endangering the welfare of the society, there are set patterns or codes of behavior for the individual and the community as a whole. There are certain standards or norms to be observed. If one observes the norm faithfully, it will be to the good of one and ones's society; but if otherwise, it will bring disaster not only to one but also to one's community.

These norms and codes of conduct can be seen as moral values. Fundamentally, moral values are the fruits or of springs of religion and not just human inventions. From the beginning, God has put his law in man's heart and has endowed man with the sense of right and wrong. Man's conscience has always instructed him that there are certain things which he must not do in order to have peace. Such things which are forbidden and must not be done are called taboos.

Taboos are prohibited actions, the breaking of which is followed by supernatural penalty. In considering taboos, covenant comes into focus. When one enters into a covenant with a divinity such a covenant has its sanctions and demands. One has to obey all the regulations of the cult and observe its taboos. Each divinity usually has certain things which are taboos to him. For example, among the Yoruba, all the worshippers of Orisa-nla, the arch-divinity, must not drink palm wine because Orisa-nla forbids it. And as such palm wine is regarded as taboo to him. Among the Igbos, Ala the earth goddess is the guardian of morality and the following thing are taboo to her:

1. Stealing of yam either from the barn or from the farm
2. Incest
3. Suicide especially by hanging
4. A woman climbing palm tree or kolanut tree
5. Killing or eating a 'Totem' animal on purpose, etc .

The Yoruba word for taboo is eewo "things forbidden", "things not done". The Igbo will call it Nso-Ani "Things forbidden by Ani the earth goddess" .
Thus each divinity has "things forbidden" which must be observed on entering into covenant with him. This morality is equally set in African communities, there are sanctions recognized as the approved standard of social and religious conduct on the part of individuals in the society and of the community as a whole.

A breach of or failure to adhere to the sanctions is sin, and this incurs the displeasure of the Deity and his functionaries. Sin is therefore, doing that which is contrary to the will and directions of the Deity. It includes any immoral behaviours, ritual mistakes any offences against God or man, breach of covenant, breaking of taboos and doing anything regarded as abominable and polluting. We cannot speak of sin in isolation. It has got to be related to God and to man; God is regarded as the guardian and founder of morality. To disregard God, the divinities and ancestral spirits is to commit sin. Likewise, to disregard the norms and taboos of the society is to commit sin.

One of the most serious violations of the moral order in African traditional ethics is the employment of mystical forces to do harm to one's neighbour. This is a typical example of evil, hence witchcraft which is precisely the employment of mystical forces to harm people is uncompromisingly condemned all over Africa. The witch is the very incarnation of evil. In a study according to is not exaggerating when speaking about the ethics of the Tiv people, he says that witchcraft is considered by them as, "the unpardonable blameworthy among people of same vocation". For example, people who trade in Iron, hunters, drivers, blacksmiths, have certain norms to follow in order to enhance the place of morality in the society.

Then we have the ancestors, these according to pander are equally regarded as the custodians of morality in the society. What we have said about the divinities equally applies here. Morality connected with the ancestors may be narrowed down in its application. What may be the taboos of the ancestors of a family may not apply to another family. For example, according to Egwu families in some families, it may be a taboo for a woman to eat snail when pregnant while it is not true of most families in Imo State of Nigeria.

However, when we look at the morality or the norm of a conduct that is universally binding, we find it in the supreme deity to whom all creatures relate. It is in this perspective that we come to examine what we may describe as sin in the African context.

In the creation stories, we found that for man to have fellowship with God, he must obey. The disobedience of man can be seen as sin against God. All sin is fundamentally the performance of sets which disapproves, and when this happens there is a separation in man's relationship with God.

Thus, sin is seen as coming between man and God; it is in disharmony with the will of God. This is the point Awolalu is making when he says: act or sin. "The essence of goodness is African Traditional ethics consists in doing good to others, while the essence of evil consists in doing harm to others, thus morality is interpersonal and social.

Contemporary African thinkers like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere lad Leopold Senghor maintain that traditional African society is based on communalism. Individualism is foreign and abhorrent to the traditional African mentality, for the African is traditionally his brother's keeper. This communal feature of the Traditional African way of life can still be seen today in the extended family relationship characterized by mutual help and independence. Hence, the African makes no sharp distinction between "brother", "half brother", "cousin", "Nephew" etc. All these are designated by the word "brother". Every member of my extended family is my brother or my sister. Whoever has the fortune of being even a little better off than the others within the extended family comes to the aid of the others. The whole extended family share in the fortune and misfortune of any of its members.

Julius Nyerere has rightly pointed out that in this modern world this "family holds to be extended beyond the confine of the extended family and the tribe, and made to embrace the whole nation, the whole Africa and the whole human race.
In general, African peoples believe that morality and sin go together. Morality enhances God's fellowship and maintains the well-being of society. But sin isolates man from God and disrupts his well-being as well as that of the society in which he lives.

B. Concept of Sin in African Traditional Religion

It is not easy to attempt in one chapter to deal with both evil and sin. The two are related, Evil is such a complex ides and happening that it would be rash to attempt a simple definition. Antagonism, destruction, deformation, suffering, and such-all these come under the title "evil" But broadly speaking, privation, "The absence of some good which should be present In Christian theology the issue of privation appears to be a challenge to the goodness of God and has been debated by every theologian since the advent of the Judaic and Christian faiths. Such a problem does not really exist in traditional African society. For that society, starting a spiritual ontology (that the world of man is surrounded by hosts of spirit-beings) attributes evil to personal forces of evil which are able to affect and influence a man's life for good or evil. Thus an earthquake or flood is explained as the anger of some spirit-being at some wrong doings hidden or exposed, in the society. (An unsuccessful or difficult delivery is attributed to the violation of family taboo or to infidelity by the expectant mother), In other words, evil is the confluence of anger from the spirit-world adman's waywardness. African peoples are much aware of evil in the world and in various ways they endeavour to fight it. Several views exist concerning the origin of evil.

The Igbo man like any other African believes that when he sins he makes the higher powers frown. The consequence of sin is evil either to the individual or to the group. This evil is in the form of natural calamity, diseases, sicknesses and death. For example, the Igbo believe that God punishes evil doers with death by lighting. Amadioha is the manifestation of the wrath of God. Like the Yoruba Songo, he descends swiftly on moral offenders like witches, sorcerers, those who poison, steal and those who break His laws. His punishment

is, royal punishment. The Bavenda regard locust invasion, floods and other calamities as punishment from God to those who disobey him. The Lugbara believe that God sends meningitis, and that will conduct that is the deed that destroy good words, lead to sickness and endless disasters sent or approved by God (J.S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in African. (S.P.G.K., London and praeger, New York, 1970), p. 131). Thus in African traditional ethics, it is futile to wish to commit a crime in secret, for no violation of the moral order (whether public or in secret) can escape the divine justice. After the violation sooner or later justice will have its turn. The transcendental moral order is not an order emanating from an impersonal cosmic force, but rather an order established by God containing within an imminent principal of divine justice (J.O. Omeregebe - Op. Cit., Pp. 82-83).

The two dimensional infliction of sanctions consequent upon a sinful act is clearly portrayed in the Traditional Religion. But first the origin of the normative order and the sanctions has a religious stamp. A direct action of the Supreme Being on the violator could be affected through lightning Otherwise the society could inflict punishment as in the case the burning of a murderer of a thief. The Kono for example condemn murder. It is believed that if a person kills another, except in war, he will be punished by the community. He will be sent to a place called "the knee-skin-eating place There the people eat the skin from their knees as a result of hunger. African Ideas of God, worth, London 1961., p.296). An area of crucial sinful perversion in traditional world view is in sexual sinfulness. In some societies, a man's accidental death could be as a result of "the unfaithfulness of the wife that is supposed to have made her husband vulnerable". According to J.V. Taylor, "Sexual sinfulness does not reside in the act itself but is channelled against the proper structure of the family and becomes an attack against its members (J.V. Taylor, Op. Cit, p. 174).
Amongst the Nuer, where a woman commits adultery in a man's house, the husband is likely to suffer most of the three parties. The concept of corporate guilt is not strange to the African. Such natural phenomena as draught, earthquake, famine and epidemic is interpreted in the primal view, as a result of God's anger consequent upon a violation of a moral order, an infringement of the law of God is the essence of the cosmic totality. In Igbo traditional system, the situation even though expressed in the sentence Ala Aruala "an abomination has occurred," is an indication that the community is suffering under the divine wrath as a result an individual and group violation of a cosmic principal. This is true with virtually all African societies where men feel themselves to exist communally in a personalized word. A diviner is consulted to know who had soiled the land. Such a situation calls for desire to restore the normal state of things to regain the favour of the gods and to be at peace with the cosmic totality.

At this stage, the patient becomes a penitent seeking forgiveness by going through some rites of atonement. Often he is accompanied by other members of his family. Every such rite is performed in several stages. As a general pattern, we distinguish the following five stages;

1. Confession by the patient
2. An offering of sacrifice the offer laying his (their) hands on the heads of the victim
3. Absolution by the priest
4. Washing (in special cases, e.g., incest, flagellation is also prescribed)
5. Communal eating

C. Concept of Sin In Christianity

The presence and the problem of sin are just as much a part of the New Testament as of the Old Testament, and yet one who reads it, is immediately struck by an outstanding difference. All the old terms and concepts are here in the New Testament, but deepened and strangely transformed. The one factor which makes this great difference is the work of Jesus Christ. He provides something which the saints of the Old Testament yearn for but could not find; real and certain victory over sin. The doctrine of sin in the New Testament is dominated by the assurance that Christ has come to conquer it. Thus whatever is said to emphasize sin's deadliness and seriousness serves to magnify the greatness of the salvation from sin which Christ has obtained.
As we should expect, each of the New Testament writers has a characteristic way of speaking about sin. Paul is by all accounts the most profound. But there is no essential disharmony amid the variety. Above all, they are all dominated by the assurance of Christ's effective answer to sin.

To a great extent the New Testament gives the Old Testament answer to the question of sin's origin. James approaches the Jewish doctrine of an evil inclination in his explanation of the psychological process of sinning:

"Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full- grown brings forth death." (James 1: 14-15; cf. 4: 1-2). Paul however, while admitting that the "flesh" has passions and desires which entice to evil and hence must be resisted (Rm. 13: 11+; Gal 5: 16-21): makes the principle of sin which lies within the heart responsible for the unruliness of these desires. Indeed, so perverse is the heart of man that the very prohibition of the law which are intended to keep the desires in check serve rather to arouse them (Rem. 7:7-8). As Jesus declared, sin lies deep in the corrupt heart of man (Mk. 7: 21-23). This is the Old Testament view taken seriously once more (of. Mk, 7: 6-7). In Romans 5:12 Paul also explains the origin of sin in line with Lid Testament's conception. He explains that "sin came through one man." That man is Adam. Thus by the single act of Adam, sin came into being. But whereas for the Old Testament, "sin is an individual act, for Paul it is a state which embraces all humanity. Paul, however, does not infer a doctrine of inherited sin. Rather it is to propose a judgment on men in their sinful nature.

The New Testament inherits from the Old Testament a belief in demonic temptation as a source of sin. This is closely associated with the notion of cosmic evil. The devil is mentioned in John as the originator of murder (Jn. 3 44) and deceit, and as the father of those who oppose the work of Christ (of. 1 John 3:8). He is often mentioned (also as "the evil one', "the tempter" or as the arch-opponent of God and the seducer of men. He appears as Jesus' tempter in the synoptic (Matt. 4: 1-11: Mk.1: 12-13; Lk.4: 1-15).

Christians are warned against him (1 Pet. 5. 5), are told to resist him and are admonished to watch and pray that they enter not into temptation, for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mk. 1: 14-38; cf. Matt 6:13). Man can be the cause of sin in another by inducing him to sin by means of persuasions suggestion, command, example, etc., or by cooperating in his sin. When the question of ultimate origin of sin is raised, it is evident that the New Testament possesses a definite historical theory. (Angels that sinned and

were cast down to hell). No trace of the fall watchers/is to be found in the New Testament except perhaps in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. It is rather to Adam's sin in Eden that mankind's depravity is traced. Pauline and Pastoral epistles contain definite recollections of the serpent's seduction of Eve (II Cor. 11: 3; 1Tim. 2: 14), the latter passage gives Eve instead of Adam the specific blame for the fall. But in Romans 5: 12-19, Paul blames Adam, setting out a doctrine of racial involvement in sin similar to that found in Jewish apocalyptic writings of the first century A.D. The Primeval sin of unbelief and idolatry which leads to all kinds of corruption and moral decay when God gives men up to the lu5t6 of their hearts spoken of in Romans 1: does not necessarily refer to Adam's sin. This is not a historical account but a description of the progress of depravity in humanity generally.

The immediate cause of sin however is man himself: All these evil things come from within, and defile a man (Mk. 7: 23). St. Paul speaks of an inner tendency to evil expressed by the term "flesh". The flesh sets us against what good reason or law prescribes. It leads man to evil and to death, but the inclination of the flesh is death but the inclination of the spirit, life and peace (Rom, 8: 6; cf. 6: 19); 13: 14; Gal0 5 16-17 and 24). Paul speaks of sinful flesh and the body of sin (Rom. 8. 3). "I am canal, sold into the power of sin" (Rom. 6: 6). Hence man is in sin's power as long as he has not received Christ's spirit. All men are subject to the "power of sin" because of Adam's sin (Rom. 5: 19). The flesh then, is the internal factor for sin, while the law is an external actor for making man aware of his sinfulness. The law cooperated with the flesh to bring men to sin consciously. Even though the law expressed God's will, it was incapable in itself to effect salvation when sinful flesh clashes with the law that prohibits sin, sin abounds the more (Rom. 5: 20), Yet in the plan of God, the law by its increasing of transgressions serves His purpose; His justice and glory as proclaimed by His son's sacrifice and all human self-glorification is destroyed. By sending his son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin-offering he has condemned sin in the flesh in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us1 who work not according to the spirit (Rom. 8: 4).

In some of the New Testament writings (as Hebrews, James) the concept of morality and the definition of sin are still very similar to those of Judaism – that is, sin that is thought of in relation to the law. However, the New Testament in general opposes the legalistic and impersonal conception. In the New Testament every vestige of the taboo concept is eliminated. Jesus refused to observe the scruples of the Pharisees concerning ritual cleanliness (Mark. 7: 2-5; cf, Matt 15:1), making the pronouncement: "There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him, but the things which come out of a man are what defile him (Mk. 7. 15) This is probably also partially tin intent of the story of Peter's vision of clean and unclean animals in Acts 10. There were lively controversies in the early church over the keeping of the law. (Acts 10-11: 15, Gal. 2, etc.), but the view eventually worn out, chiefly through the work of Paul, that this was no longer the ultimate standard of morality. Jesus kept the law (Matt. 5: 17), but he made it clear that legalism, particularly as it was enforced by the Pharisees, had no place in his concept of righteousness. He refused to follow their tradition condemning them in withering terms as hypocrites and blind leaders of the blind (Matt. 23: 13-26). They had made the law an odious thing. (vs. 4) and the occasion for all kinds of externalism and pretense. Jesus showed them that some parts of the law could be turned against other parts (Mk 10:2 12); he showed them that such ordinances as the keeping of the Sabbath were intended for man's benefit and not as a burden (Matt. 12: 1-14, of Jn. 9: 14, 6); he also reminded

them that love was the real fulfillment of the law (Matt. 5: 43; 22 36-40; cf. Rom, 13: 9-10, Gal. 5: 14, Jas. 2: 8) It is important to observe that Jesus did not count the righteousness obtained from keeping the law as worthless and meaningless; his claim, rather, was that this righteousness is not sufficient (Matt. 5. 20), and if substituted for true inward piety, becomes a horrible farce, Righteousness measured by such an externalistic standard leads to prideful boasting before God (Lk 18: 11-12) while neglecting the duties which God really requires (Mt. 15: 3-9 21: 30-31, 23: 23-26). Thus the very righteousness of which the spiritual elite boasted was in Jesus' eyes the cause of their condemnation before God. Jesus looked for a consciousness of failure before the searching penetration of God's judgment, even when the law had been outwardly observed (Matt. 19:21). Even "the righteous needed is understand that they were sinners in the sight of God" (cf. Mk 2: 17). Jesus according to the Synoptic writers offered no statement on the nature of sin. He was not interested in sin in the abstract but rather in specific sins or more accurately, he was interested primarily in sinners it may be assumed that his idea of the nature of sin was entirely Hebraic. This represented a return to the deep inward conceptions of parts of the Old Testament in repudiating a narrow legalism, Jesus showed that is understanding of the will of God was far wider, and of the darkness of sin far deeper than the Scribes and Pharisees imagined. In the Sermon on the Mount he showed that all the hidden attitudes and emotions are involved in sin, just as much as the outward actions by which legalism judged a man (Matt. 5: 21-43). It is what lies in the heart that counts the most in God's sight; it is sin in the depths of man's being that defiles him the most (Mk.7. 21-23). On the other hand, the true quality of the outward life is determined by and is a manifestation of the spiritual attitude, whether for good or for evil (Matt 7: 15-27, of. Jas 2: 14).

James shares the view that the law has to be taken more seriously than in rabbinic Judaism (2 8, 10); the apostle Paul, however, goes completely beyond the law as a standard of sin and righteousness. Such a passage as Rom 5: 13 where sin is not counted, where there is no law, shows that he could not entirely escape his rabbinic habits of thinking, but for him the law led to condemnation rather than to self-righteousness. Having been a Pharisee himself, Paul knew by personal experience the hollowness of a righteousness measured by external standards. As a converted man Paul could henceforth make no compromise with legalism (Gal. 2:11". Col. 2: 16), even though for the scruples of a weaker brethren (1 Car. 8) Paul knew that the law was impotent as a means of leading one to reincarnation with God (Rom. 8: 3). The apostle does not deny that if a person could keep the law perfectly, in spirit as well as in letter, he would be considered righteous in God's sight. The sad truth is that no one can keep it perfectly. Thus the law points out a man's failures. It shows the depth of his sinfulness. The function of the law is clearly expressed in Rom. 3: 20; 5: 20; '7: 7-2k, Gal. 3: 19-24. It is thus in connection with the law that Paul's most characteristic understanding of sin appears. He often speaks of particular sins, but generally he speaks of sin as an evil power working against the law and against the influence of God's spirit to drag a person into transgression It is in this aspect that sin appears in the notable section Rom. 5 12 -8: 10, where it is personified as a cruel enemy of the soul, allied with the flesh and finding opportunity through the law to bring the soul into bondage and condemnation. Thus the doctrine of two opposing cosmic principles, which has been the Qumran theology, reappears in Paul. With Paul there is a constant struggle of sin versus Christ, of the flesh versus the spirit, of darkness versus light person is in bondage to the one or to the other (Rom. 6: 16). He is either a slave of sin or a slave

of Christ, a child of light or a child of darkness (cf. Ram. 13: 12; Eph. 5: 8; 1Thess. 5: 4). He does the work of his master, whichever this may be1 and receives the appropriate recompense (Rom. 6: 21-23). This whole world is presently in the hands of the powers of darkness which Christ has come to destroy (Eph. 2: 2; 3: 10; 6: 12; Col. 1: 13; 2: 15). The Johannine literature manifests a similar indebtedness to the concept of hostile world-forces (1Jn. 5: 19). It speaks of a domain of sin, which is, the realm of darkness (Jn. 5; 3: 19-21, 1 Jn. 2: 11). Those who oppose Christ are enslaved to this evil power (Jn. 8: 31-34; cf. Matt. 6: 24). Sin is therefore rooted in hatred toward God, as Paul (Rom. 8: 7) and the Fourth Gospel (15: 23-24) agree. The transfer of this hatred to Jesus is the Jew's greatest sin (cf. Matt. 21: 33-39). The greatest sin of all is that of rejecting Jesus as the son of God (Jn. 15: 22 cf. 1 John 2: 22). The very serious sin of apostatizing from the gospel is prominently mentioned in the letter to the Hebrews (2: 3; 3: 12; 6: 4-6; 10: 26; of. 1Jn. 5: 16). The unforgivable sin (Mk. 3: 28-30) is to oppose the work of the Holy Spirit with deliberate malice. Sin as the transgression of commandment is subsidiary in the New Testament and appears in Paul with regard to the significance of the law. The main New Testament tradition is not so concerned as the Jews with particular transgressions, nor as the Greek with intellectual failure, but is concerned with man's attempt to be righteous or religious apart from Christ who alone makes both possible and valid. In Paul failure to acknowledge God aright in worship is characterized as idolatry which leads directly to immorality (Rom. 1: 23-26). There is no excuse on the ground of ignorance (Rom. 1: 20). Not knowing God is only a definition of man's inability to worship Him a right of not acknowledging Him and is as such man's primal rebellion. This is different from Acts 17:30 where ignorance characterized the Gentiles before the Christian revelation.

D. Consequences of Sin In Christianity

The New Testament speaks of the consequences of sin. Sin results in a hardening of the heart, a dulling of the moral sense, so that there is less and less reluctance to sin, and thus sin begets sin. It also results in "Death." According to Paul it was sin that brought death, both physical and spiritual, into the world, finally it brings eternal damnation. In Christ's picture of the last judgment, the wicked are sent out of God's sight: "Depart from me you condemned." Jesus himself speaks of the unquenchable fire of Gehenna (Mk. 9: 43), of the "eternal punishment" in store for sinners (Matt, 25: 46), and Paul warns of "the punishment of eternal destruction, separation from the presence of the Lord and from his glorious might." (2 Thess. 1: 9).

Although Christ did not make sweeping statements concerning the Universality of sin, he considered all men sinful. He saw sin in the heart of the strict observers of the law and denounced them (Matt. 12: 34-35; 16:4 23: 35). Even his disciples were included in this perverse generation (Lk. 9 14). Christ himself showed His solidarity with man's sinfulness in accepting baptism and the cross although He w sinless (Matt. 3: 13-15: 2 Cor. 5: 21, Rom, 8, 3; Gal. 3: 13; Heb, 4: 15; 7: 26-27; 1 Pete 1: 19, 1 Jn., 3: 5; Is. 53 6-8). The New Testament is united in its testimony that "all (Jew and Gentile, religious and non-religious Christian and non- Christian) have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendor (Rom. 3: 23 NEB; cf. Rom. 5: 9.-20), Indeed the first letter of John goes further to say "if we claim to be sinless we are self-deceived and stranger to the truth' (1Jn. 1: 8 NEB). To be a man is to be a sinner a-ad to sin is a fact of human existence. And by the same token, the New Testament affirms the Universality of sin: "For we have argued that Jews and

Greeks are all under sin (Rom. 3 Hence all men are sinners and in need of Christ's redemption.

Atonement: Jesus repeats the prophetic criticism of sacrifice by quoting Hos. 6: 6 (Mt. 9: 13, 12: 7); His insistence on the need for genuine interior piety is entirely in accord with the prophetic teaching. Sacrifice is metaphorically good deeds ("spiritual sacrifices," 1Pt. 2: 5) or submission to God "present your bodies as a living sacrifice." (Rom. 12: 1). The father reconcile humanity to himself through the Beloved Son their new head, 2Cor. 5:8, and the son crowns a life of devotion and solidarity with fallen man by a sacrifice of perfect obedience which gives back to his father the honour and worship which just order requires in man constitutes him the Mediator of his brethren, and wins for himself the glory which the Father had. A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, destined for him, and for men the pardon they need. This act of reconciliation is not extrinsic to men. So effective is that it calls forth their love and gives them grace to co-operate in the redemptive work itself (Phil. 2:5: Rom. 8. 17).

According to William Still no single view covers the doctrine of Christ's atonement, but some views are nearer the heart of the truth than others. For example, it is not wrong to regard the death of Christ as the Supreme example of sacrificial love. For the death of Christ is no mere display of love in action, but is in fact the putting away of the sins which set up a barrier to the very possibility between God and man it is not only an exhibition, but a removal. And it is more a removal than an exhibition for its one thing to show sinners what they ought to do quite another to do it for them when they are helpless to do anything for themselves. We need not only pictures, but power, not only diagrams, but dynamics. This we have in the death of Christ, which is nothing if not an actual factual, objective putting away of our sins. Let us look at the fact as plainly stated in the Word. Isaiah 53: 6 tells us that whereas "All we like sheep have gone astray" "the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of all". Paul corroborates this in Romans 4 7. 8 when he quotes from Psalm 32, "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven (removed, and whose sins are covered blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin, and 4. 25. "Jesus our Lord was put to death for our trespasses." Peter says "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. There is no evading the plain and repeated words of the scripture: He took our sins. But John 1: 29 takes it a step further the Baptist declares that the Lamb of God on whom our sins are laid takes them away. Do we question this? Let the Bible answer our questions: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud they transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins (Isa, 44: 22). "For thou hast cast all my sins behind my back" (Isa. 38: 17). "He will turn again, He will have compassion on us; He will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea." (Micah 7:19). "As far as the east is removed from the west, So far hath he removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103: 12). "This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more (Jer. 31: 33 34; also Heb. 10: 16, 17). Thus Christ takes our place, and bear our sins with their guilt, punishment and shame "in his own body on the tree", and on the third day rises without them, so that they are gone, forever. Every sin we have committed from life's beginning to its end is forever put away, never to be brought against us again, Christ the sinless One is God's appointed substitute "criminal", carrying away man's filth with his own hands.

E. Consequences of Sin in African Tradtional Religion

In African Traditional Religion, sin disrupts communal and cosmic harmony (sin is called asise in Yoruba). Offences may incur ancestral displeasure, affecting community wellbeing. Ritual restoration often addressed through rituals, sacrifices for the restoration. Taboo breach consequences and breaking taboos can lead to communal repercussions.
ATR often emphasizes communal impact while Christianity focuses on personal sin and Salvation.

In Yoruba ATR, Orisa is involved while maintaining balance while 'Ebbo' is for rectification. In Igbo ATR, Community reconciliation is prevalent in addressing wrongdoings. Disruption of harmony is caused by sin and this can be addressed with the spiritual realm. Actions are seen in the context of communal wellbeing while wrongdoings affect the group.

Generally, under ATR consequences of sin brings illness, misfortune, or communal disruption. In Igboland "Ajo Omume" (bad conduct) affects a whole community. It might involve 'nso ani' (abomination against the earth) and its effect is the purification of the land. 'Ifa' divination in Yoruba helps to determine causes and remedies for disruption of peace. Ancestors are regarded as guardians of morality. Ancestors are propitiated for harmony. They connect the living with the dead.

It can then be compared that while ATR focuses on disruption of communal harmony, balance with spirits, Christianity emphasizes on personal sin against God, redemption through Jesus Christ.

F. Punishment for Sin in Both Christianity and African Traditional Religion

The concept of punishment for sin is a significant aspect of both African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity. While both traditions recognize the importance of accountability for sin, the understanding and implementation of punishment differ significantly. In ATR, punishment for sin is often understood as a means of restoring balance and harmony in the community. The consequences of sin can affect not only the individual but also the entire community. Punishment can take various forms including:

1. Spiritual Punishment: Ancestors and divinity can inflict punishment on individuals or communities for violating taboos, norms, or expectations. This can include illness, misfortune or death.
2. Community Punishment: The community can impose punishment on individuals who have committed a sin, such as ostracism or fines.
3. Ritual Punishment: Certain rituals can be performed to cleanse the individual or community of the sin and restore balance.

The purpose of Punishment in ATR is not only to penalize the individual but also to restore balance and harmony in the community. This is often achieved through rituals, sacrifices and other forms of spiritual intervention. In Christianity, Punishment for sin is understood as consequences of disobedience to God's Law and Commandments. The consequences of sin can lead to spiritual separation from God and eternal punishment. Punishment can take various forms, including:

1. Spiritual Punishment: Sin can lead to spiritual death and separation from God. This can result in eternal punishment in hell.
2. Temporal Punishment: Christians can experience temporal punishment for sin, such as suffering, hardship or loss.

The purpose of punishment in Christianity is to restore the individual's relationship with God and to promote spiritual growth and redemption. This is often achieved through repentance, forgiveness, and faith in Jesus Christ.

In comparison, while both ATR and Christianity recognize the concept of punishment for sin, there are significant differences in their understanding and implementation. ATR emphasizes communal responsibility and restoration, while Christianity emphasizes personal responsibility and redemption. Both traditions recognize the importance of accountability for sin and the need for restoration or redemption.

The understanding of sin, punishment and restoration differs significantly between the two traditions, reflecting their unique theological and cultural contexts. Thus, punishment for sin is a complex concept that exists in both African Traditional Religion and Christianity. While the understanding and implementation of punishment differ significantly between the two traditions, both recognize the importance of accountability and restoration. Understanding these differences can promote greater respect and cooperation between adherences of these traditions.

G. Universality of Sin as Conceived In Both Religion

In Biblical Religion all men are considered sinful. The Old Testament extends condemnation to all classes of men, even to the righteous; "surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good never sins (Eccl. 7:20). The New Testament is united in those testimony that 'all alike (Jew and Gentle, Religious and non-religious, Christian and non-Christian) have sinned and are deprived of the not divine splendor (Rom. 3: 23 NEB, of. Rom. 3:9-20). This theology is not alien to most African societies. For example, the Igbo man would say: onye din ma? "Who is good". It asserts the unreliability of man. Therefore, that man is a sinner and is naturally inclined to sin is affirmed by both the Biblical Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Man cannot flout the moral order and go free, for the moral order contains within it an imminent principal of justice who ensures that the good is rewarded and the wicked punished. Sin has its repercussion, inflicted at times, by God himself, or through human agency as a divine sanction; and could be inflicted individually, corporately or in an extended sense. On these too Biblical and the African Traditional Religions agree. Also there is a direct relationship between sin and human suffering in both Biblical and Traditional Religion's perspectives. Man suffers and is in want because he is out of tune with the cosmic order. In the healing of paralytic (Matt. 9: 1-7), Jesus adopted the approach of "spiritual medication" in order to effect a physical change. He said: "Take heart my son, your sins are forgiven." But the skeptics around could not see through this relationship between sin and human suffering. So also among the Nuer, syphilis or yaws is seen as a direct result of an incestuous act. The word Nuer is used as a reference to both the breach of interdiction and the consequence also the resulting violent sickness. So any sickness is regarded as the operation of spirit on account of some fault on the part of the sick person or of someone closely related to him. Evans Prictchard discovered that

among the Nuer a sickness can be cured by expiation. In which case, “the healing of the sickness is felt to be also the wiping out of sin”. Both the Biblical and Traditional African morality holds that man is a social being who cannot live isolated from his fellow men. Man is free only in certain limits, his morally evil actions can bring his destruction and suffering to all those within his community. The essential thing which should not be forgotten is that is neither dependent upon fate nor an independent being free to do as he wishes. A practical example suffices to show that the consequences of sin affect not only the sinner but also the community as a whole. For example, the sinfulness of theft disrupts the order of the community. The person whose possession is stolen suffers the loss, while the good name of the community from which the thief halls is tarnished Because both good and bad moral actions touch the community as a whole, both Biblical Christian and Traditional African morally strive to see people as members of a community having moral laws and norms. The African classification of sins into serious and minor ones corresponds with the Roman Catholic classification of them into mortal and venial sins.

Man ever seeks to restore, however imperfectly a covenant relationship broken through sin. This is achieved through expiatory sacrifices in which an animal is offered as exchange or payment for or as an agent for removal of guilt. African Traditional Religion as well as the Biblical Religion considered the sacrificial victim in terms of the magnitude of the offence. More serious offences and acts of abomination call for more reasonable victims. The offer of human being as expiatory sacrifice should be recognized as not only peculiar to African Traditional Religion. They are noticeable at one stage or the other in the history of some other religion which the observers have already recognized as conscious of morality. In the Old Testament for instances, the prophets of Baal were slaughtered by Elijah in the name of Jehovah. Much earlier than that Abraham had attempted offering of his son Isaac. The offer of human beings for expiatory sacrifice is indeed an indication of a high level of human failure and desire to match guilt with payment for it. In some cases, however, where a human being is the victim, the notion is that such a victim is being sent the spirit world to the make a direct request for restoration of normalcy. In most cases, for both the Biblical and Traditional African Religions sacrifice for sin is accompanied with confession of guilt and confession is a necessary condition for the forgiveness of sin. It brings reconciliation more than sacrifices. The African and Israelites concept of group solidarity demands that confession of sin be open. It is felt that the guilt so publicly declared "are placed on the victim and flow away into the earth with its blood." The blood in Nuer thought, as well as other African societies serves as a carrier of the guilt. This is very much in line with the Jewish idea of the blood "that makes atonement by reason of life."

H. Confession / Atonement for Sin In Both Christianity And African Traditional Religion

Confession of Sin in both Religion:

It is the acknowledgement of sin and helplessness, a means of restoring the holiness of life forfeited by grievous sin and to deepen it through a livelier sorrow for the acceptance of Christ. Through it grievous sin is removed, and divine friendship is restored to the contrite soul through the mercy and redemptive grace of Christ. Let the first genuine turning towards God the sinner is forgiven. On God's part, the act of forgiveness is instantaneous and pure gift, not an earned reward. But on the sinner's part this return to

God's friendship is only the beginning of a process. It will take time to repair the harm done to others and to let conversion have its full effect on mind, will and emotions. This is the area of asceticism, of prayer, aims-giving and penance in the case of more serious sin, the sinner must be so disposed that he is willing, at an appropriate time, to confess these sins. To refuse to be confronted with the incidents which broke his relationship with God calls into question the sincerity of his repentance. The reason for confession as part of the process of reconciliation is that sin is never a purely private affair. Even our most secret sins affect our brethren in the community, and when we sin grievously. We cut ourselves off not only from Christ, but from his mystical body, the community of his followers. For repentance to be genuine, therefore, it must be not merely a turning back to God, hut a firm desire to be reconciled with the community. Private confession to the person offended may reconcile one to that particular person, and where possible this ought to be done. Reconciliation with the community is the outward sign of reconciliation with God, and the absolution given is the concrete expression of God's forgiveness.

Above all a sin must be confessed before and of the above steps is undertaken. Confession of sin thus, gives a man a new life and unburdens his mind. When he confesses, he accepts his guilt and prepared to make reparation and to start to lead a new and unstained life. This is why in many African localities, it is believed that once a woman in difficult labour confesses her sexual infidelity before or during pregnancy, delivery will be accelerated. From the study of the rites of confession in Africa, we can say that it native in origin and was not adopted as a result of the introduction of Christianity. The forms of confession found in African Religions and their marked differences from that practiced by Christians lead us to the conclusion that they are independent of origin.

In most cases in Africa, sacrifice for sin is accompanied with confession of guilt. The African concept of group solidarity demands that confession of sin be open. For example, the Nuer people of Africa except wronged persons to express their grievance publicly on ceremonial occasions. This is followed by a confession by the offender. It is felt that guilt so publicly declared, "Are placed on the victim and flow away into the earth with its blood. The blood in Nuer though, serves as a carrier of guilt (S.C. Chuta- "Sin and Evil-Biblical and Traditional (unpub-published articles).

In Africa, confession can be addressed to a Supreme Being, minor divinities, spirits, dead ancestors and one's living father. It can also be addressed to any member of the community, irrespective of age or position, who has been injured in mind or body. As confession is aimed at getting rid of something belonging to the sinner (to cleaning), it is accompanied with many eliminatory practices such as bathing, washing, sprinkling, fumigation, spitting and vomiting. In the Congo a bath in the river before confession is prescribed. Among the Thonga who are the Bantu of South East Africa, confession is accompanied by a bath taken separately by the woman and man. In the Bendel State of Nigeria, the common practice is sprinkling of water to which the native chalk, "Nzu" has added. With the same people, a woman undergoing confession of her husband, "Umuada". A new cloth is given her to replace the old one which is now regarded as unclean . "In the case of anyone who eats a forbidden animal vegetables, a special cleaning called "ina onu" (cleansing the mouth) takes place during the confession. The victim is taken to the shrine of the divinity associated with the "totem". He confession what kind of meat or vegetable he has with eaten. A herb called "odo" is mixed with native chalk and water is added for

the cleansing. This mixture is poured into his mouth seven times. He spits out six times and swallows the seventh mixture with these from the officiating priest: "Iri ye ri noo, ye ri gboo" (when you eat swallow, you will not eat and vomit). Thus the confession of sin in Africa is always linked to eliminating practices because sin is dirt which must be purged away. The Africans practice confession not as an article of faith, but as an admission that they have left the "Right" and done the "wrong" declaration of sin and guilt. Confession is a necessary condition for forgiveness. It brings reconciliation more than sacrifices. Here, then we see a liturgy with a specific shape, present in all propitiatory rites, though sometimes one or other of the five stages may be absent. Penitents who undergo such a rite feel a sense of restoration afterwards.

I. Atonement of Sin In Both Religions

Sin could be atoned for in a variety of ways. For example, among the Mende when a person is conscious of his sin and is convinced that he has committed a crime or an offence, he does not wait till the sin is discovered or punished by the supernatural powers. He immediately takes steps to remove the sin. The guilty person and his family undergo ritual washing and beating by a priest. A heavy fine may also be imposed on them. We may add here that other steps can be taken to remove sin depending on the nature of the sin and the locality where the sin is committed. It could therefore be seen that in both the Biblical and African Traditional Religions, sacrifice and confessions were required for atonement. In the Traditional African Religion, animal and human victims were offered for sacrifice. The people of the Old Testament offered animal victims in sacrifice but its vision was clearer at its developed stages, in understanding that it is wrong, for any reason to offer human victims in sacrifice. The climax was reached in the New Testament in which God permitted the death of the Begotten So Jesus Christ as the sufficient sacrifice for sin. In the New Testament, the sacrifice of Christ made obsolete the order ways of atonement. Another striking thing is that extended African family members do penance as do the Israelites for the sin of their relatives. It is thus right to view the African as their brother's keeper rather than maintaining that they are "strangers to one another, as Basden maintains: although speaking the same languages, and in times of peace, intermarrying with one another, the nearest neighbors may still be regarded as strangers.

As in all societies of the world, social order and peace are recognized by African peoples as essential and sacred. Where the sense of corporate life is so deep, it is inevitable that the solidarity of the community must be maintained, otherwise there is disintegrated and destruction. This order is conceived of primarily in terms of kinship relationship, which simultaneously produces many situations of tension since everybody is related to everybody else and deepens the sense of damage caused by the strain, of such tensions. If a person steals a sheep, personal relations are at once involved because the sheep belongs to a member of the corporate body, perhaps to someone who is a father, or brother, or sister or cousin to the thief. As such it an offence against the community, and its consequences affect not only their but also the whole body of his relatives. To prevent such evils, there exist, therefore, many laws, customs, set forms of behaviours, regulations, rules, observance and taboos, constituting the moral code and ethics of a given community or society. Some of those are held sacred, and are believed to have been instituted by God or national leaders. In addition to these laws and taboos etc., there exist

also some set forms of behaviour that acts as deterrent to sin and evil. The Igbo like every other African society abhor idleness which is a prelude to detestful acts such as stealing, murder, suicide, fornication, etc. to prevent such behaviours, peoples are encouraged to do on type of work other since an idle man is the devil's workshop.

Another form of prevention of sin is the use of the curse and the oath. The basic principal here is that if a person is guilty, evil will befall him according to the words used in cursing him. By the use of good magic, it is believed, a person can curse an unknown thief or other offender. The most feared curses are those pronounced by parents, uncles, aunts or other close relatives against their "juniors" in the family. The worst is the curse uttered at the death bed; for once the pronouncer of the curse has died, it is practically impossible to revoke it. Formal curse are feared much in African relationships especially in family circles. Formal oaths are used as another method of establishing and maintaining good human relationships. There are oaths which bind people mystically together, the best known being the one which creates what is rather loosely referred to as 'blood-brotherhood." By means of this oath, two or more people who are not immediately related go through a ritual which often involves exchanging small amounts of their blood by drinking or rubbing it into each other's body. After that they look upon each other a real "blood" brothers or sisters, and will behave in that capacity towards each other for the rest of their lives. Their families are also involved in this "brotherly" contact. This oath places great moral and mystical obligations upon the parties concerned, and any breach of the covenant is dreaded and feared to bring about misfortune. The belief behind oaths is that God, or some power higher than the individual man will punish the person who breaks the requirements of the oath or covenant. Like curses, oaths are fears and many are administered ritually and at great expense.

It must seem contradictory to what we have stated concerning victory in Christ, immediately to counsel young soldiers to run from the enemy, but it is necessary. For discretion is often the better part of velour, especially when God lets Satan loose upon us for our training. At first we may want to flee. But Christ has given us the injunction of not to fear but to know the enemy and learn that he is our terrible foe. As we learn we will realize that it is important run to Christ for shelter. The Christian is also advised to run to Christ for shelter as to escape from the pressures of modern life and some other escapes. Like those into drugs or suicide. Most importantly the Christian is advised to set a serious watch, and reckon that the devil is always ready to attack at any time (Mtt. 26:41).

The first item of defensive armour is the Girdle of Truth This reminds us that only the truth can prevail in the war against falsehood. The truth referred to is the whole body of biblical truth and to particular truths declaring sod's power and victory over the forces of evil. These concern the nature of God and the devil and the different dimensions of their activities - (Heb 2:14, 1Jn. 3: 8; Col. 2: 15; Rev. 12: 7-11).

To be prepared for further attacks Christians are to put on The Breastplate of Righteousness which guards the hearts that is being morally good as regards the following virtues honesty, purity, humility, and charity in order to withstand the enemy's assaults. This Peter affirms when he says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul..."(1Pet 3: 11-12a). Also Christians are asked to be anxious about nothing, do have trust in God and complete peace of mind

for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength (Isa, 26: 3, 4). The devil does not rest. But an unshakable faith in Christ puts devil off (Lk. 22: 39.-46). To give the devil a good fight Christians are admonished to put on the helmet of salvation which needs be a scriptural word defying the total ingenuity and might of the devil himself. Such a word is "submit yourselves to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4: 7 and I Pet. 5: 19). Thus, proving that Jesus is stronger than the Satan geared with the word of Gods Christians are advised to learn to hurl it at the enemy as Jesus did when he was tempted (Matt. 4: 7-11): He took three "cocks" of Holy Scripture (Deut. 8: 3, 6: 16 13) and flung them at the devil until he departed, beaten. Christians are to be involved in all-out payer, which we think is what the apostle has in mind in Eph. 6: 18. It is total war, demanding total dedication, the plain truth being that as Christ did not save us short of His death, neither will we save others short of His death in us, whatever that death may be or may mean for us personally.

J. Prevention Of Sin In Both Religions

Preventing sin is a crucial aspect of both African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity. While both traditions recognize the importance of avoiding sin, the approaches and strategies differ significantly. In ATR, preventing sin involves respecting community rules to maintain balance and harmony. Ancestors and divinities play a significant role in ATR, and individuals are expected to show respect and other sacrifices to avoid sin. Sin in ATR often involves breaching communal relationship, so maintaining harmony within the community is crucial. Rituals and sacrifices are performed to cleanse individuals and communities of sin and restore balance. Elders play a significant role in ATR and individuals often seek guidance from them to avoid sinning.

In Christianity, preventing sin involves following God's commandment. Christians are expected to follow God's commandments and moral laws tto avoid sin. Christians believe in repentance and forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ. Christianity emphasizes personal responsibility for sin, and individuals to take steps to avoid sinning. Christians believe that faith and spiritual growth can help individuals resist sin and live a virtuous life. Christians often use prayer and devotion to seek guidance and strength to avoid sinning.

There are key differences between ATR and Christianity on prevention of sin. African Traditional Religion (ATR) emphasizes communal responsibility. ATRA focuses on restoring balance and harmony, while Christianity focuses on redemption through faith in Jesus Christ. ATR views sin as a breach of communal relationships and taboos, while Christianity views sin as a fundamental aspect of human nature that requires redemption.
The implications understanding the differences in preventing sin are for interfaith dialogue. Recognizing the differences and similarities between the two traditions can promote greater understanding and respect. Understanding the cultural context of sin and prevention in ATR can promote greater cultural sensitivity and awareness. The differences in preventing sin can inform theological discussions and debates about the nature of sin, redemption, and forgiveness.

K. Comparative Analysis of Sin In African Traditional Religion and Christianity

Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) have distinct understandings of sin, reflecting their unique theological, cultural, and historical contexts.

1. Christianity: In Christianity, sin is often understood as a violation of divine law, rebellion against God, and a breach of moral standards. It's seen as a fundamental aspect of human nature, requiring redemption through Jesus Christ. African Traditional Religion: In ATR, sin is conceptualized as wrongdoing, badness, or destruction of life. It's often associated with violating communal norms, taboos, and ancestral expectations. Sin can lead to punishment, illness, or misfortune.
2. Christianity: Christianity emphasizes personal responsibility for sin, with individuals accountable for their actions. Sin is seen as a fundamental aspect of human nature, requiring redemption.
   African Traditional Religion: ATR emphasizes communal responsibility, with individuals and communities accountable for maintaining social harmony. Sin can affect the entire community, requiring collective action for restoration.

3. Christianity: Forgiveness of sin is achieved through faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and atonement.
   African Traditional Religion: Forgiveness of sin is often achieved through sacrifices, purification rituals, and confession. Ancestors and divinities play a significant role in mediating forgiveness.

Similarities: Both Christianity and ATR recognize the importance of moral accountability, the need for forgiveness, and the consequences of sin.

Differences: The understanding of sin, moral culpability, and forgiveness differs significantly between the two traditions, reflecting their unique theological and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, in African Traditional Religion, forgiveness of sin is often achieved through sacrifices, purification rituals, and confession. Ancestors and divinities play a significant role in mediating forgiveness that could be said is that it does not give its moral values the same systematic exposition as in the Bible, but, like every other people, the Africans knew the rights and the wrongs as revealed by the Deity. They were able to apprehend the moral law (in all its categories), as clarified in the human conscience. But they saw the moral law as absolute justice. They Deity must surely satisfy the demands of this law. The emphasis was not on the grace or mercy of God, as in Christianity, but on the individual's effort to save himself by his rectitude. Since this was not always easy to accomplish, the religious man started in time human victims. He knows that as a taboo-breaker, in a religion of rigid justice, he must die in consequence of his sin. A polite "sorry" cannot fetch atonement. He therefore emphasized ritual sacrifices in which animal and mainly human victims could use as a mean by which the demands of justice can be met. Nevertheless, he encouraged such practices mainly because of his deep awareness of the wrath of the Deity. It was here that the observers misunderstood the traditional religion and conclude that it was amoral. But as a matter of fact, God makes the same ethical demands in nearly

every religion. Differences exist only at the human level or at the level interpretation. The religious man often misinterprets the will deity, either because his visions and intellect are not clear or because he is unable to comply with the stricter demands of divine law. Thus in the religions man's ignorance or inability to obey God's laws, he may modify his teaching on the moral law, or he may introduce some unwholesome ritual practices or method of atonement which are abominable to divine justice. The fact of the case can be proved. Biblical religion as much as Traditional Religion agrees up to the point of "loves those who love you." That is loved only your friends and relatives and not your enemies." For instance, when an Igbo man is pouring libation he would say, ndi nine n'elolu anyi oni ililo anyi n'elo kwalu fa ma onye si na anyi amamdi ya bulu okuko uzo na kpuo ula – "Those who wish us well, we do wish them well equally, but those who say we should die, should equally die". Similarly the Old Testament teaches Love; but the mosaic rejoinder at human level is, Tit for Tat (Matt. 5: 28), or in common language, "if you do me I do you. But the New Testament as the fulfillment of both the Traditional Religion and the Old Testament goes higher and declares: "love your fellow human beings including your enemies (Matt. 5: 43). Paul wet as far to say, "if your enemy hungers feed him" (Rom. 12:20). The same is true of the moral laws. While both the Old Testament and the African Traditional confine themselves to Israel and African respectively, the New Testament embraces all mankind (Monica Wilson. Op. cit., p. 91). Again, God's justice is recognized in Biblical Religion and African Traditional Religions differences nonetheless exist. The Traditional Religion sees God's justice or righteous anger as something that cannot be appeased without the giving up a life or the shedding of the blood of the sinner or of the human or animal victim whom he offers as his substitute. There is no clear concept of forgiveness from God in the African Traditional Religion. The Old Testament agrees that animal not human victims can be used as atonement for sin, but it believed that in addition to ritual sacrifices, sincere change of heart was necessary. The New Testament discarded all the old methods because the death of Christ made the old ways of atonement irrelevant. Christ had paid for price man's sin. What is required of the sinner is absolute faith in Christ, change of heart shown in the change of way of life and determined to maintain good relations with God and man. Their difference only relate to degree and fidelity of practice.

The Adam myth highlights the soldierly of man not only in sin but also in the consequence of sin. First sin brings about a separation between man and the spiritual world the loss of Endemic bliss. In the Biblical faith man is chased out of the garden. African version is expressed in the myth of old lady who greedily touched the face of the sky with unwashed hands. This annoyed God who later moved farther way hence the recession of the firmament farther away from man. Secondly, the consequence of sin according to Genesis is "Death". Similarly, the myth of the old lady affirms "Death" as the consequence of sin. Biblical Religion as well as the traditional Africans believed that sin is the cause of death in the world. Both also believe in the immortality of the soul and life after death. They abhor and deprecate suicide. Also sin and evil emanated as a result of Satan's interference with the goodly state of man's relationship with God. On this, both the Biblical and the African religion agree. Once, this happened, man's rebellious nature became a permanent feature, consequently even with the inner witness to point to the right way, there is ever present that sin that dwells within man and renders him incapable of accomplishing the desirable. This characteristic of man is universal not because he intended it, but because judgment has been pronounced on him in his being in such a state of incapability The solidarity of man in sin and the attribution of evil to personal forces of evil do not absolve

man of individual and personal responsibility (Cf. James 1:13-15). On this also both the Biblical and Traditional African world views agree. The Igbo has this to say isi kote ebu ya agba a ya - the head that touches the wasp must be stung – i.e. individual responsibility cannot be submerged each must be answerable to his actions and face the consequence of his irresponsible actions. Also the Akans say - because god hates evil, he each one name as to identify the perpetrator of Evil. In other words, each individual is responsibility for his sin and accountable to God for it. These saying affirm individual and personal reasonability for sin, in spite of the idea of mythical origin and demonic forces. Many similarities exist between the African family system and that of the Israelites. The Hebrew word for family is 'Betab." It mean "fathers house", and immediately shows patrilineal structure of the family. The Hebraic extended family was that group of a clan, which had the same ancestors as in the case of the Africans. The nuclear and external family members exert great influence in moral matters. There was a strange practice of "Solidarity" among the Israelites, the family members cared for the old (Lev 19:32) and especially the widows (Ruth. 2, 4: 1-11; Acts. 11:30). They were also obliged to help and protect one another. Like the Africans, the Israelites kinsmen do not only help their relatives in training their children, caring for the old people but they aid one another in difficult times and situations. They acts as one family both in time of jubilation and sorrow. This is seen in the fact that the extended family members contribute to the well-being of any of their relatives not because the former have too much but because they believe that they should help their relations.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Summary

This project compared the concept of sin in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity, highlighting their distinct understandings and approaches. Sin is understood as a violation of communal or spiritual norms, addressed through rituals and sacrifices to restore balance and harmony. Sin is seen as a transgression against God’s laws, with redemption and forgiveness offered through faith in Jesus Christ. African Traditional Religion focuses on Communal harmony, while Christianity emphasizes on personal relationship with God. It uses ritual and sacrifices whereas Christianity emphasizes faith in Jesus Christ. This comparative analysis enhances understanding of sin across religious traditions, promoting interfaith dialogue and appreciation of diverse moral and spiritual frameworks. In ATR, sin is often viewed as a violation of communal norms or spiritual taboos, which can disrupt the harmony and balance within the community and with the spiritual world. Christianity emphasizes a personal relationship with God and views sin as a transgression against God’s law and commandments, which separates individuals from God. The Christian approach to sin focuses on redemption and forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ, who is believed to have atoned for the sins of humanity.

ATR communal focuses contracts with Christianity’s emphasizes on a personal relationship with God, highlighting different priorities in understanding and addressing sin. The use of rituals and sacrifices in ATR differs from Christianity reliance on faith in Jesus Christ. For forgiveness and salvation, reflecting fundamentally different theological and soteriological perspectives.

The core difference and similarities in how sin is conceptualized and addressed in ATR and Christianity, offering insights into the diverse ways religious traditions understand and manage moral and spiritual failings.

Sin and evil emanated as a result of Satan's interference with the goodly state of man's relationship with God. On this, both the Biblical and the African religion agree. Once this happened, man's rebellious nature became a permanent feature. Consequently, even with the inner witness to point to the right way, there is ever present sin that dwells within man and renders him incapable of accomplishing the desirable. This characteristics of man is universal not because he intended it, but because judgment has been pronounced on him in his being in such a state of incapability.

B. Conclusion

The study of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) underscores the diversity of theological and cultural perspectives on morality and transgression. Christianity's emphases on original sin and redemption through Jesus Christ contrasts with African Traditional Religion's focus on communal harmony and restoration through rituals, highlighting the contextual nature of sin's understanding. These differing viewpoints reflect the unique religious and cultural frameworks of Christianity and ATR, influencing how communities address morality, reconciliation and relationships with the divine and communal structures. Awareness of these distinctions can enhance interfaith dialogue and cultural sensitivity, particularly in multicultural context like Nigeria. Scholars such as Augustine of Hippo, E. B. Idowu and J.S. Mbiti have contributed significantly to insights into these contexts enriches comparative religious studies and appreciation of diverse theological perspectives.

The exploration highlights the value of contextual understanding in interpreting religious concepts and the potential for mutual enrichment through interfaith engagement and scholarly enquiry.

This project has explored the concept of sin in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity, highlighting their distinct understandings, implications and approaches to reconciliation. Through a comparative analysis, it is evident that while both traditions recognize the significance of sin, their perspectives on its, consequences, and resolution differ substantially.

African Traditional Religion emphasizes the communal and spiritual dimensions of sin, focusing on restoring balance and harmony within the community and with the spiritual world through rituals and sacrifices. Christianity personal relationship on the other hand, underscores the personal relationship with God, highlighting sin as a transgression against divine laws and emphasizing redemption through faith in Jesus Christ.

Cultural and theological significance underscores the importance of understanding sin within its cultural and theological context, revealing how different societies and religious traditions conceptualize and address moral and spiritual failings. This comparative analysis also highlights the potentials for interfaith dialogue and understanding, encouraging a deeper appreciation of the diverse ways in which sin is perceived and managed among religious traditions.

Future research could further explore comparative studies on sin and redemption cross different religious traditions, enhancing our understanding of moral and spiritual frameworks globally.

Investigating how different cultural contexts influence the understanding and implication of sin within religious traditions could provide valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between culture and religion.

In conclusion, this project contributes to a nuanced understanding of sin in African Traditional Religion and Christianity offering insights into their distinct approaches and the broader implications for interfaith dialogue and cultural understanding.

C. Findings

The findings from the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) reveals distinct theological and cultural perspectives. In Christianity, the concept of sin is rooted in the original sin of Adam's fall as described in Genesis 3, a notion significantly developed by Augustine of Hippo. Redemption is understood through Jesus Christ, emphasizing personal salvation by faith. This highlights Christianity's focus on personal sin and individual redemption.

In contrast, African Traditional Religion, particularly as seen in Yoruba traditions, views sin as a disruption of communal harmony affecting relationships within the community and with ancestors. Restoration of balance is sought through rituals and sacrifices, underscoring the communal nature of reconciliation in ATR. Ancestors play a crucial role in maintaining this harmony, reflecting the interconnectedness of the living and the ancestral in ATR beliefs.

Comparing the two, Christianity's emphasis on personal sin stands apart from ATR's focus on communal balance. Mechanisms of redemption differ with Christianity cantering on Christ and ATR utilizing rituals for restoration. The understanding of sin is deeply shaped by the respective religious and cultural context of these traditions.

Scholars such as Augustine of Hippo have profoundly influenced Christian theology regarding original sin. E. B Idowu has explored Yoruba religious concepts, while J.S. Mbiti has contributed to broader understandings of African Religions.

Awareness of these perspectives can foster interfaith dialogue and cultural sensitivity particularly in multicultural settings. The differing views on sin inform theological discussion and comparative religious studies, highlighting the importance of context in interpreting moral and theological themes.

D. Recommendation

The key recommendation stemming from the concept of sin in Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) emphasizes the importance of fostering interfaith dialogue and encouraging cultural sensitivity in religious engagement. Engaging in dialogue between Christian and ATR adherents can enhance mutual understanding and respect for the diverse perspectives on sin and morality.

Promoting awareness of the cultural contexts that shaped concept of sin in these religious traditions is crucial for meaningful engagement particularly in multicultural settings like Nigeria.

Community based studies on morality and reconciliation in African contexts can provide valuable insights into how sin and restoration are understood locally.

Conducting in-depth comparative analysis of sin in Christianity and ATR can yield theological insights and contribute to comparative religious studies. Exploring how specific African cultures influence understandings of sin and morality can further enrich this field of study.

Interdisciplinary approaches combining theological anthropological and cultural studies can lead to more nuanced understanding of sin across traditions. Its essential to acknowledge the diversity within both ATR and Christianity avoiding over simplification and ensuring that respectful of local traditions.

These recommendations aim to enhance understanding and engagement between traditions, appreciating the theological and cultural nuances that shape concepts of sin and morality.

Based on the above recommended views, this research outlines the following recommendations:

1. To encourage interfaith dialogue between ATR and Christianity to promote mutual understanding, respect and cooperation.
2. To identify common ground and explore common values and principles between ATR and Christianity to foster unity and collaboration in addressing moral and spiritual challenges.
3. Approach religious and cultural practices with sensitivity and respect, recognizing the diversity of beliefs and practices around sin and redemption.
4. Raise awareness and educate people about the different understandings of sin in ATR and Christianity, promoting a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between religion and culture.

E. Suggestions for Further Studies

This work suggests further studies on the concept of sin as to deepen comparison of sin in ATR (Yoruba, Igbo) and Christianity.

Another area is “Rituals and Sacrifices”, ths will compare ATR rituals and Christian sacraments.

Finally, on Eschatology by exploring views on afterlife, judgment in ATR and Christianity.

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