



Article

Understanding The Concept of Salvation in Isaiah and Its Application to African Christian Theology

Patrick Eluke

1. Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

* Correspondence: elukepatrick4u@yahoo.com

Abstract: This paper discusses how, among the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah is designated as the son of Amoz. The content of his message focused on sin and salvation. According to the prophet Isaiah, as a result of the sin of the people of Israel and Judah, the judgment of Yahweh over them was inevitable. Nonetheless, their salvation shall come from the Lord. Isaiah's message implies that spiritual redemption and physical deliverance from their enemies. It portends that salvation and redemption go hand in hand. In Africa, because of the colonial experience of different nations, as well as the current economic distress, the message of salvation (spiritual) cannot be applied to the Africans when removed from liberation (physical). African Christian theology must identify both the spiritual and physical needs of Africans. This is because it would seem that the Christianity that came through the western missionaries has ended up in another form of slavery for Africans. The poor are still being oppressed and marginalized by the rich, politics still remains a dirty game, corruption is still the order of the day, and Africans still need liberation from the power of sin and socio-political liberty. This paper argues that for the message of salvation to be applied to African Christian theology, it must not only concentrate on the spiritual life of the people, but also their physical life. Accordingly, salvation must also mean liberation from shackles of poverty, marginalisation, and such negative trends. This is the thrust of this Isaiah's concept of salvation to African Christian theology.

Keywords: Salvation, Redemption, African, Christian, Theology

Citation: Eluke, P. Understanding The Concept of Salvation in Isaiah and Its Application to African Christian Theology. American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research 2025, 6(3), 670-678.

Received: 21st Feb 2025

Revised: 10th Mar 2025

Accepted: 17th Mar 2025

Published: 28th Mar 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

1. Introduction

Africa ranks high among the religious countries in the world. Religion was the centre and life-wire of their existence[1]. Their culture was inspired and directed by their religious beliefs and Africans are traditionally, notoriously and profoundly religious people as John Mbiti would surmise[2]. Churches, mosques and *juju* (traditional) temples dotted the streets of the continent with mammoth crowd as congregation and adherents. On weekly, monthly and yearly bases, they troop en masse to worship God. Most of them are prepared to spend interminable hours there and even for all sorts of "prayer meetings and sacrifices." One expects that the rich ethical, spiritual and moral values of these religious practices will overflow into the governance and fellowship of the various nations. This is because if God should rule the affairs of men/women, then, the nations would be the most economically, politically and technologically advanced continent. After 60 years of many Africa's independence, there is credible evidence that many African countries have meandered at the crossroad of development in all its ramifications. Africa is broken politically, socially, economically, mentally and psychologically. The results are the indices of underdevelopment: instability, insecurity, kidnapping, anarchy, poverty, hunger, sicknesses, drought, brink future and many more woes, as their *vade mecum* (go with me). Amidst these, there is the clarion call by some that the Church should

stay out of politics. For them politics has often been tagged a dirty game which members of the Church should not have any business to be identified with. It should be left at the hands of the 'children of the world.' But there is an undeniable question staring us: Is the solution to be lukewarm, passive, nonchalant or neutral the answer? I am afraid, the answer is "No!" because 'a problem is not solved by shying away from it.'

Nonetheless, African continent today is made up of many peoples, cultures, nationalities and ethnic groups having rich cultural heritage. African ethnic groups have rich tapestry of proverbs, myths, symbols, riddles, food recipes and folk stories, these varieties ought to have their vital part to play in the educational role of the African practice of Christian faith. Regrettably, the continent has the greatest portion of the world's most natural resources, and yet its people remain the poorest and most oppressed. What this paper intends to underscore is that the African Church has come of age. This paper advocates for the application of the message of salvation in Isaiah to be applied to the African situation. In Isaiah, salvation not only connotes spiritual redemption from sin but also deliverance for the oppressed. Africans have been oppressed and are still under serious oppression, ranging from social, cultural, economic and political spheres. The major concentration, therefore is to explore the concept of salvation in Isaiah to African Christian theology which can be used to enhance the effectiveness and excellence of African Christianity.

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative and theological-analytical method. It relies on biblical exegesis and hermeneutical interpretation of selected texts from the Book of Isaiah, especially those pertaining to the themes of salvation and liberation. The primary approach is textual and conceptual analysis, wherein the theological motifs within the prophecy of Isaiah are critically examined and interpreted within the African socio-cultural and religious context. Sources include both primary scriptural texts and secondary literature from African theologians, biblical scholars, and socio-political commentaries. The aim is to draw theological implications that are both spiritually relevant and contextually applicable to the African Christian experience. Furthermore, the study incorporates an interdisciplinary reflection, engaging insights from historical, cultural, and liberation theology perspectives to ground the concept of salvation in Isaiah in the lived realities of African Christians..

3. Results

The Exploratory Nature of African Christianity

African Christian embraces two words: African and Christian. Africans are mainly inhabitants of the African continent, the second-largest continent in the world. It is made up of about fifty-three (53) countries, excluding the Western Sahara, which consists of five geographical sub-regions, namely, Central Africa, East Africa, North Africa, South Africa, and West Africa, with an estimated population of about 1.34 billion inhabitants as of 2020. In 1900, an estimated 2 million Catholic faithful lived on the African continent. Today, that number stands at about 236 million.

Whereas a Christian is a believer in Christianity. Christianity, etymologically, means 'Christ-likeness'. It refers to those who are like Christ, both in words and actions. It is a religion established by Christ. Since Christ is 'God the Son' in the Most Holy Trinity, it is, therefore, the religion of the Most Holy Trinity. On account of this origin, it is a religion traceable to Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who is regarded as the Only Begotten Son of God. The Scripture reported that Believers "were first called Christians in Antioch" because their behaviour, activity and speech were like Christ. Accordingly, Jude E. Madu asserts: "The word Christianity refers to the original form of worship and access to God taught by Jesus Christ. The Church today, which is the visible body of Christ, continues with the teaching of Jesus"[3]. Remarkably, the missionary mandate of the Church is contained in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go you therefore and make disciples of all nations...and behold I am with you always until the end of time."

Christianity, as the religion of believers, calls for attention and a careful study. In the world today, she is credited to be a religion that consists of one-third of the world population on earth. She accounts for nearly 2,000,000,000 people who profess the religion nominally, dormantly or actively [4]. Her membership cuts across the different continents of the world, namely: Asia, Africa, Europe, America, etc. Even though it is represented in various lands, continents and climes, it is usually regarded as having Western phenomenon; the influence of Christianity goes beyond this myopic and truncated understanding. Inasmuch as it has affected other religions, they also affect her and hence continue to shape the faith of the characters of the individuals and nations that live by her tenets. Our operational framework is, therefore, to view an African Christian as a believer whose religion is based on the teaching and spirit of Christ.

The Concept of Theology

Etymologically, the word 'theology' is derived from two Greek nouns: *theos* (God) and *logos* (study of), meaning an account of, or discourse about, gods or God. The link between these two nouns may easily be noticed in the first chapter of the gospel of John. In the beginning was the WORD (*Logos*), and the WORD (*Logos*) was with GOD (*Theos*), and the WORD (*Logos*) was God (*Theos*). Theology is thus defined as a systematic discourse about God. Theology, as a *corpus* of knowledge, is the basis and summit of all human quests for knowledge. Theological education stands as the queen of the source of knowledge, establishing the purpose for which man was created. The writer dares to assert that all human endeavours are meant to find meaning to the question of human existence, and no human existence answers the question better than theology. Theology stands out as the moderator of other disciplines, being the oldest body of knowledge from which others evolved. Theology deals with the relationship between God and creation, and to do away with theology is to attempt to rule the world created by God without God. While theologizing, it must not end in mere accumulation of knowledge; instead, it must go on to address issues in the world. In this sense, it is the body of knowledge that prepares people to live out a Christian and godly life. Theologians must possess such practical knowledge that will forge a blueprint for daily issues.

Indeed, the goal of theology is not achieved if it does not lead to character formation and information. We cannot sharply separate considerations of salvation and redemption from theological ones in attempting to find justification for the African situation today. Indeed, the study believes that rediscovering the primal depths of life is an urgent business for theology. The simple meaning of theology is to articulate and designate the content of our faith in the working of God's agenda in our lives. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) said that theology is faith seeking understanding (*fides quarens intellectum*). Theology is a practical exposition of the Revealed Truth by God. It is also an enfolding of the doctrine of the Church and the different approaches to this discourse.

The Content of Theology

The content of theology is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In other words, it is the comprehensive mystery of the incarnation. Revelation constitutes the basis and centre of theology. The basis to do theology is the potentiality to know. Positive theology begins with Revelation and ends with Revelation while Speculative theology begins with reason and ends with Revelation.

Theology pursues the deepest questions of being authentically human in God. Why should there be any limit? Absolutely everything is grist for the theological mill. As an academic discipline, theology is not insular, exclusive, or a foreigner in the academy; it is in conversation with the best results, discoveries and methods of every academic discipline's pursuit of truth. Theology takes up the important questions for every human being, such as what is the meaning and purpose of life, death, suffering, family, person, society, structures, governance, poverty and wealth? It takes up cosmic questions as well: Why am I here? Why is this planet spinning in this galaxy among billions of other galaxies? What if there is life elsewhere? Why is there a universe at all? What is it all about? Theology also recognizes that we live in God's mystery and that we cannot answer all these questions adequately but that there is a purpose to being here in this universe. The

Christian believes what Jesus said and did and in what he asked of his followers: to love God above all things and our neighbour as ourselves. God is love.

By African theology, we mean a theology which is based on the biblical faith and speaks to the African 'soul' (or relevant to Africa). It is expressed in categories of thought that arise out of the philosophy of the African people. African theology is a household expression today in theological circles all over Africa. Theoretically, it is expressed as the history of Christianity in the West, or practically lived without extensive verbalization, like in the indigenous African Religious heritage. Accordingly, Christianity has been planted in Africa by Western missionaries but has not been properly received in some quarters. It has always been the nature of Africans to give ear to this kind of theology, warranting the tension and friction existing in the juxtaposition of two cultures and two religions. African theologians must seek new answers to the new contexts and questions that the faith of God's people presents to them today. They must appreciate the different tributaries of the vast ocean of God's mission, meeting in love, hope and faith. The joys and sorrows must be shared. This is the earth on which African theologians must operate and contribute to renew the face of the earth.

A Theology of Salvation

A theology of salvation for today must take into cognisance the fact that the human community is besieged with a barrage of crises, exacerbating daily. As Christian believers today, they must have the same concern as their predecessors, concerning sin and forgiveness, the suffering of the innocent, death and life beyond, and the meaning of who they are and what they do before God. It is all about their life here and now (*hic et nunc*) and thereafter. Karl Rahner rightly notes that the Hebrew expressions corresponding to the English word "salvation" show that the Old Testament concept of salvation (*soteriology*) had its roots in concrete experiences and situations[4]. Hence, Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation. It is the branch of theology that deals with the study of salvation. The term comes from the Greek *soterion*, "salvation," and is also related to several other branches of theology because it asks who is saved, by whom, from what, and by what means. Accordingly, salvation is usually understood to mean deliverance from mortal danger, healing in sickness, liberation from captivity, ransom from slavery, help in a lawsuit, victory in battle, peace after political negotiations. This experience is also shared by the nation as a whole. The experience of salvation as a concrete manifestation of help for the individual or the whole nation assumed a new form in the message of the prophets.

The great event of salvation in the history of Israel was God's deliverance of the Jewish community from Egypt and the covenant with them at Mount Sinai. This was not only a religious but also a political reality, witnessed by them. It involves both the liberating action of God and human participation. The God of Israel was Saviour and Redeemer, a God who acted in history, and the experience of this God's saving actions continued to open up new promises of future salvation to come from God, from one generation to another [5].

Accordingly, the question of salvation for today needs to be taken into consideration the fact that the human community faces a crisis it has never had to face before. An outstanding dimension of this crisis is what salvation in Isaiah means to African Christian theology in the contemporary understanding. How would this salvation lead to the emancipation of both men and women in the contemporary African context? As African Christian believers of today ask about the meaning of salvation, they face all the ancient fundamental questions about redemption and salvation, sin and forgiveness, the suffering of the innocent, death and life beyond death, and the meaning of who they are and what they do before God. In the African setting, they ask: what does salvation in the concept of Isaiah mean for them and the relationship with the liberation of men and women of African descent? Hence, Hence, the study of the concept of salvation in Isaiah of paramount importance to appreciate this study.

The Text of the Book of Isaiah

The book of Isaiah starts by the opening words (1:1): "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz." That was the period given for the "vision" which covers at least twenty-five years

(and potentially as much as fifty years). It makes it clear that the entire compilation of Isaiah's prophecies is subsumed under that heading and not simply one vision or another [4]. The prophecy of Isaiah is the third longest, complete literary entity in the Bible, being exceeded in length only by Jeremiah and Psalms. The Psalm is in a special category as a collection of separate literary units. The book of Isaiah is considered one of the most significant of the Old Testament [5]. This is indicated for one thing by the frequency of its quotations in the New Testament: by the name no less than twenty-one times, and numerous allusions and references to it besides. Its theme is similar to the meaning of Isaiah's name: "Yahweh (Jehovah) is salvation." The purpose is to teach that God's salvation for the His people is by grace alone. This theme is presented under two main divisions. In chapter 1-39, the prophet depicts Judah's sin and warns the people of sure punishment to come if their sin is continued. Intermixed are warning of other nations as well. The time in view is the day in which Isaiah himself lived.

In chapter 40-66, Isaiah brings a word of comfort and also Messianic prediction. Most part of the time in view, it is Isaiah's day, as the prophet projects himself ahead and sees Judah's punishment as already having taken place. He gives comfort to the people that there will be deliverance from it. He enlarges on its comfort by saying that eventually the Messiah Himself will come and bring deliverance from the cause of this punishment, the sinfulness of the people. Besides, he tells of the glorious millennial day when Israel as a nation will rule in the world and be the supreme people [6]

4. Discussion

Authorship

One of the most widely discussed issues in the field of modern Old Testament scholarship is the question of the authorship of this book [7]. While some scholars uphold the possibility of two authors (Isaiah ben Amoz and Deutero-Isaiah), some other scholars uphold three authors for the book (Isaiah ben Amoz and Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah).

Here, the book of Isaiah, since the study of B. Duhm in 1892, has been recognised to consist of three major parts: 1-39 (First Isaiah, attributed to Isaiah of Jerusalem, 40-55 (Deutero-Isaiah, attributed to a prophet of the late exilic period), and 56-66 (Trito-Isaiah, considered a prophetic work of the post-exilic period). There is, however, much debate regarding this division, as many elements overlap in the three parts. Current research favours a greater tendency to argue for the unity of the whole book, at least at the redaction level. This is because the entire corpus is seen as a product of a progressive and complex literary development [8].

The Traditional Approach: Jewish and Christian interpreters alike regarded Isaiah son of Amoz (1:1), the eighth-century prophet, friend and confidant of Hezekiah, as the author of the entire book. Isaiah lived in Jerusalem at least until the death of Sennacherib. This position prevailed until the last two centuries [9].

The Critical Approach: Beginning at the end of the eighteenth century with Doderlein and Eichhorn, scholars began to question the unity of the book of Isaiah and to divide the book at the beginning of chapter 40 [10]. Scholars began to distinguish between Isaiah ben Amoz (or "Isaiah of Jerusalem") and Second Isaiah (or Deutero-Isaiah). There were three major lines of argument advanced for attributing Isaiah 40-66 to another author, these include the historical situation, theological difference and language style [11]. Details of these may not be given in this paper. Nonetheless, this paper upholds single authorship of the book of Isaiah on the ground that the Bible suggests no other author for the book apart from Isaiah ben Amoz and there are both internal and external evidences that justifies single authorship of the book of Isaiah.

Historical Setting

Isaiah delivered his prophecies during a time of great moral and political upheaval. In the early part of his ministry, about 722 BC, Judah's sister nation, the northern kingdom of Israel, fell to the invading Assyrians. For a while, it looked as if Judah would suffer the same fate. But Isaiah advised the rulers of Judah not to enter alliances with foreign nations against the Assyrian threat. Instead, he called the people to put their trust in God, who alone could real salvation offer lasting protection for the perilous times.

The Content of the Book of Isaiah

The book of Isaiah is one of the most comprehensive of all the Old Testament books [12]. Each of the three subdivisions sets forth systematically an area of doctrinal emphasis: A. Theology; B. Soteriology; C. Eschatology. This architectonic structure points to a single author rather than to a collection of heterogeneous sources. What is said about the volume of comfort is to its systematic arrangement may be extended to the first thirty-nine chapters as well.

Isaiah's Theology of Salvation (Soteriology)

According to Isaiah, the basis of redemption lies precisely in the faithfulness of a God who is willing to let His anger go and is unwilling that His people should be estranged from Him (Oswalt, 1986, p.40). Far from exulting in their destruction, He longs that they might move through that abasement which their pride has brought upon them to cleansing and new life (1:16-19; 6:5-7; 27:1-9; 29: 22-24; 33: 5-6, 17-22; 43:3; 49:14-23; 57:16-19. Isaiah discusses a God who is interested in the salvation of His people. Even the prophet's name, "God is salvation," emphasizes this truth. He uses the word salvation 28 times in his book, while all the other Old Testament prophets combined mentioned this word only 10 times. Isaiah's thought, salvation is of God, not man. God is the sovereign ruler of history and the only one who has the power to save [13].

The book of Isaiah reveals that God's ultimate purpose of salvation will be realized through the coming Messiah. Thus, it is plain that the means of salvation can only be through God's activity, humanity is helpless to redeem itself in God's sight or even to change its behaviour. If there is to be a restoration of the relationship and a substantive change of behaviour, it must be because the Creator becomes the Redeemer. This emphasis upon the necessity of God's defeating the enemies without and within by Himself is distinctly Isaianic [14]. Accordingly, the nations of the earth are just as much God's tool for redemption as they were for judgment. Why is it that Cyrus the Persian will declare all exiles of the former Babylonian empire free to return? It is because it pleases God to direct him.

The conditions for redemption are everywhere the same in the book: a renunciation of one's pride and a corresponding acknowledgement of God's sole rulership, an acceptance of God's provision for deliverance and a willingness to function as God's servant. In Isaiah's view, chief among the many conditions resulting from redemption would be restoration of God's holy image in his people, restoration to the land, reestablishment of social justice, and fulfilment of the servant role by God's people. One of the book's recurring points is that God will make his people like himself. Redemption is not merely people's deliverance from the guilt of past sins, but also the sharing of his holy character. This is clear in the prophet's call experience, but also in many other places.

Besides, in the Hebrew Bible, the term "*gā'al*" (redeemer) is closely associated with the semantic domains of salvation and deliverance. Isaiah's concern to present God both as the Holy one of Israel and as her saviour and redeemer leaves a profound tension. How can the divine holiness and the resulting just judgment against sin be reconciled with divine grace and promise? In the Old Testament, this theological tension is addressed most often through the remnant theme. The remnant is that group of people who survived some catastrophe brought about by God, ordinarily in judgment for sin. This group becomes the *nucleus* for the continuation of humankind or the people of God. This purified remnant will make Jerusalem a "city of righteousness, the faithful city". The names of Isaiah's sons reflect this two-sided dimension of the remnant theme: *Maher-shalal-hashsh-baz* ("quick to the plunder, haste to the spoil – 8:1-3") speaks the certainty of coming judgment, *Shear-yashub* ("a remnant will return") speaks of future hope. Isaiah's sons were potent to Israel about the intent of God [15].

It is important to note that in the book of Isaiah, salvation is connected with deliverance. Deliverance and restoration are developed in three aspects: Israel's return from captivity under Cyrus, deliverance from sin, and the ultimate establishment of righteousness when Israel and foreigners will enjoy God's blessings forever [16]. The scope of fulfilment covers a long period of time. Initial fulfilment comes in part with the return from captivity under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah; atonement for sin but also

of physical deliverance and liberation for the people. He gave hope to the people and comforts them as he preaches his message of salvation.

Application of Isaiah's Concept of Salvation to African Christian Theology

African Theology is Christian theology or black theology from the perspective of the African cultural context. Although there are very old Christian traditions on the continent, in the last centuries Christianity in Africa has been determined to a large extent by western forms of Christianity brought by colonization and mission. This also means that the theology in Africa was strongly influenced by Western theology. This change in mid-20th century when African Theology as a theological discipline came into being. This movement began to protest against negative colonial and Western missionary interpretations of the religion and culture in Africa. Upon realization that theology is a contextual phenomenon, African Christians began to read the Scriptures using their own cultural lens, which invariably resulted in some interpretations that did not always agree with how Western theology interpreted things. As such, African Theology is to engage in shaping Christianity in an African way by adapting and using African concepts and ideas. Indeed, African theologians must rise above the ordinary and then, 'taking nothing away from the temporal welfare of the people, but fostering the ability, goods and riches in which the genius of each culture expresses itself and helping them to be purified, strengthened, elevated and consecrated in the Church.

African Christian theology can only be that Christian theology which is systematized and articulated by African about the religious experience of their people. More than ever before, the imperative of development suggests that African theologians should begin to perceive African theology not as a reactionary theology, but as a systematic presentation of the worldview of the African as far as knowledge of and belief in God is concerned. And as J. V. Taylor, in his book, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amidst African Religion*, opined that Christianity is not identical with any particular worldviews and cultures. The African theologian should ask what if Isaiah had come into the world of African cosmology to redeem man/woman as African understand him, how would he be perceived by them. Indeed, liberation is the objective task of Contemporary African Christian Theology. It is not just one of the issues, instead, all issues aimed at liberating the African from all forces that hinder him/her from living fully as a human being.

The text of Isaiah presents many interesting lessons for the modern reader. In our contextual study, African context and in the Bible, salvation, as a theological concept, cannot be complete without liberation. It is only when African Christians have a faith deeply rooted in their culture they can take the effects of the biblical application into their lives. Only Africans can genuinely make the Christian faith relevant to the African situation. African Christianity must be interpreted within the African context to have a lasting effect. Accordingly, the fundamental concern of African Christian theology has been liberation has been manifested in the activities of many African Christians and the growth of more than 6,000 'independent' churches on the African continent. African theology is based on the practical need to interpret the gospel in terms relevant to the historical and experiential situation of Africans.

The Hebrew word "*yāsha*" is translated to mean "to help, deliver and save". The word salvation then means deliverance or rescue. To be saved means to be delivered or rescued from something. The Salvation of the Lord in the book of Isaiah is an important theme in Deutero-Isaiah. The salvation is physical but also purposeful. God will save His people by allowing the great captor to be destroyed. Deutero-Isaiah predicted the fall of Babylon which will usher in the salvation or deliverance of the exiles. God uses Cyrus as His instrument to inaugurate His salvation. Edward J. Young articulates that, "Cyrus is a type of the Messianic servant of the Lord, upon whom the Spirit came in greater measure, that he might be equipped for the task, infinitely greater than that of Cyrus, of setting His people free from the spiritual bondage of sin and guilt". A sharp contrast is drawn between those in Israel who loved God and those who disobeyed Him (57:1; 65:13f; 66:5). God, however, promised to show mercy to those who are contrite in spirit. These righteous ones were comforted (57:14-21) with the promise that God would vindicate them. These people will be saved by God and will enjoy peace with God. Salvation is

never racial but universal (or worldwide) in character. God will bring these people to His holy mountain, and their sacrifices will be accepted by God (56:1-8).

Accordingly, the African Theological/Religious Hermeneutics follows that in the context of the prophecy of Isaiah, salvation for the people means deliverance and that God will not only save the people from the power of sin but that He will restore their land. The message of salvation, as presented by Isaiah, thus addresses the total need of man/woman (both spiritually and physically). The people were lost in sin and, as a result, were allowed to face the consequences. Despite that, God did not abandon them, rather, He came to rescue them at the end of the day. If Christian theology in African will only concentrate on the spiritual need of the people, it will then fail to meet the need of Africans, to properly apply Isaiah's concept of salvation in the African context. As such, salvation then must mean liberation. It means that, "God's activity in history, setting people from economic, political and social bondage" [15]

Admittedly, an invitation to come to the Lord, was given in Isaiah 55: 1-2: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! ...why spend money on what is bread...and your soul will delight in the Lord richest of fare." God usually invites people in need to come to Him (v.1). By coming, they indicate that they are trusting in and relying on Him for salvation and are agreeing to obey His commandments. The blessing God gives them are available without cost. Salvation is a free gift of God, whether it refers to spiritual redemption and physical deliverance.

5. Conclusion

The genre of Isaiah has been identified with the concept of salvation, and consequently can be applied to African Christian theology/religion. Africans are entitled to a faith that emanates from their context, cultural values and genius. They need to understand what they believe, celebrate and participate actively in it. They require, as a matter of necessity, a theology that transforms the inner realities of their being and the entire humanity. It is only when African Christians have a faith deeply rooted in their culture can they take the effects in their lives. Only Africans can genuinely make Christian faith to be relevant to the African situation. African Christianity must be interpreted within the African context to have lasting effect. That is the ultimate motif of African Christianity. Accordingly, the unity of faith does not however abolish divergence of salvation, liberation and theology which are ways of expressing the same faith according to "the genius, and culture of those who profess this one faith." It is a recognition of this pluralism that led Paul VI to assert that Africans "may" and "must" have an African Christianity". Accordingly, for the Africans, based on their history and past experience, salvation and liberation cannot be divorced and to preach the message of salvation without liberation, politically and economically, will be out of interest in any African setting.

It is important that the curriculum of studies in our universities, seminaries, theological institutes and higher institutions should be based to suit the purpose of African Christians, in order to demonstrate that attention must be given to the spiritual need of man/woman as well as the physical need. When people are liberated from poverty, they will listen better to the message of the Gospel. Although when too much attention is given to prosperity and human comfort, it may lead to spiritual relaxation and consequently ungodliness will result. The prophet demonstrates the power of the word of God in effecting the salvation and liberation of the people. Thus, understanding the concept of salvation in Isaiah, the paper argued for a rebirth since the biblical text under study holds the ace in the re-orientation of African Christians.

REFERENCES

- [1] K. L. Barker and Kohlenberger, *The Complete Expositor's Bible Commentary: Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.
- [2] Z. Slimi and B. V. Carballido, "Systematic review: AI's impact on higher education-learning, teaching, and career opportunities," *TEM J.*, vol. 12, no. 3, p. 1627, 2023.

-
- [3] W. Doniger, Ed., *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*. Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated Springfield, 1999.
 - [4] R. B. Dillard and T. Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Leicester: Apollos, 1995.
 - [5] K. Kahner, Ed., *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. Rochester, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1993.
 - [6] B. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1975.
 - [7] J. E. Madu, *Fundamentals of Religious Studies*. Obudu: Tony Printers, 1997.
 - [8] J. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann Education Books, 1969.
 - [9] H. P. O. Okeke, *Living Our Culture in the Light of Faith Pastoral Letter*. Nnewi: CathCom Publishers, 2015.
 - [10] J. N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.
 - [11] S. J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1960.
 - [12] "2024 United Nation World Population Prospects."
 - [13] J. V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amidst African Religion*. London: SCM Press, 1976.
 - [14] E. Uzukwu, *Liturgy: Truly Christian Truly African*. Eldoret: Gaba Publication, 1982.
 - [15] L. J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979.
 - [16] R. E. Clements, "A Light to the Nations: A Central Theme of the Book of Isaiah," in *Forming Prophetic Literature, Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, J. W. Watts and P. R. House, Eds., in JSOTS 235. , Sheffield, 1996, pp. 57-69.