



Theologische Universiteit Kampen | Utrecht

**A COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF THE ALADURA CHURCHES ON RITUAL
SACRIFICE WITH BERKOUWER'S TEACHING ON CHRIST'S ONCE-FOR-ALL
SACRIFICE.**



MASTER'S THESIS FOR THE MASTER OF INTERCULTURAL REFORMED THEOLOGY (MIRT)

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Table of Content

| | |
|--|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| DEDICATION | v |
| LIST OF TABLES/ ILLUSTRATIONS | vi |
| ABSTRACT..... | vii |
| GLOSSARY | viii |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Background of the Research | 1 |
| 1.2 Statement of the Research Problem..... | 4 |
| 1.3 Research Questions | 4 |
| 1.3.1 Main Question..... | 4 |
| 1.3.2 Sub-Questions | 5 |
| 1.4 Research Purpose and Objectives..... | 5 |
| 1.4.1 Purpose | 5 |
| 1.4.2 Objectives..... | 5 |
| 1.5 Significance of the Study..... | 5 |
| 1.6 Delimitation of the Study..... | 6 |
| 1.7 Research Design and Methodology | 7 |
| 1.7.1 Methodology..... | 7 |
| 1.7.2 Research Design..... | 7 |
| 1.8 Conceptual Clarification of Terminology | 7 |
| 1.8.1 Sacrifice (Etutu)..... | 7 |
| 1.8.2 Ritual (Ebo)..... | 8 |
| 1.8.3 Ritual Sacrifice..... | 9 |
| CHAPTER TWO: RITUAL SACRIFICE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND AMONG THE ALADURA CHURCHES IN NIGERIA | 10 |
| 2.1 Chapter Introduction | 10 |
| 2.1.1 An overview of Social Religious Context in Nigeria..... | 10 |
| 2.1.2 An overview of African Traditional Religion in Nigeria and among the Yorubas..... | 10 |
| 2.1.3 A Short Description of African Traditional Religion in Relation to Ritual sacrifice. | 11 |
| 2.2 Historical Background of the Aladura Churches in Nigeria..... | 12 |
| 2.2.1 Perspectives of the Aladura Church on Ritual Sacrifice | 14 |
| 2.2.2 The practice of ritual sacrifice in the Aladura church in Nigeria..... | 15 |
| 2.3 Chapter Conclusion | 18 |
| CHAPTER THREE: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FIELDWORK | 20 |
| 3.1 Chapter Introduction | 20 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 3.2 Field Study – Interviews Conducted | 20 |
| 3.3 Bio-Data of Respondents | 20 |
| 3.4 Data from the Field Survey | 21 |
| 3.5 Common Characteristics Between Aladura church and Africa Traditional Beliefs. | 25 |
| 3.6 Differences between <i>Aladura</i> church and African Traditional Religion. | 27 |
| 3.7 A Description of the Aladura Ritual Sacrifice Practices (Phenomenology), with the help of the 'BBBE' model..... | 29 |
| 3.7.1 Believing..... | 29 |
| 3.7.2 Belonging | 30 |
| 3.7.3 Behaving..... | 30 |
| 3.7.4 Experiencing..... | 31 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: BERKOUWER’S REFORMED TRADITION ON CHRIST’S SACRIFICE | 32 |
| 4.1 A Brief Introduction to Chapter Four | 32 |
| 4.2 Brief Background on Berkouwer | 32 |
| 4.3 Berkouwer within the Context of Reformed Theology..... | 33 |
| 4.4 Perspectives of Berkouwer’s Reformed on Christ’s Once-For-All sacrifice. | 35 |
| 4.5 Perspectives of Berkouwer’s Reformed thought on ritual sacrifice. | 40 |
| 4.6 Chapter Conclusion..... | 41 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ALADURA AND BERKOUWER’S REFORMED VIEWS OF CHRIST’S ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE..... | 42 |
| 5.1 Introduction to Chapter Five..... | 42 |
| 5.2 Similarities..... | 42 |
| 5.3 Differences | 44 |
| 5.4 Table of summary of similarities and differences..... | 46 |
| 5.5 Way Forward for the Aladura Churches | 46 |
| CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 47 |
| 6.1 Summary..... | 47 |
| 6.2 Conclusions | 48 |
| 6.3 Recommendations..... | 49 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 50 |
| Interviews | 55 |
| Appendix 1: Transcript of the interview with respondent 1..... | 55 |
| Appendix 2: Transcript of the interview with respondent 2..... | 58 |
| Appendix 3: Transcript of the interview with respondent 3..... | 60 |
| Appendix 4: Transcript of the interview with respondent 4..... | 62 |
| Appendix 5: Transcript of the interview with respondent 5..... | 64 |

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DEDICATION

To

Samuel and Mary Olorunsola, my late parents
and Afolake Olorunsola, my friend and lovely wife.

Also, Joy, Mercy, Gift and Praise, my loving children
and the entire Aladura church, Nigeria where I was born.

LIST OF TABLES/ ILLUSTRATIONS

Table 2:1- Tabular summary of Relationship of Ritual Sacrifice in the ATR and Aladura Church through BBBE Model.

Figure 2:2- Picture Showing some Aladura members in their expression of dancing and clapping as a way of giving *Ebo Ope* (Sacrifice of thanksgiving).

Figure 2:3- Picture of Aladura in their white garment dressing during a ritual sacrifice.

Table 3:1- Table showing the classification of the Respondents in terms of age, gender and position held in the Aladura Church.

Table 3:2- Showing Question 1: on the significance of Ritual Sacrifice in the Aladura Church.

Table 3:3- Showing Question 2: on how Aladura Church offers ritual Sacrifice.

Table 3:4- Showing Question 3: on the importance of Ritual Sacrifice today.

Table 3:5- Showing Question 4: on the significance of Christ's sacrifice to humanity.

Table 3:6- Showing Question 5: on whether the Aladura sees Christ's sacrifice as once for all sacrifice.

Table 3:7- Table showing the Similarities Between Aladura Church and African Traditional Religion views on ritual sacrifice.

Table 3:8- Table showing the Differences Between Aladura Church and African Traditional Religion views on ritual sacrifice.

Table 5:1- Table showing similarities and differences in certain thoughts between Aladura Church and Berkouwer's Reformed Tradition on sacrifice in line with the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on a comparison of the Aladura Church's understanding of continuous ritual sacrifices and Gerrit Berkouwer's (Reformed) thought on the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The purpose of the comparison is to see how the theological understanding of ritual sacrifice in the thought of Berkouwer plays out in the belief system and practice of the Aladura Church. It, therefore, investigated the critical question of what can be learnt from a comparison of both perspectives, that is, Berkouwer and Aladura Church. The field study was conducted at the Aladura Church in Agbado, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study found out that the African Tradition Religion has a great influence on the sustenance of ritual sacrifice by the Aladura Church. To better understand the subject, therefore, a section of the research compared ritual sacrifice in the African Traditional Religion (ATR) with that practised in the Aladura Church pointing out their similarities and differences in the area of belief, behaviour, belonging and experience. The general outcome of the field study is that ritual sacrifice is part of the religious experience of the Aladura Church. Some of these practices are the use of water, anointing oil, and spiritual bath. These are meant to aid "cleansing" and sometimes for healing. Through literature, the study established that Berkouwer affirmed that the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was imperfect and was never able to effect a lasting reconciliation between God and man because it was only a shadow of Christ's sacrifice. Berkouwer, therefore, stresses the sacrificial death of Christ as the fulfilment of all sacrifices. The repetition of any other kind of sacrifice for Berkouwer is a denial of the definitive act of Christ's sacrifice. This study concludes that Christ's sacrifice annulled and removed from humans the penalty of sin. It is sufficient for all ritual sacrifices. The Aladura Church is encouraged by the study to place their spiritual and biblical foundation on the ritual of dedication and contacting God in a religious experience in order to express thanks and joy. Also, to re-read the Bible, especially on the essence of ritual sacrifice in the Old Testament and how Christ's sacrifice nullifies the repetition of such practices. Such a theological review will lead to necessary modification in the current practice of ritual sacrifice by the Aladura Church.

GLOSSARY

Ebo: Items that are put together to perform ritual sacrifice

Etutu: Sacrifice

Irubo: The act of performing the sacrifice

Aladura: The owner of the prayer or the one who prays

Ile aanu: Mercy ground

Iye: Survival

Ayo ni o: It is a joy (greeting language among members)

Ori oke Adura: Prayer Mountain

Amure: Belt

Ebo Irapada: Ritual sacrifice for the redemption of life

Aworo or Iworo: The priest

Omi Adura: Prayer water

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

The idea and practice of sacrifice are prominent throughout the biblical narrative. For example, in Genesis 4:2-5 we read of the sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel, also we read of sacrifices offered by Noah (Gen. 8:20), Abraham (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:4, 18; 22:13), Isaac (Gen. 26:25), Jacob (Gen. 31:54; 33:20; 35:1-7; 46:1), Job (1:5; 42:8) and so on. Scholars such as Harry Sawyerr have argued that since the third wave¹ of evangelization first reached sub-Saharan Africa in the middle of the eighteenth century, sacrifice has been a key theme in missionary and African theological discourses.² More closely, Justin S. Ukpong asserts that biblical scholars have wrestled with the relation between biblical and African concepts of sacrifice, liturgical theologians have focused on the appropriation of Christ's sacrifice in the celebration of the Eucharist, and systematic theologians have reflected on the meaning of Christian sacrifice in African social contexts.³

In the African context, particularly in Nigeria, scholars such as G. S. Maxey and P. Ozodo have argued that the Aladura churches in Nigeria are characterized by several ritual sacrifices which they believe have the potency to provoke supernatural aid in their favor. Most notable of the ritual sacrifice are feet-washing, mid-night bathing, robbing of herbal substances, pouring of anointing oil, and cleaning of faces with white handkerchiefs among others.⁴ The order of these rituals depends on the prescription of the pastor, prophets, or prophetesses as the case may be. According to Maxey and Ozodo, it is generally believed that

¹ The Aladura churches are also known as the Third wave movement in Nigeria. They are believed to have institutionalized ritual sacrifice and divine healing. See Adam Mohr, Zionism and Aladura's Shared Genealogy in John Alexander Dowie." *African Zionist and Pentecostal Christianity*, vol. 45 no. 2 (2015), accessed August 9, 2022, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0048721X.2014.992105>.

² Harry Sawyerr, "Sacrifice," in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, ed. Kwesi A. Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), 57–82.

³ Justin S. Ukpong, *Sacrifice, African and Biblical: A Comparative Study of Ibibio and Levitical Sacrifices* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1987), 27.

⁴ G. S. Marxay, and P. Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, (Lagos, Nigeria: WATS Publication, 2017), 97.

these practices are necessary and capable of washing away sins; ascertaining salvation, healing, and deliverance.⁵

The use of ritual sacrifice by the Aladura Church has well-founded roots in both the Old Testament and New Testament.⁶ Scholars such as J. Quayesi-Amakye affirm that the concept of ritual sacrifice in the Aladura belief system finds its place in the Bible.⁷ For example, he mentioned that such a belief system can be seen in the incident of Abraham and the three visitors, the ritual of washing was clearly observed (Gen. 18:4). Similarly, this expression is further strengthened by G. S. Marxay, and P. Ozodo that the practice of ritual sacrifice such as mid-night bathing among the Aladura Church is similar to the biblical account of Moses when he performed a kind of ritual in order to purify the waters of Marah for the Israelites (Exo. 15:25).⁸ Also, the ritual of pouring oil (anointing) may have something to do with the oil Jacob poured on the stone pillar he erected following his dream at Bethel (Gen. 28:18) and similar account found in the New Testament account in relation to anointing the sick with oil (James 5:14). The book of Leviticus is replete with incidences of sacrifices and ritual practices. Furthermore, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were particularly characterized with similar ritual practices throughout the period of their prophetic ministry (Jer. 13:1f and Ezek. 24:1f). Of particular interest is the fact that in the New Testament, Agabus appeared to have employed a form of symbolism in his prophecy concerning Paul and the Jews of Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11).⁹ It was upon these and similar texts that the Aladura Church based their ritual practices on.

Thus the purpose of this research is to see whether such biblical account and practices is still important in our contemporary time particularly as it relates to forgiveness of sin, deliverance and healing. Specifically, this research will critically examine the practice of ritual sacrifice among the Aladura Church in Agbado, Ogun State of Nigeria and its implications on Christ-Once-for-All sacrifice. In doing so, the research will heavily rely on G. C. Berkouwer's work on "Studies in dogmatics: the work of Christ." Berkouwer's treatment of Christ's sacrifice as we shall see in the discussion of this research clearly affirms that it is supreme and that no

⁵ Marxay, and P. Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 97-99.

⁶ G. S. Marxay, and P. Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, (Lagos, Nigeria: WATS Publication, 2017), 15.

⁷ J. Quayesi-Amakye, Prophetic Practices in Contemporary Aladura in Ghana, *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity*, 6, (2015): 43-69.

⁸ Marxay, and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 16-17.

⁹ Marxay, and Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 18.

other sacrifice (i.e bloody and unbloody) is further needed for the purpose of reconciling our broken relationships with God. The researcher believes there is a need for a comparison between the ritual sacrifice that is ongoing in the Aladura churches and the teaching of Berkouwer on Once-For-All Christ's sacrifice to have a profound understanding of their thoughts. The choice of Berkouwer as a conversation partner is not an effort to formulate a practical solution for the ongoing ritual sacrifice in Aladura church, but a broader reflection on the relationship between the two views (Aladura church and Berkouwer's Reformed views).

The motivation for this study arose from my background as a former member of the Aladura church and my deeper study of reformed theology at the Theological University Kampen/Utrecht. The issue of ritual sacrifice is not strange to me as I was born into the Aladura Church and have firsthand experience of the practice. My father was one of the leaders of the church and I have witnessed him performing ritual sacrifice such as members offering money in exchange for items such as prayer water, anointing oil, white handkerchief and bathing soap that was meant for healing, deliverance and for the forgiveness of sin. The practice has not changed and my deeper study of the reformed theology at Kampen raised my curiosity. After having been exposed to rigorous academic study at Kampen especially as it relates to contextual and intercultural theology, I came across Berkouwer's thought from the context of Reformed theology on Christ's sacrifice, the central point of his argument is that Christ's perfect sacrifice has secured for us all we need and that no other sacrifice is needed. This was a turning point for me.¹⁰

The study is located among the Yoruba people. The Yoruba people are one of the ethnic groups in the southwestern part of Nigeria. They have several lingual affiliations, but they are always referred to as Yoruba people. They are very religious people, but their major religion was known to be African Traditional Religion.¹¹ Some of them got converted to Christianity as well as Islam faith. This has been one of the reference points in this thesis. This was not only about the Yoruba people alone as John Mbiti repeatedly argued that Africa's

¹⁰ G.C. Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics, The Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing company 1965), 301-302.

¹¹ Michael A. Ogunewu, *Travails and Triumphs of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria*. (Lagos: The Amen Mission Inc; 2015), 4.

'old' religions have been reflected and have also been a crucial factor in the rapid spread of Christianity among African peoples.¹²

When Christianity entered Yoruba culture, it encountered a well-structured religious environment. In the hand of the Yoruba Christians, the process of adapting it to the indigenous religious and cultural environment began.¹³ Other development in the course of time will be discussed subsequently. The area of concern for this study is on comparison of the views of the Aladura church on Ritual Sacrifice with Berkouwer's teaching on Christ's Once-For-All Sacrifice.

There will be a need to look at the understanding of the indigenous Aladura church in Nigeria in the light of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. Also, this thesis will investigate Berkouwer's understanding of ritual sacrifice in the light of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. Furthermore, this study will look into the similarities and differences between the two selected Aladura and Berkouwer's views on ritual sacrifice in the light of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. The concluding part will be on what can be learned from the thoughts of Aladura Ritual Sacrifice and Berkouwer's once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The problem that this study seeks to address is the problem of ongoing ritual sacrifice in the Aladura Church vis a vis Berkouwer's thought on the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Unbloody ritual sacrifice in the Aladura Church is still ongoing. Such practices include feet-washing, mid-night bathing, pouring of anointing oil and cleaning of faces with white handkerchiefs. The practice becomes a subject of investigation because Berkouwer seems to suggest a contradictory position.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Main Question

What can be learned from a comparison of the *Aladura* views on the ritual sacrifice with Berkouwer's teaching on Christ's Once-for-All sacrifice?

¹² John Mbiti. *Concepts of God in Africa*, (London: Longmans, 1976), 65.

¹³ Benjamin C. Ray, *Aladura Christianity: A Yoruba Religion*, In *Journal of Religion in Africa* xxiii, 3 (1993), 267.

1.3.2 Sub-Questions

1. What is the understanding of the indigenous *Aladura* Churches in Nigeria on ritual sacrifice (*Irubo*)¹⁴ in the light of Christ's Once-for-All sacrifice?
2. What is the understanding of the Reformed (Berkouwer) on ritual sacrifice in the light of Christ's Once-for-All sacrifice?
3. Which similarities and differences between the two selected *Aladura* and Berkouwer views on ritual sacrifice in the light of Christ's Once-for-All sacrifice are remarkable?
4. What can be learned from the comparison of *Aladura* Churches and Berkouwer's view of Christ's sacrifice of Once-for-All sacrifice?

1.4 Research Purpose and Objectives

1.4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to see how the theological understanding of ritual sacrifice in the light of Christ once for all sacrifice (Berkouwer) plays out in the beliefs system and practice of *Aladura* Church in Agbado.

1.4.2 Objectives

The study sought to address four objectives as follows.

1. Explore the understanding of the *Aladura* church on ritual sacrifice
2. Explore Berkouwer's Reformed view on sacrifice (Christ's once-for-all sacrifice).
3. Examine the similarities and the differences between the two selected views on ritual sacrifice and Christ's once for all sacrifice.
4. Recommend the way forward for the *Aladura* church.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is important for the following reasons:

¹⁴ '*Irubo*' (Ritual Sacrifice) as used in this research is limited to customary observance or practice, stereotyped behavior, the prescribed procedure for conducting religious ceremonies such as offering money in the church in exchange for ritual symbols such as feet-washing, mid-night bathing, pouring of anointing oil and cleaning of faces with white handkerchiefs to receive the favor of God."

First, the impact of using the perspective of the Aladura Church on ritual sacrifice in addressing the purpose of Christ's Once-for All sacrifice in this research cannot be overemphasized. This is underpinned by the fact that the Aladura Church constitutes an important segment of the Nigerian Christian population. This factor is capable of affecting a great number of people who might develop an interest in joining the Aladura Church. There will be fast number of people believing and accepting the ritual practices which will further pave way for the spread of the practice, thereby affecting the thought of Christ's once for all sacrifice. As a result of this, the proper understanding of Christ's Once-for-All sacrifice especially from Berkouwer's thought has become necessary.

Second, linking the practice of ritual sacrifice among the Aladura Church in Nigeria to Berkouwer's thought on Christ sacrifice specifically is not popular in academic work. In other words, an academic works that have researched the Aladura Church practices have not made a link with Berkouwer's Reformed thought as such. Therefore, this work is crucial to leave one with no doubt on the nexus between these variables. Third, the notion is that a proper study of Berkouwer's thought on Christ's Once-For-All sacrifice by the Aladura Church may be able to cast a new or different light to their understanding of Christ's sacrifice. Adding to the above, the study will be of great significance to the Aladura church in Ogun state in their teaching of Christ's sacrifice.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

As the title of this work suggests, my investigation will be limited to only the aspect of continuous 'Ebo Etutu' (Ritual Sacrifice) among the Aladura Church, in Agbado, Ogun state as against Christ's sacrifice especially as I have learned in the Reformed Tradition during my MIRT course in Kampen Theological University, Netherlands. While I will make some reference to the Yoruba traditional beliefs on ritual sacrifice, my focus will remain on the practices of the subject matter among the Aladura Movement in Agbado Ogun State.

More so, I do not intend to cover all that could be said or explored on the topics I will be comparing. I will occupy myself mainly with those aspects I consider relevant for this study, i.e., the comparative analysis of Christ's Once-for-All Sacrifice and 'Ebo Etutu' (Ritual Sacrifice) among the Aladura in Agbado Ogun State as it relates to Sin, healing and hopes.

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

1.7.1 Methodology

The methodological framework of this study entails both literature review and empirical fieldwork. To gain some insight into this research topic, people from *Aladura* churches will be interviewed with the aid of the “BBBE” model and literature written about *Aladura* churches will be reviewed. There will be an interview of five members of *Aladura* churches who have been members and have a deeper understanding of the doctrine and practices of the church. The literature review includes intensive research into books and journals to investigate the theological narrative of ‘Ebo Etutu’ (ritual sacrifice) considering Christ’s sacrifice among the *Aladura* churches of Nigeria as well as the position of Berkouwer’s Dutch Reformed Tradition on Ritual Sacrifice.

1.7.2 Research Design

This study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the whole of the study. The second chapter will deal with the historical background and theological understanding of ‘Ebo Etutu’ in the *Aladura* perspectives. The third chapter will investigate the respondents’ reports with the aid of the BBBE¹⁵ Model. The fourth chapter will deal with the understanding of Reformed (Berkouwer) in the light of Christ’s Once- for- All sacrifice. The fifth chapter will be a comparison study of two traditions in which the similarities and differences will be discussed and what can be learned from the *Aladura* church’s view on ritual sacrifice and Berkouwer’s thought on Christ’s sacrifice. There are two traditions in focus. The first tradition will be the *Aladura* practice of *Ebo Etutu*, while the second tradition will be Berkouwer’s thought on Christ’s sacrifice of Once-For-All. Furthermore, in the sixth chapter, a conclusion and recommendation for the church of the *Aladura* and the Dutch reformed tradition will be presented for consideration.

1.8 Conceptual Clarification of Terminology

1.8.1 Sacrifice (Etutu)

The language of sacrifice appears prominently in the Old and New Testaments and the liturgical theology of various early Christian writers. Gabriel O. Abe affirms that sacrifice

¹⁵ Jos Colijn, BBBE Model for Appropriating the Faith, In Class lecture at Theologische Universiteit Kampen, September 15, 2021.

has often been considered a “spiritualization” of the Israelite cult centered at the Temple in Jerusalem. The concept of sacrifice according to Abe involves the death of a victim for the maintenance of a relationship between man and anything considered sacred.¹⁶ In conveying the above, he further reiterates that such sacrifice connotes the surrender to the divine, and could be with blood or without blood, of a person, an animal, bird, food or anything.¹⁷

For Reid, sacrifice can be seen as what is offered to the supernatural to receive certain favor back.

For the purpose of this research, sacrifice is “to make an offering; to consecrate or present to divinity by way of expiation or propitiation, or as a token acknowledgment or thanksgiving; to immolate on the altar of God, in order to atone for sin, to procure favor, or to express thankfulness”.¹⁸ This definition gains prominence in the belief and practice system of Aladura Church as seen earlier in this research.

1.8.2 Ritual (Ebo)

Laura Grillo defined ritual as the primary medium through which religious thought is expressed and transmitted.¹⁹ She argues that anthropologists classified ritual as a set of smaller rites that are designed to achieve particular, prototypical ends.²⁰ According to Dada Adelowo, ritual is a means of bringing into the limelight the religious experience of a group of people.²¹ Furthermore, Adelowo stated that rituals are means of concretizing one’s belief system and acts of communication between one and one’s objects of worship.²² In this thesis, rituals refer to rites which are concretized with the aim of attracting the attention of supernatural beings and forces.²³ Through ritual, African religions accomplish what all

¹⁶ G. O. Abe, *History and theology of sacrifice in the Old Testament*, (Benin, Nigeria: Selvon Prints, 2004), 2

¹⁷ G. O. Abe, *History and theology of sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 2.

¹⁸ Sandra S. Frankiel, Christian Ideas of Sacrifice, accessed on August 17, 2022, <https://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Projects/Reln91/Blood/sacrificemainpage.htm#:~:text=1,2,accessed on 17/08/2022. 12:00pm>

¹⁹ Laura S. Grillo, “African Ritual,” in Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African Religions (ed.) Elias Kifon Bongmba, 2012.1.

²⁰ Laura S. Grillo, “African Ritual,” 1

²¹ Dada Adelowo, *Ritual, Symbolism and Symbols in Yoruba Traditional Religious thought*, in *Journal of Theology*, <https://www.degruyter.com> (accessed August 9, 2022). 162.

²² Dada Adelowo, *Ritual and Symbolism*, 162.

²³ Harold A. Netland, *Sacrifice in other Faiths*, in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000). 836

religions aim to achieve for adherents: they establish orientation in the cosmos; define identity and belonging; connect individual to the community and ancestors.²⁴

1.8.3 Ritual Sacrifice

Ritual sacrifice in this thesis combined the notion of both ritual and sacrifice. As Netland puts it, “in a general sense, sacrifice is an intentional ritual offering of something valuable to one or more divine beings, spirits, or sacred powers.”²⁵ Though it may take different forms or processes to carry out rituals, but the notion or general focus is to get the attention of the supernatural power. The relationship of this can be seen in the ritual sacrifice that takes place in Aladura churches.

²⁴ Laura S. Grillo, “African Ritual,” 1.

²⁵ Harold A. Netland, *Sacrifice in other Faiths*, in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, 846.

CHAPTER TWO: RITUAL SACRIFICE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND AMONG THE ALADURA CHURCHES IN NIGERIA

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter investigated ritual sacrifice in African Traditional Religion and among the Aladura churches in Nigeria. It is divided into three segments. The first aspect looked at the social-religion context in Nigeria. The second aspect is an overview of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in Nigeria. There is also a description of ATR in relation to Ritual Sacrifice and among the Aladura churches with the help of the BBBE model. The third section is on the historical background of the Aladura Church.

2.1.1 An overview of Social Religious Context in Nigeria

One of the activities of life that cannot be overlooked in Nigeria is the social-religious context of the people. It is a general belief that religion, as well as its institutions in every society, has at one point in time or the other played a vital role in the subject of maintenance of what is social.²⁶ It was mentioned that the religious activities in Nigeria are not only about social order but also about social change, disorder, deviance, social death and re-birth.²⁷ When the matter of religion is examined, it is probably over-studied, and its impact on general society and societal beliefs, yet cannot be overemphasized. The emergence of the Aladura Church in Nigeria also has a greater influence on the social life of the people.

2.1.2 An overview of African Traditional Religion in Nigeria and among the Yorubas

African Traditional Religion (ATR) simply put, is the religion of Africans. It can be described as a religion that came to be from the faith of the forefathers of Africans and has been sustained through practice and oral tradition. Awolalu calls it a religion that Africans today have made theirs through practice. It has no written literature but is reflected in the

²⁶ Michael A. Owojuyigbe and Dauda A. Busari, "Religion and Social Control in Nigeria: The Rise and Rise of Secularization and Fanaticism," In LASU Journal of Social Sciences, 2014 vol. 9. 21.

²⁷ Michael A. Owojuyigbe and Dauda A. Busari, "Religion and Social Control in Nigeria, 21.

culture of the people through their myths, folktales, songs, shrines etc.²⁸ According to Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion is the religion practiced by the majority of Africans.²⁹ Before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, the people had a clear concept of God through their ATR. This is known as “*esin ibile*” (native religion)³⁰ in the Yoruba language.

2.1.3 A Short Description of African Traditional Religion in Relation to Ritual sacrifice.

The practice of Ritual Sacrifice is very strong among the Yoruba people. Although there are no written records to explain it in detail, yet, it is expressed among the people in proverbs, short statements, songs and prayers. One of the proverbs is “*riru ebo nii gbe ni*” that is, failure to offer sacrifice leads to disaster.³¹ Olupona and Sulayman mentioned that is one of the ways Africans have experienced God’s salvific activity in their history.³² This is a statement that is valid because God is Lord over all humankind, and He does not withhold his presence from people anywhere. In the thought of Akin-Otiko, in African Traditional Religion, one of the ways to establish a relationship with *Olodumare*, the Supreme being, is to enter a covenant relationship with him. This can be carried out through ritual sacrifice. He mentioned two categories of expiatory (*Ebo Irapada*) and expiation (*Ebo Imukuro Ese*).³³ In other words, sacrifice is offered to extinguish the guilt incurred because of sin and to make amends for the past. In the opinion of Bediako, “sacrifice is a way of ensuring a harmonious relationship between the human community and the realm of divine and mystical power.”³⁴ This was seen as a regular event in society and there is a purpose for every act of sacrifice that is carried out. According to Dada Adelowo, rituals, sacrifices, and symbols have ultimate reference to *Olodumare* (supreme being) who is believed to be the Maker, the Creator, the owner of life.

²⁸ J. O. Awolalu, “The encounter Between African Traditional Religion and other Religions in Nigeria” in J.K. Olupona (ed.), *African Traditional Religion in Contemporary Society*, (1991): 111. See also J. O. Awolalu, “Sin and its removal in African traditional religion.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. vol.44, no. 2 (1976): 275.

²⁹ Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion- A Definition*, London: Oxford University Press, (1973). 208

³⁰ This is a common name for ATR among the Yorubas

³¹ See Adekola O.O. and Ayoola, F.K, “African Traditional Religion as a Recipe for Peace, Development and Security Oriented Commonwealth in Nigeria”, *Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*, vol. 28, no.1, (2018): 202-205.

³² Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang, *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*. Berlin: De Gruyter (1993): 69-70.

³³ Akin-Otiko, Akinmayowa, *The Significance of Sacrifice in Yoruba Religion and the Scope of Sacrifice to Esu-Odara, the Mediator Divinity*. CAJOLIS-Calabar Journal of Liberal Studies. 21.2, (April 2019), 22.

³⁴ Kwame, Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 28.

Thus, all items in their religious thought are means to reach on to God.³⁵ Moreover, in the African Traditional Religion, the case that the higher power is one and all mediation; direct approach is almost impossible. The deity as the origin of life is at a great distance.

2.2 Historical Background of the Aladura Churches in Nigeria

The Aladura or literally “the praying people” in Yoruba land of South-west Nigeria trace their origin to the period after 1918.³⁶ Though this movement eventually grew beyond the boundaries of Yorubaland and even Nigeria as a whole, it began and remains vital there to this day. J. D. Y. Peel asserts that the Aladura emerged due to several causes: social change in Yoruba society, the growth of Christianity, the decline of African Traditional (Indigenous) Religion, the financial depression, natural disasters, and epidemics.³⁷ Perhaps a more detailed historical background of the Aladura Church can be traced to the works of Deji I. Ayegboyin and Ademola S. Ishola who rightly observed that Aladura Christianity began when several persons formed a prayer group within Saint Saviour Anglican Church, Ijebu-Ode in the southwest of Nigeria in the second decade of the 20th century, as a response to the influenza epidemic, which defied modern and traditional medicines.

Recent discourses about the origin of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria point to Joseph Sadare whose appellation is ‘Esinsinade’ as the founder, or Joseph Sadare and four others³⁸ as pioneer members whose unflinching determination and faith in fervent prayers led to the formation of the Aladura brand of Christianity.³⁹ However, existing literature on Aladura Christianity in Nigeria in particular and on the advent and development of Christianity in Nigeria, in general, does not provide empirical evidence that Joseph Shadare singly founded Aladura Christianity.

In the work of Allan Anderson, it was noted that they broke with the Anglican church in 1922 over the issue of medicines and infant baptism and became affiliated with a North American fundamentalist church called the Faith Tabernacle, which also favoured faith

³⁵ Dada E. Adelowo, *Ritual, Symbolism and Symbols in Yoruba Traditional Religious Thought*, in AJT/4: 1/ 90. 171.

³⁶ Afe Adogame and J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, “Anglicanism and the Aladura Churches in Nigeria,” in *Anglicanism, A Global Communion*, ed. Andrew Wingate (London: Mowbray, 1998), 19.

³⁷ J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (Oxford: OUP, 1968), 292.

³⁸ For details of the four pioneer members, see Olofinjana, Israel O. 20 Pentecostal Pioneers in Nigeria: Their Lives, their Legacies. Volume 1, (Bloomington, USA: Xlibris Publishers, 2011),21.

³⁹ Deji, I. Ayegboyin, and S. Ademola Ishola. *African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective*, (Lagos, Nigeria: Greater Heights Publications, 1997), 66-67.

healing and adult baptism.⁴⁰ The church later broke over organizational and doctrinal issues. The churches fastly expanded throughout Yorubaland during a revival movement in the 1930s which paved way for it to become an important feature of western Nigerian society. One of the influencers in the early founding stage of the Aladura church was Apostle Ayo Babalola, though he went to start Christ Apostolic Church, and he emphasized the use of “water of life,” blessed water, in healing rituals.⁴¹ The movement according to Kofi Johnson emanated from the quest of the natives to make the worship experience to be relevant to their society.⁴²

Aladura church according to Kofi Johnson emanated from the quest of the natives to make the worship experience to be relevant to their society.⁴³ Their mode of worship is with special references to vision experiencing, tongue-speaking, and magical drugless healing. Though, they emphasize on Holy Spirit and the power of Old Testament prophets like Moses and other notable patriarchs. In the same way that Kofi emphasizes the modus operandi of the Aladura church, other African theologians like Appiah-Kubi and Babalola opined that Aladura exercise their worship experiences with the light of traditional African culture.⁴⁴ Scholars such as G. S. Maxey and P. Ozodo have argued that the Aladura churches in Nigeria is characterized by several ritual sacrifices which they believe have the potency to provoke supernatural aid in their favour. Most notable of the ritual sacrifice are feet-washing, mid-night bathing, robbing of herbal substances, pouring of anointing oil, and cleaning of faces with white handkerchiefs among others.⁴⁵ The order of these rituals depends on the prescription of the pastor, prophets or prophetesses as the case may be. According to Maxey and Ozodo, it is generally believed that these practices are necessary and capable of washing away sins; ascertaining salvation, healing and deliverance.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Allan H. Anderson, “Aladura Churches,” *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, eds. J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 60-61.

⁴¹ Allan H. Anderson, “Aladura Churches,” *Religions of the World, Second Edition: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, 65.

⁴² Kofi Johnson, *Aladura: The search for Authenticity and Impetus for African Christianity*. [AJPS 14:1 (2011), pp.149-165].

⁴³ Kofi Johnson, *Aladura: The search for Authenticity and Impetus for African Christianity*. [AJPS 14:1 (2011),149-165].

⁴⁴ Kofi Johnson, *Aladura; The search for Authenticity and Impetus for African Christianity*,149-165.

⁴⁵ G. S. Marxay, and P. Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, (Lagos, Nigeria: WATS Publication, 2017), 97.

⁴⁶ Marxay, and P. Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, 97-99.

At the initial stage of its existence, the Aladura church have been classified as incipient nationalism or religious independents but today, it was mentioned that scholars have dismissed the validity of this rationale and have concluded that the phenomenon is more amazing than the previous assessment.⁴⁷ John Mbiti has repeatedly argued that Africa's 'old' religions have been a crucial factor in the rapid spread of Christianity among African peoples.⁴⁸ In other words, the former religious activities or services have a great impact on the way the Africans think and observed their newfound faith (Christianity).

The Aladura churches are not unified in any official sense, but because they "have enough similarity in their origins, beliefs, leadership, and rituals to be known locally by the same term..." they are commonly lumped together.⁴⁹ Among the groups of the *Aladura* churches, the three notable ones are the Eternal Sacred Cherubim and Seraphim church, *Aladura* founded by Apostle Moses Orimolade Tunolase on 9th September 1925, Cherubim and Seraphim Church Movement, *Aladura (Ayo Ni o)* founded by Prophet Fakeye in November 1927 and The Church of the Lord, *Aladura* founded by Apostle Josiah Olunowo Oshitelu in 1926.⁵⁰ Other versions are splintered from the Eternal Sacred Cherubim and Seraphim church as a result of jealousy, disputes and breakaways, but that will not be the focus of this thesis. The primary concern of this thesis is the major factors that combined them.

2.2.1 Perspectives of the Aladura Church on Ritual Sacrifice

The essence of the Aladura ritual sacrifice rests on their beliefs in spiritual graces of salvation, repentance, forgiveness, holiness, healing, deliverance, exorcism, spiritual baptism, spiritual gifts and spiritual authority.⁵¹ In the aspect of healing and conducting deliverance for the sick one, Ayegboyin argued that, with natural diseases, prayer takes pre-eminence in the activities aimed at helping the sick.⁵² The Aladura prescribe among other things the use of *omi-iye* or *omi-adura* (consecrated water) for those with 'abnormal' sickness.⁵³ Adewale

⁴⁷ Kofi Johnson, *Aladura; The search for Authenticity and Impetus for African Christianity*,

⁴⁸ John Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, (London: Longmans, 1976), 55.

⁴⁹ Robert Cameron Mitchell, "Religious Protest and Social Change: The Origins of the Aladura Movement in Western Nigeria," in *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, ed. Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui (New York: OUP, 1970), 461.

⁵⁰ Michael A. Ogunewu, *Travails and Triumphs of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria*, 1-4.

⁵¹ C. O. Osun, 1999, *Aladura Evangelists in Britain: An assessment of spiritual adventurism*, *Black Theology: An International Journal*, 1, 3, (1999), 9- 32.

⁵² Deji Ayegboyin, 'Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons', 238.

⁵³ Deji Ayegboyin, 'Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons', 238.

draws a parallel between the use of water in the Yoruba traditional religion and the Aladura and opined that water is endowed with supernatural power.⁵⁴ The Aladura, however, contend that they prescribe the use of water only by divine revelation or guidance. The argument for the utilization of *omi-iyé* (consecrated water) was advanced in the formative years of the Aladura movement in what Osun referred to as the 'Aladura theology of water.'⁵⁵

Ray further corroborated this assertion when he noted that the Aladura Churches also incorporated the use of holy water, candles, and spiritual words into their worship.⁵⁶ It is generally perceived that the use of these ritual sacrificial elements is responsible for deliverance, salvation and healing among members. Also, in a related development, K. Johnson mentioned that the members of the Aladura movement feel empowered by the tenets of the movement to seek religious solutions to the problems of sorcery, witches and other problems.⁵⁷ Aiyegboyin opined that the Aladura church draws on indigenous symbolism, healing modalities, worship styles and spiritual roles to form a contextualized Christianity which has made the Aladura and Pentecostal churches appealing to a broad base of Nigeria Christianity.⁵⁸

2.2.2 The practice of ritual sacrifice in the Aladura church in Nigeria

The practice of ritual sacrifice in the Aladura church can be looked at from different angles. First when it comes to the issue of rituals to be performed to aid healing for their patrons, the Aladura Church depends on the one with the gift of discernment to know what ritual to prescribe. This is also seen in Ayegboyin who opined that "for sicknesses which are described as 'abnormal', the Aladura prophets believe that they have the gifts of intuition and the ability to communicate with God to diagnose the cause."⁵⁹ The Aladura prophets hold that since abnormal diseases may have been caused by supernatural powers, spiritual means

⁵⁴ SA Adewale, 'The Cultic use of water among the Yoruba', In ORITA Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, June (1986). 28-29.

⁵⁵ C.O. Oshun, 'Divine Healing in the Service of Mission: Some Reflections on the experience of Aladura Pentecostals in Nigeria' Paper presented to a Consultation of Faith, Health, Healing and Mission Organised by the WCC and Evangelical Team, at GIMPA, Accra, (December 2002), 17.

⁵⁶ B. C. Ray, *African Religions; Symbol Ritual and Community*, (Upper Saddle River- Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2000), 27.

⁵⁷ Johnson, K. 2011, Aladura: *The search for authenticity and an impetus for African Christianity*, Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies, 14, 1, (2011), 149- 165

⁵⁸ Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, "Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons': The Response of the Aladura," Studies in World Christianity, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2005), pp. 233-249.

⁵⁹ Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, "Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons," 238.

through ritual sacrifices are required to cure them.⁶⁰ Sometimes the prophets recommend spiritual bathing, or use of the anointing oil for healing or both depending on the nature of the ailment.

Ritualistic usage is a hallmark of Aladura Christianity. According to Afe Adogame, Aladura

liturgical tradition is a highly expressive action characterized by a heavy dose of rituals

enacted to resolve individual and collective existential problems. Each segment of the ritual

worship is seen by members to be full of religious symbolism and meaning.⁶¹ Notable among these include but are not limited to feet-washing, mid-night bathing, pouring of anointing oil and cleaning of faces with white handkerchiefs which they believe are capable of healing, taking away sins, and restoring.⁶²

It should be noted here that people carry out sacrifices for different reasons. In many traditions any individual can make an offering or sacrifice for personal reasons.⁶³ Of course, there are pieces of evidence of similar ritual practices associated with some events, especially in the Old and New Testaments that tend to lend support to such use of symbols. For example, in the incident of Abraham and the three visitors, the ritual of feet-washing was clearly observed (Gen. 18:4). Similarly, Moses performed a kind of ritual to purify the waters of Merah and Elim for the Israelites (Exo. 15:25). Also, the ritual of pouring oil (anointing) on client's head, houses, business, etc, among the Aladura Movement in Agbado, Ogun State may have something to do with the oil Jacob poured on the stone pillar he erected following his dream at Bethel (Gen. 28:18). Of particular interest is the fact that in the New Testament, Agabus appeared to have employed a form of ritual symbol in his prophecy concerning Paul and the Jews of Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11).

⁶⁰ Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, "Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons," 238.

⁶¹ A. Adogame, *Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The public face of Aladura in diaspora*, Journal of Religion in Africa, Vol. 34, no. 4, (2004), 493-522. 57George Harinck, class lecture [discussion], Neo-Calvinism from International Perspective, June 2, 2020, Theologische Universiteit, Kampen.

⁶² Adogame, *Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare*, 520.

⁶³ Harold A. Netland, *Sacrifice in other Faiths, in Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, 846.

Table 2.1 - Tabular summary of Relationship of Ritual Sacrifice in the ATR and Aladura Church through BBBE Model

| Areas of Appropriation | Yoruba Traditional Religion on Supreme Being | Aladura Churches |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Believing | Believe in ritual sacrifice for the progress, and salvation of the land | Ritual Sacrifice is made to God and it brings deliverance, healing etc 2kings2:21; 5:14; Gen.28:18;Ex.15:25; John9:7; Acts19:12; James5:14-15. |
| Behaviour | Through prayers and sacrifices, the Yoruba people appease the Supreme Being who has revealed himself through the myths, ancestors, and the gods for offences they have committed and by so doing reconciled to them and obtain their blessings in return. | Through prayer and sacrifice, the Aladura Churches appease God for reconciliation and forgiveness of sins. Leviticus7:11; James5:14-15. |
| Belonging | The Yoruba traditional religion holds to the belief that it belongs to a society that is composed of friends, age mates, and relatives. Not only does each member of the community have a defined role to play, but there are responsibilities to each other that when transgressed bring about judgment from God or the other deities, can be used on behalf of one another and the community. | Belonging helps the Christians to make connections between the belief that service to others is service to God through, (Jesus told us to love God and love our neighbor), and its implications on how Christians should respond to others. Acts19:12. |
| Experience | The Yoruba traditional religion is informed by the history and lived experiences of the Yorubas from one generation to another. The Yoruba traditional people's experiences of God through ritual sacrifice influence their understanding of God. | Among the Aladura Churches, Christianity is informed by the lived rich experiences found in the Word of God, particularly in the Old Testament on to God.Ex.15:25; 17:1f. |

2.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the emergence of the Aladura church amid the social-religious changes in Nigeria and the influence of the traditional practices, though not totally responsible, but as part of what stimulates the ritual sacrifice among the Aladura churches in Nigeria. One of the major findings as discussed in this thesis is on social and religious context through the practices of ritual sacrifice by the Aladura Church in Nigeria. The spread of the Aladura Church is tremendous because they made a greater impact in meeting the social need of the people, mostly in the area of healing and worship style with native items as mentioned in this chapter. It was mentioned that the “Aladura Church draws on indigenous symbolism, healing modalities, worship styles and spiritual roles to form a contextualized Christianity which has made the Aladura church appealing to a broad base of Nigeria Christianity.” The next chapter will be on the report of Aladura Beliefs and practices (Ritual sacrifice) analysed using the BBBE model.

PICTURES



Picture showing some *Aladura* members in their expression of dancing and clapping as a way of giving *Ebo Ope* (Sacrifice of thanksgiving).



Picture of *Aladura* in their white garment dressing during ritual sacrifice practices

CHAPTER THREE: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FIELDWORK

3.1 Chapter Introduction

This section is on the presentation and the analysis of the fieldwork carried out through the electronic media and document supplied by some of the respondents. The outcome of the field study was divided into two major aspects and illustrated with tables. The chapter also discussed similarities and differences between African Traditional Religion (ATR) ritual sacrifice practices and that of the Aladura Church from the perspectives of the respondents.

3.2 Field Study – Interviews Conducted

The interviews were conducted with the selected members and Apostles of Aladura Churches through means of electronic media and other documents that were sent through the emails, on the beliefs and practices of Aladura Churches in Nigeria. The distributions of the respondents were done based on the groups of ages, sex, years of membership and position held in the church. Five members of Aladura churches were interviewed. This group of five people comprises both church leadership and followership. Some of these people interviewed were born in Aladura churches and some joined or converted into Aladura churches. Also, the number of years being used at Aladura church helps some findings on the church. It was to my greatest surprise that they believed that there are certain practices that those who did not belong to the Aladura church did not border to ask them their purpose and significance, but which were firmly rooted in the scripture.

3.3 Bio-Data of Respondents

In order to get the information needed for this thesis with the aid of the illustration table, five members of the Aladura churches that were interviewed were classified into three aspects namely, the age distribution of respondents, gender classification, and position held in the Aladura churches. The age classification was 31-40 years, 41-50 years, 51-60 years, and 61 and above years. There is a mixture of both the male and female gender as mentioned earlier. The positions held at one time or the other were taken into consideration. These

respondents were committed members of the Eternal Sacred Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Aladura and Cherubim and Seraphim Church Movement Aladura, *Ayo ni o* who have been in membership of the church from birth and several years. The demographic analysis is shown in the table below.

Table 3.1 - Table showing the classification of the Respondents in terms of age, gender and position held in the Aladura churches.

| S/NO | AGEE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT | GENDER | POSITION HELD IN THE CHURCH |
|------|---------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 31- 40 | MALE | APOSTLE |
| 2 | 41-50 | FEMALE | PROPHETESS |
| 3 | 51-60 | MALE | MEMBER |
| 4 | 61 AND ABOVE | FEMALE | MEMBER/CHURCH TRUSTEE |
| 5 | 61 AND ABOVE | MALE | RETIRED APOSTLE/TREASURER |

3.4 Data from the Field Survey

In this section, respondents were tested concerning the research objectives. In line with this, questions were put forward to the respondents for which they were expected to answer accordingly. The questions were open-ended by design, and all the respondents were asked the same set of questions and given the freedom to express themselves. (See Appendix 1 to 5 for a complete set of the questions). It is important to state that due to the vast amount of information obtained in each interview, I have decided not to include all their answers but have carefully selected and used only the aspects that were most relevant to my work. All of the five interviews in this chapter are found in Appendix 1. I have further labelled the five respondents in this chapter as follows: Interview One, R1, Interview Two, R2, Interview Three, R3, Interview Four, R4, Interview Five, and R5. The various questions and their responses are accordingly presented and analyzed below.

Table 3.2 - Question 1: What is the significance of Ritual Sacrifice in the Aladura Church?

| Respondents | Summary of Responses |
|--------------------|---|
| R1 | To appease our God so that our sins may be forgiven |
| R2 | Ritual Sacrifice to us (i.e Aladura) is a way of seeking favour and forgiveness with our creator |
| R3 | Ehmm! I think sacrifice is a way of showing appreciation to God, just as we have seen in the book of Jonah 2:9. |
| R4 | We believe that if we offer sacrifice to God, we get something back in return. What we get back could be what we have been praying for long time. |
| R5 | We offer sacrifice to God for our own good and to be in the right relationship with our God. |

Source: Field Survey

From the above, all the respondents clearly agreed that ritual sacrifice is made to God. However, the significance of such sacrifice depends on your expectations or motifs of the one making the sacrifice. The above is not unconnected with the appropriation table shown earlier as Table 2.1. In the believing system of the Aladura churches as shown in Table 2.1, the Aladura churches believe that sacrifice is made to God. In the table, it was shown that ritual sacrifice brings deliverance and healing. The respondents' opinions tally with this.

Table 3.3 - Question 2: How does the Aladura church offer ritual sacrifice?

| Respondents | Summary of Responses |
|--------------------|--|
| R1 | The prophet will pray on the Water or the Anointing oil and return it to the owner for use. We can drink it or rob our bodies with the anointing oil |
| R2 | We sing, dance and clap our hands as a sacrifice unto God |
| R3 | We use the handkerchief to cleanse our faces and we can place it in our vehicles for protection against accidents. |
| R4 | We carry out bathing at the running river |
| R5 | We use sacrifice in order to be in the right relationship with God. |

Source: Field Survey

In the above report, different ways and items such as prayer water, anointing oil, bathing in the running river and handkerchiefs were in use according to the respondents to carry out the ritual sacrifice. For example, the ritual of bathing a believer during midnight

hours is normally performed to bring healing and deliverance. What is used depends on the instructions of the prophets or the *elemi* (the ones that fall into trance to give the instruction) to the member. Evidence of this can be seen in Table 2.1 under behaving in the sense that ritual symbols such as handkerchiefs etc are for the purpose of restoring a relationship with God. In table 2.1, the Aladura offers prayer and read the book of Psalm depending on the nature or the reason for the sacrifice. In the cause of their performing ritual sacrifice, the Aladura people never take with levity the act of singing, clapping and dancing. All the respondents affirmed that there is no dull moment in the gathering of the Aladura when it comes to ritual sacrifice.

Table 3.4 - Question 3: Why is Ritual Sacrifice still important today?

| Respondents | Summary of Responses |
|--------------------|---|
| R1 | Because it has to do with receiving God’s favour and healing. |
| R2 | Because it appeases God for favour and reconciliation. |
| R3 | Because it has biblical bases where some of the items in use were mentioned. |
| R4 | Because people feel protected and assured of its effectiveness in their lives. |
| R5 | When the <i>elemi</i> (the one that falls into trance) speaks, people give respect to him or her word as a mouthpiece of God. |

Source: Field Survey

This report, like others discussed earlier, gave different reasons for the importance of Ritual Sacrifice today. The result from table 2.1 shows that through prayer and sacrifice, the Aladura Church appeases God for reconciliation and forgiveness of sin. The respondents believe that God is involved because it has some roots in the Bible. This response that it has some root in the scripture has been what all the respondents affirmed throughout the interview sessions. They pointed out the call and ministry of the prophets in the scripture as part of what make the ritual sacrifice important to them. Examples from the bible are, 2Kings 2:21 (for healing), James 5:14-15 (for healing and forgiveness of sin); Leviticus 7:11-12.

Table 3.5 - Question 4: What is the significance of Christ’s sacrifice to humanity?

| Respondents | Summary of Responses |
|-------------|--|
| R1 | Salvation and forgiveness of sin |
| R2 | It shows us the love of God that was demonstrated through his son, Jesus Christ. |
| R3 | It shows that he is our redeemer |
| R4 | It reveals that God has plan for people both now and in the future. |
| R5 | Christ has suffered because of us |

Source: Field Survey

In this section the respondents see Christ’s sacrifice as salvation for humanity and the plan of God for the universe. The respondent believes that Christ suffered and died for us. All the respondents showed their understanding and believing in the work of Christ to humanity most importantly around forgiveness of sin, the love of God, they also believe in the plan of God for humanity both now and the future. The respondent three understanding of significance of Christ’s Sacrifice to humanity shows in the affirmation of Christ as their redeemer.

Table 3.6 - Question 5: Do you see Christ’s sacrifice as a Once-For-All sacrifice? (b) If yes, why do you still practice Ritual Sacrifice?

| Respondents | Responses | Why do you still practice Ritual Sacrifice? |
|-------------|-----------|--|
| R1 | Yes | They are relevant and have biblical roots |
| R2 | Yes | Observing ritual sacrifice is like exercising our spiritual gift through the office of the prophet. |
| R3 | Yes | I have faith in using ritual sacrifice items like prayer water, anointing oil, and burning incense because they work for me. |
| R4 | Yes | I believe in the leading of the prophets if they ask me to carry out the ritual sacrifice of those items mentioned. |
| R5 | Yes | It is not occultic and Bible did not oppose it in my understanding. |

Source: Field Survey

In this section, they all gave an affirmative answer to the question of Christ’s sacrifice as once for all sacrifices but gave different reasons on why they still practice. They all see it as

what has references in the Bible, for example, the use of items such as water, anointing oil, handkerchiefs and others. The biblical foundation for such ritual sacrifices is in Leviticus 7:11-12; 2 Kings 2:21; Acts 19:12; James 5: 14—15. The respondent five says he does not see anything bad in it on the ground that it is not against the Bible. The respondent three says he believe in the performance of the ritual sacrifice because it works for him. Also, the respondent says the ritual sacrifice give him joy and this can relate to experiencing shown in table 2.1.

3.5 Common Characteristics Between Aladura church and Africa Traditional Beliefs.

This aspect examined the common characteristics between the Aladura church and African Traditional beliefs given ritual sacrifice. It has been mentioned earlier that one of the major emphases of the Aladura church is healing, so also this aspect is much emphasized in African Traditional beliefs. In the appropriation table 2.1, it was shown under believing column that both belief in ritual sacrifice for progress, salvation of the land, deliverance, and healing. It was noted by Ayegboyin that Aladura churches reflect the indigenization of Christianity through its use of symbols, traditional healing modalities, and worship styles.⁶⁴ Using items like water, anointing oil, handkerchiefs, incense burning, and spiritual bathing in the running water are common practices both in the Aladura church and the African Traditional Belief. The purpose of these items, though not all, is the same thing in both Aladura church and African Traditional Belief which is for healing, the redemption of life (*irapada*) and for the forgiveness of sin.⁶⁵

The second point of similarity is on behaving which reflects that in African Traditional Religion, through prayers and sacrifices, the Yoruba people appease God for reconciliation and obtain their blessing back. Also, in the Aladura Church, the Aladura offer prayer and sacrifice to appease God for reconciliation and forgiveness of sin.

In the area of Belonging, the African Traditional Religion holds to the fact that it belongs to a society that is composed of friends, age mates and relatives and besides, they have roles to play among others. They have responsibilities to each other's that when anyone transgress, sacrifice can be made on behalf of one another. This is also a common feature in

⁶⁴ Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, "Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons: The Response of the Aladura," *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2005), pp. 233-249.

⁶⁵ E.Dada Adelowo, *Ritual, Symbolism and Symbols in Yoruba Traditional Religious Thought*,

the Aladura Church through ritual sacrifice. The Aladura shows this in responding to one another in time of need.

The African Traditional Religion is informed by the history and lives experiences of one generation to the other. One of the ways they experience God is when they carry out the ritual sacrifices. Among the Aladura churches, Christianity is informed by the experiences found in the word of God, particularly when observing ritual sacrifice.

The Aladura church depends solely on its prophets to give spiritual guidance to the laity. Ayegboyin argued that the role of the prophet echoes other roles in Yoruba society, most notable the Babalawo, a Yoruba priest of ifa skilled in divination, healing, and problem-solving.⁶⁶ In another argument on the Aladura church's claims to the primacy of the Bible and a total repudiation of what the Aladura perceive as 'unchristian' and 'unbiblical,' their ritual cosmos is evidently suffused with features that demonstrate some affinity with Yoruba religious worldview.⁶⁷

Just as the Aladura church has the leadership of the church on the priest otherwise called Woli (prophet), the African Traditional Belief referred to their leader as *Aworo* or *Iworo* meaning the priest.⁶⁸ They both administer the rituals as led by God. Another similarity in the placement of their leadership was that he must have received direct training under an elderly priest before they become a leader over a particular area or level of service.

| Religion | Practices | Meaning or purpose |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Aladura church | Healing and deliverance with the use of water, anointing oil and other items. | Sees the items as the gift from God and can be used for the benefit of man |
| African traditional belief | Healing and deliverance with the use of water, anointing oil and other items. | God has given us these items for the use of man |
| Aladura church | Ritual Sacrifice | For appeasement |

⁶⁶ Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, "Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons': The Response of the Aladura," *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2005), pp. 233-249.

⁶⁷ Afe Adogame, *Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare*, 502.

⁶⁸ E.Dada Adelowo, *Ritual, Symbolism and Symbols in Yoruba Traditional Religious Thought*,

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|--|
| African traditional belief | Ritual Sacrifice | For appeasement |
| Aladura church | Prophetic gift | They believe in their prophet for guidance |
| African traditional belief | Priestly gift | They believe in their priest for guidance |

Similarities Between Aladura church and African Traditional Beliefs on ritual sacrifice.

3.6 Differences between *Aladura* church and African Traditional Religion.

As was opined by Ayegboyin above, “Aladura churches reflect the indigenization of Christianity through its use of symbols, traditional healing modalities, and worship styles,” but these are in a different context. Ayegboyin mentioned that Aladura prophets are outspoken in their condemnation of indigenous deities.⁶⁹ This assertion was noted in what one of the respondents says that all the ritual sacrifice carried out by the Aladura church are rooted in the scripture, mostly in the Old Testament and the New Testament.⁷⁰ For example, the warning in Ephesians 5:11, “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” But the biblical root for the practice of ritual sacrifices for healing and forgiveness of sin can be traced to Leviticus 7: 11-12; Gen. 28:18, 2 Kings 2:21; 5:14; James 5:14, and Acts 19:12. The respondent went further to say that the prophets in the Aladura church receive special spiritual gifts and messages from God for the benefit of people either in the Aladura church or outside the fold. The Aladura calls and prays in the name of Angels and the African Traditional Belief uses the name of deities which are though messengers but of different context.⁷¹

In African Traditional beliefs, some symbols are made to identify one divinity or the other for use in traditional religion.⁷² This is unlikely in the Aladura church. The use of white cloth symbolizes holiness in the Aladura church while it also stands for purity in African Traditional beliefs, it is peculiar to the deity known as *Obatala* in Africa Traditional Religion.

⁶⁹ Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, “Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons”: The Response of the Aladura,” *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2005), pp. 233-249.

⁷⁰ The first respondent in an interview conducted on 4/07/2022. Lagos: 10:00am.

⁷¹ The first respondent in an interview conducted on 4/07/2022. Lagos: 10:00am

⁷² E.Dada Adelowo, *Ritual, Symbolism and Symbols in Yoruba Traditional Religious Thought*, 170.

In the Aladura church, the usage of white clothes, water, spiritual bath, and anointing oil is not meant for any Angels or deities. Though it may be for the same end like healing and for cleansing, but the items have some underline factors that differ. Dada Adelowo argues that traditional herbalists make use of plants, roots, and animal species in the preparation of medicine for healing purposes.⁷³ In the African Traditional Belief, the priest needs to know the time and how to prepare all these items before they could be administered to the user. This method is not accepted in the Aladura church, however, there are certain priests among the Aladura churches that were accused of this practice. This challenge is what Ogunewu mention as syncretism.⁷⁴ It is the merging beliefs of two or more religious systems in order to come up with a new one. Ogunewu argues that is the mingling of authentic notions and realities of the revealed faith with realities of other spiritual worlds.⁷⁵

the Aladura churches.

| Religion | Practices | Meaning or purpose |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Aladura church | Ritual sacrifice | Rooted in the scriptures and from the priests |
| African traditional belief | Ritual sacrifice | Given only by their priests |
| Aladura church | The white clothes and handkerchief | For healing prosperity, spiritual cleansing. |
| African traditional belief | The white clothes and handkerchief | White cloth is purity but also an identity of a deity |
| Aladura church | Using of anointing oil | Forgiveness of sin |
| African traditional belief | Using of anointing oil | For protection, prosperity and deliverance. |

Table showing Differences between *Aladura* church and African Traditional Religion.

⁷³ E.Dada Adelowo, *Ritual, Symbolism and Symbols in Yoruba Traditional Religious Thought*, 170.

⁷⁴ Michael, A. Ogunewu, *Travails and Triumphs of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria*, 70.

⁷⁵ Michael, A. Ogunewu, *Travails and Triumphs of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria*, 70.

3.7 A Description of the Aladura Ritual Sacrifice Practices (Phenomenology), with the help of the 'BBBE' model.

In this section, the Aladura ritual sacrifice was analysed on the level of Believing, Belonging, Behaving and Experiencing (BBBE).⁷⁶ In other words, this aspect was able to examine the understanding of the Aladura churches on ritual sacrifice. The BBBE model was also helpful to examine the worldview and the real meaning behind the ritual sacrifice in the Aladura church. The reason for the usage of this model is to look at how the Aladura churches appropriate ritual sacrifice in their Christian context. This model will help the Aladura churches and people studying their practices better understand their belief system.

3.7.1 Believing

When the respondents were interviewed, on the level of belief, it can be established that they attach tremendous value to ritual sacrifice. The respondents mentioned that they place so much value on ritual sacrifice because it makes them to physically express their belief system. The mentioned that the items in use made them to concretize their worship and prayers. Virtually all the respondents interviewed asserted that ritual sacrifice are part of what they do in their religious expressions. Notable among their practices that can be established is the use of water, the anointing oil and spiritual birth which are meant for cleansing and sometimes for healing purposes.

The respondents emphasize faith but in a different dimension. A respondent says that the person performing the ritual sacrifice must have faith that the ritual will work for him or her otherwise it may result in a fruitless effort. What this implies is that the attitude or the behavior of the Aladura to all the ritual sacrifice is important. This factor of faith in what they believe, and practice has motivated the action of the Aladura church to show passion in what they do.

⁷⁶ See for the methodological background of the model, which was developed by Jos Colijn: Saroglou, Vassilis. 'Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation'. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 42, no. 8 (1 November 2011): 1320–40. See also: Kreider, Alan. *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999.

3.7.2 Belonging

In this part, the factor that unites the Aladura church members will be considered. One of the values in Africa is to get the support necessary from the community they belong to. The community of faith is not with exception when it comes to this. When the wider society is considered, people feel free to connect easily with some people in their area of influence. Every Christian denomination has fellowship easily with their cycle of membership. The Aladura church has a good sense of belonging to one another. They exhibit their connectedness beyond the wall of their fellowship to the social gathering. They show their belonging to one another even in their greetings. For example, when the members of the Aladura Church, Cherubim and Seraphim church movement, *Ayo ni o* sees a member, they greet them with the slang, *Ayo ni o*, meaning it is joy. The social impact of this ritual makes the belonging so strong.

3.7.3 Behaving

One of the factors that stimulate the way African Christians behave or act out their faith has to do with their background in African Traditional beliefs. There is no dull moment for Africans when it comes to expressing themselves in the presence of their God or deities. To an African, dancing, drumming, and shouting are part of the ways they want to show or get noticed by their God. This attitude or behaviour made Bediako argue that, Africans who in various degrees of reality have accepted Christianity.⁷⁷ He argues further that, it is not to be expected that they have made, or can make, a complete break with the past, however much they profess to do so.⁷⁸ This also can be part of what influenced the Aladura church in ritual sacrifice. The acceptance of items such as water, handkerchiefs, anointing oil, mid-night birth and frankincense look like concretize their faith. One of the respondents who happens to be a prophetess says that people love to act quickly on what they see and what they can directly use on their bodies.⁷⁹ The respondents affirmed that those symbols that can be touched and feel with their hands make it a concrete.

⁷⁷ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, 211

⁷⁸ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, 211

⁷⁹ Respondent 5, interview conducted on 15/07/2022. Lagos: 9:00am

3.7.4 Experiencing

This is the final stage of the BBBE model, the stage of experience. At this stage, the respondents were asked about their moods, feelings, and emotions during their ritual sacrifice. The congregation of Aladura were known for its enthusiasm during their worship experience. It is noted as earlier mentioned that there is no passive moment in their gathering. They love to show their feelings of joy by dancing, clapping, singing and using the traditional drums as an act of showing gratitude to God. There are two purposes of these acts of gratitude in the gathering of the Aladuras. The first is an act of showing gratitude (*ope*) and the second is sacrificial gratitude's (*Ebo ope*). The general belief and experience are that one can use dancing, clapping, singing and shouting as a sacrifice unto God.⁸⁰ When this happens, it stirs the heart of God to show favour as well as release blessings to the camp of his people. The respondent pointed to the expression of king David in dancing when he brought the ark of the covenant back to Israel. The mood and emotions displayed by David were a good example. The respondent gave two examples from the Yoruba songs.

Ijo ni majemu mi, e sa nje njo,

Ijo ni majemu mi, e sa nje njo,

E nje nfun Jesu lebo ope,

*E nje nfun Jesu lebo ope.*⁸¹

Translated as: Dancing is my covenant

Dancing is my covenant

Let me give Jesus the sacrifice of thanksgiving

Let me give Jesus the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

This experience is equally reflected in their other ritual practices. When the Aladura come to take the water, anointing oil and receive a handkerchief from their prophets, it goes with a certain expression that shows their joy, relief, the experience of divine presence and fulfilment.

⁸⁰ Respondent 5, an interview conducted on 15/07/2022. Lagos: 9:00am

⁸¹ This song is one of many songs composed by the Aladura church depending on the kind of worship and experience that stimulate the song. The purpose or meaning of it is beyond physical singing but that of expression of feelings to show gratitude to God.

CHAPTER FOUR:

BERKOUWER'S REFORMED TRADITION ON CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

4.1 A Brief Introduction to Chapter Four

Having looked at the history, background and understanding of the Aladura church ritual sacrifice, with a focus on the Eternal Sacred Cherubim and Seraphim church Aladura and Cherubim and Seraphim Church movement, *Aladura, Ayo ni o*. This chapter will look at Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer's (Berkouwer) Reformed view on Christ's sacrifice in the light of Christ's Once-For-All sacrifice. This chapter will first look at the brief historical background of Berkouwer and move on to examine what Berkouwer says about sacrificial practices. What is the thought of Berkouwer on the legalistic interpretation of sacrificial practices to make God favourably inclined toward the people? What does Berkouwer argue on "once and for all," Christ's sacrifice? Some of the thoughts of Berkouwer will be examined in a way to give a clear understanding of the Reformed Tradition on ritual sacrifice. After these might have been done, the researcher will look at the comparison between the Aladura churches and Berkouwer's understanding of ritual sacrifice in the light of the Once-For-All sacrifice of Christ.

4.2 Brief Background on Berkouwer

Berkouwer, born in 1903, was a product of the Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands and of the Free University of Amsterdam, where he received a doctor's degree cum Laude in 1932. He sat at the feet of Dr Valentine Hepp (whom some will remember for his part in the polemics which ultimately led to the formation of the Liberated Churches under the leadership of the late Dr K. Schilder), and in 1945 he succeeded Dr Hepp in the chair of dogmatics at the Free University.⁸²

Berkouwer is widely regarded in The Netherlands as one of its most influential theologians of the 20th century.⁸³ Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer was born in the year 1903 to a teacher at a primary school in the Hague.⁸⁴ He studied Theology at the Vrije University,

⁸²H. C. Hoeksema, Book Review: Dr. G. C. Berkouwer's "De Heilige Schrift," Protestant Reformed Theological Journal, vol. 1, no. 2 (1968): 56-57.

⁸³Dirk van Keulen, *Bibliografie, G.C. Berkouwer Bibliography*, Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2000, 25.

⁸⁴J.T. Baker, 'Dr.G.C. Berkouwer' in: *The Theological Course of the Reformed Churches in The Netherland*, Dirk van Keulen, 50.

Amsterdam between the year 1922-1926, though initially, he wanted to study mathematics.⁸⁵ It was noted that he served as a minister in Oudehome, a little village in the province of Friesland between 1927-1931 and Watergraafsmeer, a district of Amsterdam between 1931-1945.⁸⁶ It was noted that he had influence in various ways, for instance, he was in demand as a preacher at worship services.⁸⁷ Thus Berkouwer occupies a prominent place in the history of the Dutch church in general, and the Gereformeerde Kerken in particular.⁸⁸

It was noted that he had published several academic articles and books and was named to the post of special professor at Vrije University. It was mentioned that on October 1, 1945, Berkouwer was appointed full professor at the Vrije Universiteit, alongside Prof. Hepp, who had supervised his doctoral studies⁸⁹.

4.3 Berkouwer within the Context of Reformed Theology

For the Reformed Church, the central theme of theology is God. It is not the man in his existential dilemma or possibility. It is not even Jesus Christ but God; (triune God) who was uniquely present in Jesus Christ. Reformed theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr states:

To put it more exactly, Christian theology has to do with the Triune God who is the creator of all things, who has made Himself known in Jesus Christ, and who, as the Holy Spirit is the Lord and Life-giver and who speaks by the prophets.⁹⁰

This position is further strengthened by B. B. Warfield who contends that "God has revealed Himself as existing in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God's revelation of Himself, however, is in no way essential to the accomplishment of His works."⁹¹ He rightly observes:

The elements of the plan of salvation are rooted in the mysterious nature of the Godhead, in which there coexists a trinal distinction of Persons with absolute unity of essence; and the revelation of the Trinity was accordingly incidental to the execution of this plan of salvation, in which the Father sent the Son to be the propitiation for sin, and the Son, when

⁸⁵J.T.Baker, 'Dr.G.C. Berkouwer' in: *The Theological Course of the Reformed Churches in The Netherland*,50

⁸⁶Dirk van Keulen, '*The Theological Course of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands*, In *Vicissitudes of Reformed Theology in the Twentieth Century*, edited by G. Harinck and D. van Keulen, 102.

⁸⁷Dirk van Keulen, *Bibliografie, G.C.Berkouwer Bibliography*, Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2000, 25-26.

⁸⁸Dirk van Keulen, *Bibliografie, G.C.Berkouwer Bibliography*, 226.

⁸⁹Dirk van Keulen, *Bibliografie, G.C.Berkouwer Bibliography*, 33.

⁹⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church in Theology Today," Vol. 3 (1946), 371-374, cited in John N. Leith, *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition*, 9

⁹¹ B. B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol IX (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003), 113.

He returned to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, sent the Spirit to apply His redemption to men.⁹²

The implication of the above is that, Reformed theology always has to do with the One God who is related to His creation in three ways. This assertion is further corroborated by the great Calvin scholar, Emile Doumergue, who insisted that Calvin was theocentric, not Christocentric, in his theological work. It is important to grasp this fact in order to understand Berkouwer's theology. To begin with, Berkouwer has constructed his dogmatics in line with the Triune God, this of course makes him be consistent with his Reformed tradition. When Berkouwer looks at one of the most compellingly complex questions in theology, namely that concerning the work of Christ, he demonstrates how the believer is again in need of the Holy Spirit to impart correct understanding. Berkouwer gives the key to comprehending the work of Christ thus "only the illumination of the Holy Spirit imparts the right insight into the profound significance of Christ's work, we realize the great danger connected with human interpretation and construction".⁹³

Berkouwer was known for writing in the context of the Dutch Reformed tradition. He had a deep concern for the faith.⁹⁴ Berkouwer was writing on the perspective that faith has to be understood in the light of its origin, its content, and its implications.⁹⁵ He strongly believes that there are symptoms of concern everywhere, and they touch on deep and central issues.⁹⁶

Other notable things about Gerrit Berkouwer have to do with some of the roles played in the Reformed tradition as well as the Dutch theological situation. It was mentioned that he was known by the term "correlation," and has often been criticised for the use of the term.⁹⁷ This was noted on the basis of three examples, the correlation between faith and justification, between faith and election and between promise and expectation, which always determined his intentions.⁹⁸

⁹² Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, 113-14.

⁹³ G.C. Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ*, 10.

⁹⁴ G.C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology Movement and Motives*, (ed.) Lewis B. Smedes. Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing, 1977, 191.

⁹⁵ G.C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology Movement and Motives*, 192.

⁹⁶ G.C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology Movement and Motives*, 192.

⁹⁷ Dirk van Keulen, "G.C.Berkouwer's Principle of Correlation: An Attempt to Comprehend," in *Journal of Reformed Theology* (Laiden: Koninklijke, 4, 2010), 97-111, 97.

⁹⁸ Dirk van Keulen, "G.C.Berkouwer's Principle of Correlation: An Attempt to Comprehend," 97.

In the area of the theological position of Berkouwer, it was mentioned that he was afraid of subjectivism and always think in terms of the necessity of an objective norm for belief.⁹⁹ His position was that with that norm for belief, believers would be able to achieve certainty for faith.¹⁰⁰ He finds the norm in Holy scripture which has complete infallible and the unity of scripture in Holy Spirit. This made him come out with an explanation of the term, “organic inspiration” as the Holy Spirit had taken over men in service as an instrument for the writing of the biblical texts.¹⁰¹ Much could be said about Berkouwer but this brief background to his life and thoughts can be reflected on some of the subjects he wrote on.

In his work for sound Dutch Theological context, Berkouwer rejects every kind of formalism as an approach to viewing scripture.¹⁰² The reason was that a formal approach to Scripture is not the appropriate way to safeguard the certainty of faith.¹⁰³ Progressively in 1949, the series of Berkouwer’s works in Dogmatic was introduced in three volumes at once.¹⁰⁴ In the efforts of Berkouwer, the apologetic approach gave way to an approach that excelled in the ability to listen and interact with the intentions of those engaged in dialogue.¹⁰⁵

4.4 Perspectives of Berkouwer’s Reformed on Christ’s Once-For-All sacrifice.

In the theology of Berkouwer, he argues that the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was imperfect and was never able to effect in any real sense reconciliation between God and man because it was only ever a shadow of Christ’s sacrifice.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, he maintains that Christ in His true sacrifice presented Himself fully in our stead as a substitutionary sacrifice which brought us forgiveness, taking away our sin. This according to him was not a human effort but an act of God which has effected concrete reconciliation.¹⁰⁷

It has been extensively discussed in chapter two how the Aladura churches understand the ritual sacrifice in their context. To follow the direction of comparison between Berkouwer’s Reformed thought and the Aladura understanding of ritual sacrifice, there will

⁹⁹Dirk van Keulen, *The Theological Course of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands*,104.

¹⁰⁰Dirk van Keulen, *The Theological Course of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands*, 104.

¹⁰¹Dirk van Keulen, *The Theological Course of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands*, 104.

¹⁰²Dirk van Keulen, *The Theological Course of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands*,106

¹⁰³Dirk van Keulen, *The Theological Course of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands* 108

¹⁰⁴Jan Veenhof, ‘A History of Theology and Spirituality in the Dutch Reformed Churches (Gereformeerde Kerken), 1892-1992’. *Calvin Theological Journal* 28, no. 2 (1993): 286.

¹⁰⁵Jan Veenhof, 286.

¹⁰⁶ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*,304.

¹⁰⁷ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 309-10.

be a need to look first at Berkouwer's view of it. Possibly to have a look at other Reformed theologians' views on the aspect of ritual sacrifice in the light of the once for all sacrifice of Christ. However, the major concern of this thesis is the aspect of Berkouwer's "Once for All Christ's sacrifice. There are various works of Christ that Berkouwer mentioned of which Christ's sacrifice is part of it. Sacrifice on its own is a very broad topic and it is not the focus of this thesis to discuss it but an aspect of the Once-For-All sacrifice of Christ will be examined. Though there is no way some other aspect that Berkouwer mentioned would not be referred to but just on a lighter mood. It was noted by Berkouwer that when we speak of Christ's sacrifice, we do not thereby begin a new subject which can be detached from the rest of Christ's work.¹⁰⁸ The work of Christ is not limited and cannot be isolated from one another hence Berkouwer pointed to the references in the scripture that Jesus was referred to as the mediator between God and man, who gave himself as a ransom for mankind.

The first point to examine or note was how Berkouwer stresses the sacrificial death of Christ as the fulfilment of all sacrifices.¹⁰⁹ It was noted that there were some agitators who argued that Christ himself never announce his death as a sacrifice. One of those who were conversational partners with Berkouwer on this work of Christ was Behm. The argument of this agitator was that the sacrificial death of Jesus was an analogy but are already ruled out *a priori* those many statements of Christ which could refer to the same fact of sacrifice.¹¹⁰ For instance, when at the institution of the Lord's Supper he said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20), also, when he spoke of giving his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).¹¹¹ But Berkouwer argued that indirectly many statements of Christ could refer to the same fact of sacrifice. Berkouwer opines that all these references indicated that the opinion that Jesus did not connect his death with sacrifice can be seen as a certain concept of sacrifice which is incompatible with the nature of Christ's self-sacrifice.¹¹²

Behm, in his opinion, says that according to the institution of the Lord's supper "Christ blood offers the guarantee for the realization of the new order of God," but that has

¹⁰⁸ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 294.

¹⁰⁹ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 294.

¹¹⁰ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 295.

¹¹¹ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 295.

¹¹² Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics*, 295.

nothing to do with sacrifice.¹¹³ Behm further pointed out that the idea of Christ's sacrifices is missing in Paul, Peter, 1 John, and Revelation. But Berkouwer referred to the practice of Sacrificial cult, though not connected with the blood of Christ, but of truth as a practice as at the primitive Jewish idea of sacrifice.¹¹⁴ In Behm's explanation, the Jewish idea of sacrifice faded away and weakened among them but there is "only pictorial representation of the self-surrender and complete obedience that Christ showed in his death."¹¹⁵

Berkouwer admitted that Christ's death showed obedience but when tracing the idea of sacrifices in the Old Testament and the New Testament views, we cannot because of metaphorical expression change the idea of sacrifice into self-surrender because that will result in human concept.¹¹⁶ He went further to cite an example of sacrifices in the scripture where believers were encouraged to do good and the fact that we cannot equate this with what the scripture teaches on Christ's sacrificial death otherwise this will result in what he called an "illicit spiritualizing" of the sacrifice idea.¹¹⁷ What this implies was that the sacrifice was real, and not just submission or obedience. In other words, we need to draw the line of differences between the usage of the sacrifice of Christ with the analogy being used by Paul and other places in the scriptures. The idea of seeing the sacrifice of Christ from the point of view of submission or obedient should not downplay the real meaning of it.

Another explanation of Berkouwer was on the problem of misrepresentation of Christ's sacrifice. In the argument of Berkouwer which I could equally see sense in, it was a misrepresentation to look at the scripture references on Christ's sacrifice in the light of ordinary analogy but rather in the context of reconciliation. In other words, as mentioned above there must be clarification of contextual use of the word, sacrifice. He went further to look at how Paul uses terminology derived from the sacrificial rites in some of his writings as metaphorical sacrifice idea of Christology which is the basic saving fact of Christ's death. At the same time, Paul also uses this figurative language to typify the Christian life.¹¹⁸ The trouble spot for the agitators of this sacrifice concept was in the Epistle to the Hebrews because it was not only treated in the metaphor of a sacrifice but is treated in the wide context of

¹¹³ Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics*, 295.

¹¹⁴ Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics*, 296.

¹¹⁵ Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics*, 296.

¹¹⁶ Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics*, 297.

¹¹⁷ Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics*, 297.

¹¹⁸ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 298.

salvation and connection with the Old Testament cult of sacrifice.¹¹⁹ The point that Berkouwer was trying to stress here is that Christ's sacrifice cannot be seen as an analogy or that which was used to explain Christian life but should be seen in the context of reconciliation and salvation. The sacrificial death of Christ is not equal to man's commitment or any act of Christian devotion.

As earlier mentioned by Berkouwer on the aspect of Reconciliation, there is no way we could dispute the fact that the Holy Scripture summarizes the work of Christ under the aspect of Reconciliation.¹²⁰ When the scripture is well examined, there are various ways that this aspect of the work was explained. In the reference to the letter of Paul in Romans 5:10, 11, "... reconciled to God by the death of his son...through whom we have now received the reconciliation" and in another place, he says that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself..." The implication of this aspect of the work of Christ is that it was made possible through the sacrificial death of Christ. They are interrelated to one another and cannot be separated.

As a furtherance to the above explanation, Berkouwer pointed out the fact that "The meaning of all sacrifices is revealed in the reality of the precious blood: "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10, 14). After that, every repetition is a denial of this definitive sacrifice, this self-abandonment in the shedding of blood, and if there is still such a thing as a sacrifice, then only by way of analogy and figurative language: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1; cf. Heb. 13:16). The fact that we now have only an analogy is possible only because Christ's sacrifice is not a mere analogy or figure of speech. It cannot be explained as a symbolic self-surrender, which would detach the biblical idea (he offered up himself) from the whole context of Hebrews and from the entire Scripture as well."¹²¹The sacrificial death of Christ was once and for all. Any other kind of repetition is seen as a denial of this definitive sacrifice.¹²² Berkouwer pointed out that the practice of the Roman Catholic Church by repeating the sacrifice is wrong because it violates the once and for all time.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 298.

¹²⁰ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 298.

¹²¹ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 301

¹²² Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 301.

¹²³ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*, 301.

Moreover, reference to Coccejus was made as he had little in common with the Roman Catholic misinterpretation of the historical significance of this reconciling act. On the thought of Coccejus, he opines that the Old Testament believers cannot yet share in the forgiveness of sin as a matter of different time context, while according to Rome the reality of the sacrifice must be carried into the history of all times by means of the mass in order to become truly effective.¹²⁴ The complication of this was the thought of those who asserted that the reconciling sacrifice became fully effective only after it took place on Golgotha, and from this, they concluded that the believers in the Old Testament could not share fully in the forgiveness of sins because sacrifice had not yet been made.¹²⁵ This implies that they rejected the practicability and potency of Christ's sacrifice once and for all.

Berkouwer went further to look at what others said about the thought of Christ's death as a sacrifice. He tried looking at Brouwer's view that sacrifice is not a substitution but a warding off of evil.¹²⁶ Brouwer writes that what Jesus did was this when he gave his life in death. To Berkouwer this is just a superficial solution to the explanation of Christ's sacrifice. A further complication in Brouwer's view was that he replaced substitution with solidarity and to Berkouwer, this approach is strong dogmatic prejudices.¹²⁷

The agitators of Christ's death as a formal sense of a personal sacrifice were of opinion that the author of Epistle of Hebrews goes back to the primitive presentation and the primitive meaning of the sacrifice in the Old Testament as a means of personal communion between God and man.¹²⁸ Berkouwer in his thought objected to this as a misrepresentation of what Hebrews was saying. He went further to argue that the scripture does not treat the sacrifice in analogy to self-surrender but rather in the concept of reconciliation as earlier mentioned.

As a matter of what this paper is trying to achieve, there will be a need to find meaning in the theology of Berkouwer in the Yoruba context of *Etutu*. Another area of interest to critically look at in the practice of *Etutu* is where Berkouwer's views do not find a correlation in the Yoruba worldview of *Etutu*. One of the critical questions was, does the

¹²⁴ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*,302.

¹²⁵ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*,302.

¹²⁶ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*,305.

¹²⁷ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*,307.

¹²⁸ Berkouwer, *Studies In Dogmatics*,297.

obedience and humility of Jesus Christ find a place in the Yoruba concept of human sacrifice? What are other areas of differences that sharply contradicted Berkouwer's theology?

4.5 Perspectives of Berkouwer's Reformed thought on ritual sacrifice.

The sacrificial death of Christ if not looked to properly can be at stake when we try to consider the ritual sacrifice in isolation or when we left out the aspect of the Once-For-All sacrifice of Christ. Berkouwer was of opinion that it can amount to an arrow which falls far from its mark because it lacks true religion and the perspective of reconciliation.¹²⁹ This section on the thought of Berkouwer on ritual sacrifice will look at some of the cautions that he sounds. Berkouwer argues that God does not reject the sacrificial service as such, but the legalistic interpretation of it which sees the offer as a performance to make God favourably inclined toward the people.¹³⁰ This implies that the practices of the Old Testament where people thought that their sacrifices were means of getting the favour of God lack true religion and the perspective of reconciliation. God is pleased with a man not out of the human sacrificial act but rather in the redemptive grace embedded in the divine reconciling act.

Another explanation of Berkouwer was that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10, 14).¹³¹ If there is any other repetition of sacrifice, it is a denial of this definitive sacrifice and if there is still such a thing as a sacrifice, then only by way of analogy and figurative language as mentioned in Romans 12:1 and other places.¹³² The example of the repetition of this sacrifice in the Roman Catholic Church violates its "once for all" relevance of it. There was a reference of those who thought that the effectiveness of the reconciling sacrificial death of Christ took place on Golgotha and that those in the Old Testament have no share in the forgiveness of sin. But Berkouwer opined that the saving power of the sacrificial death was not limited to the Golgotha. It was noted that according to Rome, the reality of the sacrifice must be carried into the history of all times using the mass to become truly effective.¹³³ This ritual sacrifice is against the once for all sacrificial death of Christ that Berkouwer argued.

¹²⁹Berkouwer on the work of Christ, 299.

¹³⁰Berkouwer on the work of Christ, 300.

¹³¹Berkouwer on the work of Christ, 301.

¹³²Berkouwer on the work of Christ, 301.

¹³³Berkouwer on the work of Christ, 302.

Furthermore, Berkouwer mentioned that the Old Testament sacrifice was a foreshadowing of good things to come because it cannot take away sins.¹³⁴ It was noted that the ritual sacrifice in the Old Testament did not become meaningless as such because it had played an important role in the divine revelation. Those who ignore Melchizedek and absolutize Aaron will never be able to understand Christ's sacrifice.¹³⁵ This implies that they would not have understood the eternal priesthood of Christ which was to put away sins.

The last point in the thought of Berkouwer on how his opposer on the sacrificial of Christ was relegated to just an act which is directed against invisible powers to protect man's life or strengthen it, or to avert evil influences.¹³⁶ The agitators of this concept explained that the shedding of blood is the giving of a counterinfluence whereby evil influences are expelled. They concluded that sacrifice is no substitution but a warding off evil and as a result replaced substitution with solidarity.¹³⁷ Berkouwer's view on this as earlier mentioned was that this concept is a dogmatic prejudice.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have been able to establish Berkouwer's thought on Christ's sacrifice and the implications on believers. The chapter affirms that Christ's sacrifice is supreme and once and for all. The repetition of any other kind of sacrifice will be a denial of the definitive act of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. The legalistic interpretation of sacrificial practices as a means of receiving God's favour is inappropriate.

¹³⁴Berkouwer *on the work of Christ*, 304.

¹³⁵Berkouwer *on the work of Christ*, 304.

¹³⁶Berkouwer *on the work of Christ*, 305.

¹³⁷Berkouwer *on the work of Christ*, 306.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ALADURA AND BERKOUWER'S REFORMED VIEWS OF CHRIST'S ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE.

5.1 Introduction to Chapter Five

The whole essence of this thesis is to see how theological understanding plays out in the practice of ritual sacrifice among the Aladura Churches in Agbado, Ogun state of Nigeria. The matrix of this position is that the practice of ritual sacrifice among the Aladura Churches is likely to reduce Jesus' Once-for-All Sacrifice to an intangible asset which is sharply against Berkouwer's thought on Christ's Once-for-All sacrifice. Therefore, what we have done so far in the previous chapters was to trace the contributions of some scholars as well as respondents concerning how the Aladura Churches interpret in their tradition.

To be specific, we established in chapter two the ritual practices among the Aladura Churches in Agbado, Ogun state of Nigeria. While chapter three focuses on the presentation of data from the fieldwork. Chapter four focuses on Berkouwer's thought on sacrifice and the position of the Reformed Christians on the subject matter. In this chapter, therefore, an effort will be made to bring Aladura and Berkouwer's views specifically on Christ's sacrifice into contact to see the similarities and the dissimilarities between the two views as well as the way forward.

For clarity, the chapter is divided into three sections, after having introduced the chapter in this current section, the second section will present some sharp similarities and differences in the understanding of both the Aladura and Berkouwer (Reformed tradition), especially as it relates to the issue of Christ's Once-for-All sacrifice, while the third section will provide the way forward.

5.2 Similarities

Findings from the field survey revealed that the respondents' understanding of Christ's Once-for-All sacrifice is consistent with Berkouwer's thought on the subject matter. For example, Berkouwer affirms that Christ's sacrifice was supreme and ultimate, in this way; it is a Once-for-All sacrifice.¹³⁸ All the respondents also agreed with this position. However, a

¹³⁸ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 309-10

critical look at the responses of the interviewees could attest to the fact that their understanding of the subject could be basic as we will see later in the differences between both thoughts.

Another area of similarity of both Aladura and Berkouwer's Dutch Theological context is in the belief in the spiritual grace of salvation.¹³⁹ This alludes to Berkouwer's Reformed dogmatics in line with the Triune God and deep concern for the faith.¹⁴⁰ Berkouwer's great concern for the faith and the thought that faith has to be understood in the light of its origin, its content, and its implication is important to note.¹⁴¹ In the quest for a further understanding of the context of what is being practised in the Aladura church, when the respondents were asked about the significance of ritual sacrifice that they observed, they all gave the same reasons that, it is being made to God.¹⁴² It was mentioned in chapter three that the context of Berkouwer's Reformed was that the central theme of theology is God. "To put it more exactly, Christian theology has to do with the Triune God who is the creator of all things, who has made Himself known in Jesus Christ, and who, as the Holy Spirits the Lord and who speaks by the prophets."¹⁴³ It has been earlier stated that Reformed theology always has to do with the One God who is related to His creation in three ways¹⁴⁴

The thought of Berkouwer on Christ being the propitiation for our sin is similar to what the Aladura church practice as well in their understanding of appeasing God. Berkouwer opined that the love of the father to humankind made him send his son to be the propitiation for our sins.¹⁴⁵ In the response of respondent one in the first table, he mentioned that the significance of ritual sacrifice in the Aladura movement is to appease God so that sins may be forgiven.¹⁴⁶

Aladura church ritual sacrifice has the purpose of atonement. Berkouwer mentioned that Christ the Lamb of God taketh away the sins of the world and that Christ who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree.¹⁴⁷ This idea of atonement is one of the underline

¹³⁹ C. O. Osun, 1999, *Aladura Evangelists in Britain: An assessment of spiritual adventurism*, 9-32

¹⁴⁰ G.C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology Movement and Motives*, 191.

¹⁴¹ G.C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology Movement and Motives*, 191.

¹⁴² All the respondents to question 1 on "What is the significance of in the Aladura church."

¹⁴³ H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church," 9.

¹⁴⁴ B. B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol IX (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003),

¹⁴⁵ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 313.

¹⁴⁶ Respondent 1 in table 1. *What is the significance of in the Aladura Movement?*

¹⁴⁷ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 297.

purposes for ritual sacrifice by the Aladura. The point of difference was while Berkouwer sees it as taking place as once-for-all while the Aladura church still observes it.

5.3 Differences

Findings from the field survey reveal a strong lack of understanding of Christ's sacrifice as against ritual sacrifice among the Aladura Churches. For instance, the belief by most of the respondents that ritual sacrifice brings forgiveness, healing and deliverance tends to reduce Christ's Ultimate sacrifice to an intangible asset. On the contrary, Berkouwer strongly affirms the sacrificial Works of Christ and mentioned that no other sacrifice is further needed.¹⁴⁸

Berkouwer's view was different to Aladura's understanding of ritual sacrifice in the sense that Christ's sacrifice is the act, the personal act of his life because he offered himself and did so with his blood in order to enter into the holy place and to obtain eternal redemption for us.¹⁴⁹ One of the ritual practices that could have been a resemblance to this was what is called *ebo irapada* (redemption) in the Aladura church. As earlier discussed in chapter three with the aid of the BBBE model in the section on behaving, it was noted by respondent five that animals, as well as other items, were used for the redemption of the critically sick one.¹⁵⁰ This kind of is what Ayegboyin described as the Aladura church method of drawing on indigenous symbolism, healing modalities, worship styles and spiritual roles to form a contextualized Christianity which has made the Aladura and Pentecostal churches appealing to a broad base of Nigeria Christianity.¹⁵¹

In Berkouwer's thought of sacrificial service especially in the context of the Old Testament, he argued that God does not reject the practice as such, but the legalistic interpretation of it which sees the offer as a performance to make God favourably inclined toward the people.¹⁵² But in the act of the Aladura church, the legalistic approach is part of what is been upheld to seek the favour of God. In table, one under the presentation and analysis of data from the field survey, respondents one, two and fourth affirmed that one of the ways to receive the favour of God is through. According to Kanu and Omojola, it is a way

¹⁴⁸ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 304.

¹⁴⁹ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 299.

¹⁵⁰ Respondent 5 in table 2. *Question: How does Aladura offer?*

¹⁵¹ Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, "Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons," 233-249.

¹⁵² Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 300.

of offering something to gain another thing.¹⁵³ Though Kanu and Omojola spoke in the context of African Religion, it is of a similar view to the Aladura tradition.

Berkouwer in his further explanation of meant to take away sin as one of the ritual sacrifice in the Old Testament pointed out that it lacks true religion and the perspective of reconciliation.¹⁵⁴ The people of God had backslid in Israel but still enjoy the fantasy of the ceremonial conduct but the message of God shows that He had no pleasure in their sacrifice for sin.¹⁵⁵ The context of the meant for the forgiveness of sin in the Aladura church in the perspective of reconciliation being discussed by Berkouwer is different. According to respondent two in table one, it was reported that the Aladura church believes that one of the ways to seek the forgiveness of the creator is through.¹⁵⁶

Another important aspect of Berkouwer's view of Christ's sacrifice that is different from what is being practised by the Aladura church is "Christ's once-for-all sanctification." In the thought of Berkouwer, the meaning of all sacrifices is revealed in the reality of the precious blood: "we have been sanctified through the offering of the blood of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10, 14).¹⁵⁷ Berkouwer argued that any other form of repetition of sacrifice is a denial of this definitive sacrifice and if there is still such a thing as a sacrifice, then only by way of analogy and figurative language.¹⁵⁸ This is the major area of the need for examining the in the Aladura Church because the is an ongoing one. Virtually all the respondents affirmed the sacrificial death of Jesus as once for all given according to table five.¹⁵⁹ But on what followed as the question of why still carry out the, they gave different answers.

¹⁵³ Kanu I. Anthony and Omojola I. Olu, *The concept of sacrifice in Yoruba Religion and Culture*, In AMAMIE: Journal of Applied Philosophy. Vol. 18. No 2. 2020. 141.

¹⁵⁴ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 299.

¹⁵⁵ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 299.

¹⁵⁶ Respondent 2 in table one. *Question: What is the significance of in the Aladura Movement?*

¹⁵⁷ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 301.

¹⁵⁸ Berkouwer, *Studies in dogmatics*, 301

¹⁵⁹ Respondent 1-5 in table five. *Question: Do you see Christ's sacrifice as a once-for-all sacrifice?*

5.4 Table of summary of similarities and differences

Table 5.1 – Tabular Summary

Table showing some similarities and differences in certain thoughts between *Aladura* churches and Berkouwer’s Reformed Tradition on ritual sacrifice in line with the once for all sacrifice of Christ.

| SIMILARITIES OF THOUGHT | DIFFERENCES OF THOUGHT |
|---|---|
| Christ’s sacrifice was supreme and ultimate. | The aladura church lacks the understanding of Christ’s sacrifice in fulness. |
| The aladura movement also believe that sacrifice reconcile us to God. | Views the ritual sacrifice as an act which is directed against invisible powers to protect man (aladura). |
| There is a correlation between sacrifice and reconciliation | Christ bears our sins as a substitute while the aladura still practices redemptive ritual sacrifice (<i>irapada</i>). |
| Salvation to aladura churches means a state of wholesomeness (well-being) | Does not see legalistic repetition of ritual sacrifice as a denial of this definitive sacrifice of Christ |
| Christ’s sacrifice as an atonement | Still believe in atonement outside Christ. (aladura). |

5.5 Way Forward for the Aladura Churches

The Aladura Churches needs to critically reflect on Berkouwer's thought that for us to comprehend the work of Christ, we need the Holy Spirit to impact correct understanding. It is only the illumination of the Holy Spirit that can impart the right insight into the profound significance of Christ's work. With the intervention of the Holy Spirit, the Aladura will fully understand that no further ritual sacrifice is needed to take away sins. According to Laurenti Magesa, it is easy to integrate biblical values with African Religious perspectives, but they should avoid or downplay all indigenous African values and customs that are not consistent with Christian teaching.¹⁶⁰ With some of the Aladura Churches, the mixing of certain elements of the indigenous religion with Christianity has become an order of the days. Ayegboyin and Ishola observe that there have been reports that some leaders of the Churches within the Aladura Churches have alliances with witches and wizards.¹⁶¹ These kinds of leaders were totally renounced from being true Aladura Church representatives.

¹⁶⁰ Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation, Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1946), 22.

¹⁶¹ Ayegboyin and Ishola, *African Indegenous Churches*, 156.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of the thesis in this chapter with a brief retrospect of what was discussed in summary form. This was followed by a conclusion and recommendation from the researcher.

6.1 Summary

The research critically examined ritual sacrifice at Aladura Church in Nigeria and made a comparison with Berkouwer's reformed understanding of Christ's Once-For-All sacrifice. So far in this study, an effort has been made to critically examine the practice of ritual sacrifice among the Aladura Church and its implications on Christ's sacrifice from Berkouwer's perspective. The entire study is divided into six chapters, chapter one introduces the research by critically examining issues relating to the aim and objectives of the study. This chapter consists of background to the study, problem statement, research purpose, research question and sub-questions, and also the methodology used.

The chapter two established the understanding of ritual sacrifice in the Aladura Church with comparison with African Traditional Religion's thought. This chapter has an overview of the social religious context in Nigeria and also, an overview of African Traditional Religion. The central theme of the thesis which was based on the perspectives of the Aladura church on ritual sacrifice was examined as well.

In chapter three, the analysis of fieldwork was presented with the aids of the BBBE model. The result of the field work was examined with the comparison of the ritual sacrifice in both Aladura church and African Traditional Religion. In chapter four, the views of Berkouwer on Christ's once for all sacrifice was looked into. The chapter considered the Berkouwer's Reformed theological context. In chapter five, the similarities and differences between the Aladura church and Berkouwer's Reformed views on ritual sacrifice in the light of Christ's once for all sacrifice was discussed. Finally, the researcher drew a conclusion on with recommendation that the Aladura Church leaders should re-read the scripture and create a sound theological foundation for their Church.

6.2 Conclusions

The thesis concludes that Christ sacrifice is superior to the Old Covenant sacrifice, as it cleansed us internally and externally (Heb. 9:28). It was made symbolically in the presence of God. It is once for all time and will never be repeated. The thesis concludes that it is no longer necessary to offer ritual sacrifice to God for the purposes of forgiveness of sins, healing and deliverance, Christ's perfect sacrifice has secured for us all we need. The thesis concludes that Christ will never be sacrificed again, and that His sacrifice is complete, perfect and final (Heb. 9:25). This means that the effects of Christ's sacrifice extend to the past, present and future sins. The thesis concludes that the purpose of Christ's sacrifice was forgiveness of all human

intentional and unintentional sins. In other words, Christ's sacrifice annulled and removed from us our sin, penalty and curse and it is Once-for All. These can be summarized into the points below.

1. The Aladura church is quite aware of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ but the practice of ritual sacrifice is ongoing.

In the studies and the interviews conducted, it was discovered that the Aladura Church have the understanding of Christ's Sacrifice but still uphold the ritual sacrifice. The findings equally revealed that the Aladura Church practice different types of ritual sacrifice, especially the one that has to do with healing and forgiveness of sin. The practice of ritual sacrifice are in form of offering money for prayer water (*omi adura*), anointing oil for healing, burning of incense, using of a white handkerchief for cleaning the face in order to receive God's favor and bathing in the running river.

2. The practice of ritual sacrifice as a way of providing redemption and forgiveness of sin shows that the Aladura church does not have a biblical understanding of the sacrifice of Christ as the only way that humanity had secured redemption and salvation. Also, the lack of this sacrifice of Christ shows that they lack the act of reconciliation which was offered by Christ.

3. The practice of atonement outside Christ

The Aladura still practice atonement outside Christ and some of the practices of the Old Testament. This shows that they embrace more of the Old Testament practices. This belief and continuous atonement are no longer relevant in the New Testament dispensation.

4 The Aladura church believe that one can get the favour of God through the use of ritual sacrifice.

5 The Aladura church believe and depend on their prophet for spiritual guidance. This attitude disallowed them from making an effort to search through the scripture for illumination into the scripture.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher, therefore, makes the following recommendations:

1. The Aladura Church should spiritualize ritual sacrifice instead of the physical practice of ritual sacrifice. The emphasis must be on the grounds that the death of Christ is seen as the perfect and final sacrifice that annulled all other sacrifices. The reason for this is that Christ's sacrifice is perfect and cleansed us morally and spiritually. The emphasis also must be on the fact that Christ's once-for-all sacrifice is sufficient for all human needs.

2. Moreover, the theocentric understanding of God by the Aladura Church is a good one, however, the church should create a theological balance in order to experience true religion and the perspective of reconciliation which is in Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. Also, the legalistic practice that tends to see the offer as a performance to make God favourably inclined toward the people should be re-examined.

3. The Aadura Church should be ready and prepared to take up the challenges of re-reading the Bible, particularly on the essence of ritual sacrifice in the Old Testament and how Christ's sacrifice nullifies the repetition of such practices.

4. The Aladura Church should consider pointing the attention of their members to the finish works of Christ with emphasis on once-for-all sacrifice.

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INTERVIEWS

Respondent 1; A Young Man (Pastor Wale); 35 yrs. Interviewed by author, 4th July 2022, 10 am at Kampen through Phone call and recording.

Respondent 2; Woman/ Prophetess (Oluwafemi); 46yrs. Interviewed by author, 5th July 2022, 11 am at Kampen through Phone call and recording.

Respondent 3; Man (Abraham); 51yrs. Interviewed by author, 7th July 2022, 9 am at Kampen through phone call and recording.

Respondent 4; Woman (Mary); 51yrs. Interviewed by author, 7th July 2022, 9 pm at Kampen through phone call and recording.

Respondent 5; Man (Ogundele); 65yrs. Interviewed by author, 15th July 2022, 9am at Kampen through phone call and recording.

Appendix 1: Transcript of the interview with respondent 1

(Young man, Wale, 35)

Date of Interview: 4th July 2022

Time: 10:00am.

1. What is the significance of ritual sacrifice in the Aladura Church?

This respondent believes that it is a thing of joy and spiritual fulfilment to be a member of the Aladura church. If you have any sickness especially if it is a type of sickness that the prophet diagnosed to be a spiritual attack, it required special attention and special prayers. This prayer may involve the use of prayer water, *omi adura*. It is a belief that there is power in water and it will turn into healing water for the sick one. The respondent has belief in the use of anointing oil, handkerchief and some incense because it works for the protection, healing and deliverance of the sick one. The items will be consecrated by the prophets and they will be given back to whoever brought them. This respondent says there is spiritual birth by the running river but he has never done that and also it is not common in his church.

2. How do you become a member of the Aladura church?

There are three ways of becoming members of the Aladura church. The first way is if you are born into the church, you become a member automatically when your parents start bringing you to church. The second way to become a member of Aladura church is if you get married to an Aladura church member and you start to come to church together with your spouse. Whether the church joins you in marriage or not does not have anything to do with this. If you get married to a member and both of you agree to be a member, it is free for both. The third means of becoming a member is by conversion to Christianity. You may be a non-believer before and later got converted to Christianity. This may happen when you are praying for or you are convinced of the leading of the spirit by yourself. Besides this one other important way, some became members was when they are sick and received healing from the prayer of Aladura church prophets. This respondent was born into the Aladura church and has his parents attending the church as well. This respondent believes that it is a thing of joy and spiritual fulfilment to be a member of the Aladura church.

3. How does the Aladura church offer ritual sacrifice?

The respondent does not see it as a shame to receive prayer water, anointing oil or any items given to them by their prophets. Some of it was not free because we have to pay for it. When an item is given to us, we value it and don't just drop it anywhere. This respondent said that he loves to act quickly on what is seen and not just to receive prayer. He testified that people love to act based on what is seen than what they cannot see or feel with their hands. There is what is called *ebo irapada* (Redemption ritual sacrifice). This type of sacrifice is not common to all people but to those who have a terminal sickness and have defiled all treatment. The family will need to act fast to buy animals or anything prescribe by the prophet to redeem the life of the sick one. Mostly it is animal because it takes blood to redeem life.

4. What is your personal experience when the ritual is been carried out?

The fulfilment and joy of receiving ritual items after prayer is not a small thing. I feel happy and hopeful that the ritual will work for me. I have received some items like anointing oil and handkerchief and they work for me. My burden is taken away anytime I drink prayer water. The anointing oil refreshes my body anytime I take it.

5. What does it mean to you when you hear that Christ's sacrifice is Once-For-All and we do not need any other form of ritual sacrifice?

My understanding of the death of Jesus Christ as once-for-all does not stop me from accepting or carrying out some of the ritual sacrifice as being observed in Aladura Church because they are not against the scripture. For instance, the use of water, anointing oil and handkerchiefs are in the bible, even in the New Testament. I do not believe that these practices are influenced or a kind of brought over from African Traditional beliefs because there are biblical references that can be pointed to as what motivated the practices.

Appendix 2: Transcript of the interview with respondent 2.

Date of Interview: 5th July 2022.

Time: 11:00am.

(Woman, a prophetess, Oluwafemi, 46).

1. What is the significance of ritual sacrifice in the Aladura movement?

People believe in what they see with their eyes and feel with their hands. The ritual of using water, anointing oil and using of handkerchief strengthen my faith. All those items were mentioned in the bible and I so much believe in it. I believe in the prophets and their messages. There is an example of how Naaman washed in the river and got his healing. The pool at Bethsaida was a healing pool. The apron of the Apostle was used in the New Testament for healing. Jesus commanded the blind man to go and wash at the pool of Siloam for his complete healing. The anointing oil was referred to in the book of James for healing after the confession of sin. All these biblical references made me and my members to believe in the ritual sacrifice that we still practice today.

2. What does it mean to be a Christian and a member of the Aladura church?

There are different stages that one needs to pass through in order to be seen as a full member of the Aladura movement. Also, we have different societies that are grouped into age and gender classification. Once you join the church and function well in any of the groups that you belong to, you already belong and recognize by the church. The members' level of commitment differs but we see ourselves as part of the larger group called the Aladura movement.

3. How does Aladura church offers ritual sacrifice?

There are rules and instructions to follow in order to make the ritual sacrifice to be acceptable. It is not just about bringing items or conducting the ritual but strictly adhering to the instructions given by God and the prophets. For instance, one must be holy and be ready to obey the rules. The prophet can give the timing for carrying out certain rituals and it must be followed that way.

4. What is your personal experience when the ritual is been carried out?

There is joy and happiness in the face of people that underwent the ritual sacrifice. Peace of mind especially if it has to do with healing. It is a practice to tell the victim of sacrifice to put his faith in what is been offered in sacrifice otherwise it may not work for him or her. Sometimes, the victim of sacrifice can see a vision or receive a message in the dream.

5. What is the significance of Christ's sacrifice to humanity and how do you understand Christ's sacrifice as Once-For-All?

Christ has given us a different gift and when we observe ritual sacrifice it does not mean that we don't believe in Jesus Christ's sacrifice once and for all.

Appendix 3: Transcript of the interview with respondent 3.

Date of Interview: 7th July 2022.

Time: 9:00am.

(Man, a member, Abraham, 51).

1. What is your belief about some ritual practices in the Aladura Church?

In Aladura church we believe in prayer and the use of water for healing and feet washing. Other items that we use are anointing oil, white handkerchief, and provisions for children (*ipese*), which can be given to children. The interpretation of the *ipese* is that “if you provide for children, their creator will give you children as well.” Besides these items, we can ask people to birth in the running river by himself or herself and throw away the bathing soap and the sponge in the water. There is no incantation that will be said than a prayer from the book of Psalms.

2. What does it mean to be a Christian and a member of the Aladura church?

We do not compel anybody to join the membership of the Church but it is by choice. Most of the time some people join the church as a result of their problems which is sickness. The church building is free for people to sleep in because we are so close to each other. We identify with ourselves in times of good and experiences in life.

3. What actions are carried out related to the Aladura ritual sacrifice?

The method of carrying out ritual sacrifice depends on the type of problem that the victim is facing. There can be a gathering of prayer warriors to pray for the deliverance of the victim. They can use water to cleanse the head of the victim or use certain psalms to pray for the victim. The entire family of the victim can join in the ritual and sometimes not necessary.

4. What is your personal experience when the ritual is been carried out?

The experience is exciting most of the time. People are joyful when the items of deliverance or healing are given to them. I have experience healing with the use of water.

5. What does it mean to you when you hear that Christ's sacrifice is Once-For-All and we do not need any other form of ritual sacrifice?

I believe in Christ and his resurrection power but that does not stop me from the use of the items of rituals like water, anointing oil, handkerchief because they are in the bible. We do not kill animals again but we can ask people to pay for ransom with items such as clothing, giving to the poor and doing night vigils for deliverance.

Appendix 4: Transcript of the interview with respondent 4.

Date of Interview: 7th July 2022.

Time: 9:00pm.

(Woman, a member, Mary, 51).

1. What is your belief about some ritual practices in the Aladura Church?

The Aladura church is a traditional church that believes so much in the practices of healing with water, anointing oil and other items as led by the prophets. We believe that even in praying, dancing, clapping and shouting there can be healing and various deliverances. We can instruct people to bathe in the river but not our practice to carry out spiritual baths on people. Although, there may be cases whereby a prophet needs to show up on rare occasions.

2. What does it mean to be a Christian and a member of the Aladura church?

When you join and become consistent in participating in the worship of the church you will be recognized as a member. The church expects that you join what we call band (*egbe*).

3. What actions are carried out related to the Aladura ritual sacrifice? (Behaving)

There is no dull moment in the gathering of the Aladura people as we love singing, dancing, clapping and "falling into trance." One of the peculiarities of the Aladura church is to wait on the Lord for some hours to get the message from *elemi* (the spiritual person). We believe in taking messages not only from the prophets sometimes but also from anybody that God sent.

4. What is your personal experience when the ritual is been carried out? (Experiencing)

People derive joy and feel fulfilled spiritually when sacrifices of dancing, singing, and clapping are given unto God.

5. What does it mean to you when you hear that Christ's sacrifice is Once-For-All and we do not need any other form of ritual sacrifice?

There are diverse opinions sometimes on this biblical truth that Christ died for us and we do not need any sacrifice again. But I don't see anything wrong with using water, anointing oil and a white handkerchief for healing. I believe in the leading of the prophets.

Appendix 5: Transcript of the interview with respondent 5.

Date of Interview: 15th July 2022.

Time: 9:00am.

(Man, a member, Ogundele, 65).

1. What is your belief about some ritual practices in the Aladura Church?

They are biblical and cultural sometimes because some of the items are been used by traditionalists. They are for the use of man for healing, deliverance and for securing the favour of God depending on what the victim has as a challenge.

2. What does it mean to be a Christian and a member of the Aladura church?

When you join through your friend, spouse, parents or when you are born into the church.

3. What actions are carried out related to the Aladura ritual sacrifice?

Dancing, singing, burning of candles, using of the anointing oil and burning of incense.

4. What is your personal experience when the ritual is been carried out?

There is deliverance and a feeling of joy and protection.

5. What does it mean to you when you hear that Christ's sacrifice is Once-For-All and we do not need any other form of ritual sacrifice?

We don't do sacrifice as the occultic but in line with the scripture.