

## **“Covering with the Blood of Jesus”: An Appraisal and Theological Response**

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### **Abstract**

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The Bible extensively discusses the concept of blood, its role, meaning, and significance. In the Old Testament, the concept of blood is featured in covenants and the sacrificial system for the atonement of sins. In the New Testament, the concept of the blood of Christ is broadly discussed with references to the Old and New Covenant. In the Bible, blood is used for consecration and purification but can also bring pollution or defilement. It is central in bringing atonement of sins, redemption, purification, and protection. The phrase “covering with the blood of Jesus” is widely used by Christians in Africa mainly to highlight the protective power of the shed blood of Christ. This study examines the biblical and theological foundation of the phrase “covering with the blood of Jesus,” as used in some Christian circles. This phrase holds enormous symbolic power to Christians who believe the blood of Jesus can protect, redeem, and deliver from various afflictions. The study argues that this concept aligns with traditional African religious beliefs and practices on blood. The study underscores potential challenges and controversies associated with the usage of the phrase. It argues for a balanced theological understanding of the concept while maintaining its spiritual essence within the African Christian context.

**Keywords:** Blood in the Bible, Blood of Jesus Christ, Cover with the Blood, Power in the Blood.

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## **Introduction**

The imagery of blood is widely used in the Bible. In the Old Testament, blood signifies life. And since human life is sacred (Ezk 18:4), any shedding of innocent blood required avenging (Gen 9:5–6). The shedding of innocent blood is said to pollute the land (Num 35:33–34), thus necessitating atonement (Deut 21:1–9). Life and blood are equated, “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” (Lev 17:11, NIV; See also Deut 12:23). The blood of animals was used to make atonement for human sin and to bring reconciliation between God and people (Lev 16:14–15). Blood was also used to unite parties to a covenant, as seen in the Sinaitic covenant (Exod 24:6–8). Significantly, in Exodus 12, the Israelites used the blood of lamb to smear on their doorframes as a sign of protection and deliverance, “The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt” (v. 13, NIV).

In the New Testament, the imagery of blood is widely used in reference to the death of Jesus and the new covenant. The role of blood in the atonement of sins is continued in the New Testament. While referring to Jesus, John said, “Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). In the Lord’s Supper, believers take the bread and wine as symbols of Jesus’ body and blood to celebrate the God’s deliverance from sin (Jn 6:53–58). The blood of Jesus is the blood of the new covenant (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor 11:25), doing away with the old order of the blood of animals (Heb 10:1). The blood of Jesus, through his death, cleanses from all sin, justifies, saves from God’s wrath and bridges the broken relationship with God (Rom 5:9; Eph 2:3; Col 1:20; Heb 9:11–22; 1 Pet 1:18–19). It settled the redemption price for human liberation (Acts 20:28). The shedding of the blood of Jesus on the cross atoned for human sins, and his sacrifice prepared the way for believers to be saved and have eternal life

Based on this brief look at the concept, one would easily see the sense in which common phrases “cover with the blood of Jesus” or “Power in the blood” are commonly used by Christians in prayers, songs of worship, and various other religious contexts, invoking heavenly protection and atonement through the blood of Jesus Christ. In African Christianity, the phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” has much weight and is commonly used in spiritual warfare, deliverance, and healing ministries. It is believed to be a potent instrument



for vanquishing demonic spirits, eliminating curses passed down through generations, and achieving success in achieving one's goals of successfully overcoming life's challenges.<sup>1</sup> Many African Christians believe that if they invoke the name of Jesus and appeal to the blood of Jesus, they can get access to his divine protection and obtain miraculous blessings.

This study examines the biblical and theological foundation of the phrase “covering with the blood of Jesus,” as used in some Christian circles. It also explores its cultural and social relevance in African Christianity and its theological implications for comprehending salvation, redemption, and divine protection. In addition, the article investigates some of the controversies that have arisen due to the phrase's application in African Christianity. These discussions have centered on the phrase's propensity to develop a concept of religion that is magical or superstitious, as well as its implications for understanding the role that hardship and suffering play in the Christian life. It underscores the need for critical thinking and theological discernment in spiritual warfare and deliverance ministries.

The research analyses the meaning of “Cover with the blood of Jesus” as it is used in some African Christian circles, especially in the Charismatic movements. The hope is to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the theological, cultural, and social forces at play within the Christian faith in Africa. The phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” has significant theological implications in African Christianity, particularly regarding salvation, redemption, and divine protection. It is essential to examine the background and significance of the concept of blood in Christian theology and the cultural and social context of its use in African Christianity.

### **The Background of the Phrase “Cover with the Blood of Jesus”**

#### **a. Historical Background and Significance**

The concept of blood has played a central role in Christian theology since the earliest days of the faith. In the Old Testament, the shedding of blood was seen as a necessary sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, and the Passover lamb was a prefiguration of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ is closely connected to the idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament (Heb 9:13–14). The Israelites offered animal sacrifices to atone for sins, and the blood of the sacrifice was seen as a symbol of life (Lev 17:11).

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<sup>1</sup> Huang, Y.S., Fang, X. and Liu, R., 2022. “Necessary Evil: A Strategy to Manage Dysfunctional Customer Behavior.” *Journal of Services Marketing*, 36(5):741–753.



In the New Testament, the blood of Jesus is presented as a symbol of his sacrificial death on the cross, which provided redemption for all humanity.<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul explains the significance of the blood of Jesus in his letter to the Romans, stating that “since his blood has now justified us, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” (Romans 5:9). The blood of Jesus is seen as a symbol of his sacrificial death, which provides justification and redemption for all who believe in him. The notion of blood has a significant role in the sacrament of the Eucharist, where the wine represents the blood of Jesus. In the sacrament, Christians partake of the body and blood of Christ, which is seen as a source of spiritual nourishment and communion with God<sup>3</sup>.

#### **b. The Phrase “Cover with the Blood of Jesus” in African Christianity**

In African Christianity, the phrase “Cover with the blood of Jesus” is used to invoke protection and salvation through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. It is often used in spiritual warfare, deliverance, and healing ministries, where it is seen as a powerful tool for overcoming evil forces and achieving victory in life’s challenges. The phrase is grounded in a deep sense of the spiritual realities of the world and the belief that there are spiritual forces of darkness that can be overcome through the power of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> By invoking the blood of Jesus, these African Christians believe they can access his divine protection and receive supernatural blessings. The phrase is also closely connected to the African cultural context, where blood is seen as a powerful symbol of life and vitality. Also, blood sacrifice is common in worship.<sup>5</sup> In many African cultures, the shedding of blood is associated with initiation rites, sacrifice, and healing rituals. Thus, the phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” resonates deeply with African Christians, who see it as a way of tapping into the spiritual power of the blood of Jesus and connecting with their faith’s cultural and social context.

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<sup>2</sup> Kraljik, D., 2022. “The Notion of Blood in the Old Testament: Blood that Purifies and Blood that Defiles.” *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology*, 16(1): 7–30.

<sup>3</sup> Chukwuedo, M.U., 2022. “The Relevance of Paul’s Concept of Dikaioisune in Romans 5: 1–11.” *Igwebuike: African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 8(2).

<sup>4</sup> Adelakun, A.A., 2022. *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare*. Rutgers University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Victor B. Cole, 2006. “Blood” in *Africa Bible Commentary*. Ed., Tokunboh Adeyemo. Nairobi WordAlive, 139.



## **Theological Foundations and Implications**

An exploration of salvation, redemption, and protection in African Christianity shows that the phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” has significant theological ramifications that can be drawn from it.

### ***Salvation***

The doctrine of salvation is one of the essential tenets of Christian theology, and the expression “covered with the blood of Jesus” draws attention to the conviction that the only way to be saved is to have faith in Jesus Christ. It is assumed that by invoking the blood of Jesus, one can access the power of his sacrificial death, which brings forgiveness for sin and reconciliation with God. This belief stems from these African Christians believing that the blood of Jesus is the most potent symbol of the Christian faith.<sup>6</sup> The biblical teaching that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23) provides the foundation for this perspective of salvation. According to this point of view, sin causes humanity to become estranged from God and ultimately results in spiritual death. On the other hand, expressing trust in Jesus Christ and his work brings reconciliation with God and obtain the gift of eternal life.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the expression “cover with the blood of Jesus” serves as a reminder that salvation cannot be gained via good works or human effort but rather that it is a gift of grace that comes through trust in Jesus Christ. This view of salvation is fundamental to Christianity in Africa, where many followers have witnessed the life-changing effects of the Christian message in their own lives.

### ***Redemption***

Another related theological idea is redemption, which brings another dimension to salvation. Redemption refers to freedom upon payment of a price. It refers to the act of being “bought back” or “rescued” from a state of servitude. In the Old Testament, God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt and settled them in Canaan (Ex 6:6; 15:13; Ps 77:14–15). In the New

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<sup>6</sup> Kama, P. and Klaasen, J.S., 2023. “Identity Formation at the Dawn of Liturgical Inculturation in the Ethiopian Episcopal Church.” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 79(1).

<sup>7</sup> Everhart, D.T., 2022. “Communio Dei and the Mind of Christ: Relational Christological Anthropology in Psychological Perspective.” *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*, 6(1): 44–71.



Testament, redemption is mainly used to refer to freedom from the servitude of sin and death. Redemption from sin is understood through the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Christians firmly believe that the blood of Jesus is a potent symbol of the sacrificial death that he endured to give salvation to all those who believe in him. The biblical teaching that “in him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, following the riches of God’s grace” (Eph 1:7, NIV; See also Rom 3:24) forms the foundation for this interpretation of redemption. Redemption cannot be earned through one’s efforts but is a gift obtained through faith in Jesus Christ and the sacrificial death that he endured.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Protection***

In addition, protection is associated with the phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus,” especially in light of the need for supernatural protection against hostile cosmic forces. Many African Christians firmly believe that by invoking the blood of Jesus, they can receive the divine protection that he provides and triumph over the spiritual forces behind evil. The biblical teaching that “the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7) forms the foundation for this idea of protection. According to this view, Jesus’ blood offers protection from the repercussions that result from sin as well as from assaults of the wicked one.<sup>9</sup>

Some African Christians have the superstitious belief that if they invoke the blood of Jesus, they will be able to tap into his power and be protected from danger in a supernatural manner. This protection is physical and spiritual and is viewed as a means of surviving sickness, disease, poverty, and other challenges that life may throw at a person. Because of this, the expression “cover with the blood of Jesus” has significant theological implications for understanding salvation, redemption, and protection within the context of African Christianity. It provides a powerful symbol of spiritual protection and victory over the forces of darkness while also emphasizing the importance of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the means of salvation and redemption for all of humanity.

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<sup>8</sup> Gittings, L., Colvin, C.J. and Hodes, R., 2022. “Blood and Blood: Anti-retroviral Therapy, Masculinity, and Redemption among Adolescent Boys in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 36(3): 367–390.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, T.T. and Horsley, M.N., 2022. Da Blood of Shesus: From Womanist and Lyrical Theologies to an Africana Liberation Theology of the Blood. *Religions*, 13(8), p.688.



### Cultural and Social Implications

African Christianity is a rich and diverse tapestry of expressions of the Christian faith, shaped by the cultural and social context of the African continent. It is a product of indigenous African religious traditions and the influences of colonialism and missionary activity. This mixing of cultures has resulted in a form of Christianity distinct from and yet deeply connected to the broader global Christian community.<sup>10</sup>

One of the defining features of African Christianity is its emphasis on spirituality. For many African Christians, their faith is not simply a set of beliefs or a moral code but a profoundly spiritual experience permeating all life aspects. This emphasis on spirituality is often expressed through vibrant worship, fervent prayer, and a strong belief in the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives. Another hallmark of African Christianity is its strong sense of community. African Christians often place a high value on communal worship, fellowship, and mutual support. Churches are usually seen as not just places of worship but as centers of community life where people can come together to share their joys and struggles and to support one another through life's challenges.<sup>11</sup> In addition to emphasizing spirituality and community, African Christianity strongly focuses on social justice. Many African Christians see their faith as a call to action, to work for justice, equality, and the dignity of all people. This commitment to social justice is often expressed through various forms of activism, including advocacy for human rights, support for the poor and marginalized, and campaigns against corruption and injustice.<sup>12</sup>

The phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” is a powerful expression of faith commonly used in African Christianity. It reflects a deep spiritual tradition that recognizes the power of Jesus Christ to save, redeem, and protect his people. This phrase is often used in times of trouble or uncertainty as a reminder that even amid challenging circumstances, Christ is present and can offer protection and deliverance. African Christianity is a dynamic and diverse expression of the Christian faith that has developed within the African continent's

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<sup>10</sup> Brown, A., 2022. Jonathan Edwards and the New World: Exploring the Intersection of Puritanism and Settler Colonialism. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, 58(2), pp.114-137.

<sup>11</sup> Kanu, I.A., 2022. *African Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Systems: Religion, Philosophy and the Environment*. AuthorHouse.

<sup>12</sup> Azia, I., Mukumbang, F.C., Shernaaz, C. and Nyembezi, A., 2022. “Role of Religious Beliefs on Antiretroviral Treatment Adherence among Pentecostal Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Scoping Review Protocol. *BMJ open*, 12(4).





rich cultural and social context. A strong emphasis on spirituality, community, and social justice characterizes it. It deeply connects to the broader global community and reflects African Christians' unique experiences and perspectives.

### **The Use of the Phrase “Covering with Blood”**

The phrase “Cover with the blood of Jesus” is a common expression of faith in many African Christian communities. It is often used in prayer and worship and is believed to have a powerful spiritual effect. African Christians believe that by invoking the blood of Jesus, they are accessing his power and receiving divine protection and redemption. The phrase is also used to seek divine intervention and protection in times of trouble or difficulty. For example, if someone is sick or facing a difficult situation, they may ask others to pray for them and cover them with Jesus's blood.

The phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” plays a significant role in African Christian spirituality and profoundly impacts daily life. It is a source of comfort and strength for many African Christians, who believe it offers powerful spiritual protection against the forces of darkness. In addition, the phrase is often used in the context of social justice and community development. African Christians believe that the blood of Jesus can transform lives and communities, and they often use the phrase to invoke this power for social transformation. For example, in many African Christian communities, the phrase is used in the context of efforts to combat poverty and social injustice. African Christians believe that by invoking the blood of Jesus, they can tap into his power to bring about change in their communities and the world.<sup>13</sup>

The phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” also has implications for African Christians's understanding of the relationship between spirituality and physical health. In many African cultures, there exists a strong connection between physical health and spiritual well-being. African Christians believe that by invoking the blood of Jesus, they can receive divine protection against illness and disease.<sup>14</sup> By understanding the cultural and social context of African Christianity, we can appreciate the richness and diversity of this vibrant and dynamic faith.

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<sup>13</sup> Mushi, F.V., Nguluma, H. and Kihila, J., 2022. “A Critical Review of African Green Building Research.” *Building Research & Information*, 50(6): 610–627.

<sup>14</sup> Oluwadare, M.A., 2022. Responding to “Eucharistic Deprivation” in Rural Western Nigeria: Toward an Inculturated Theology and Celebration of the Eucharist.





### **A Response to the Use of the Phrase**

From a theological perspective, some have raised concerns about using the phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus.” One critique is that the phrase can promote a theology of “magical thinking” in which God is reduced to a force that can be manipulated through certain words or actions. In this view, the phrase can be seen as a superstitious way of trying to control the spiritual realm.<sup>15</sup> Another theological concern is that the phrase can lead to a misunderstanding of the role of the cross in Christian salvation. Some argue that the phrase emphasizes Jesus’ blood as a protective shield rather than the redemptive power of the cross. This can lead to a shallow understanding of the meaning of salvation and obscure the cross’s centrality in Christian theology.<sup>16</sup>

From cultural and social perspectives, some have raised concerns about the impact on African culture, that it can perpetuate a culture of fear and superstition in which people are encouraged to rely on supernatural protection rather than taking practical steps to address problems. This can reinforce a passive approach to problem-solving and may hinder social and economic development.<sup>17</sup> Also, it is noted that the phrase can promote a hierarchical view of power, in which some people are seen as more spiritually powerful than others. This can lead to a culture of spiritual elitism in which specific individuals or groups are seen as having privileged access to God. This can exacerbate existing power dynamics in society and may lead to the marginalization of certain groups.

### **Potential Misuse and Abuse of the Phrase**

One concern about the phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” is that it can be misused and abused in specific contexts. For example, some individuals may use the phrase to justify harmful or abusive behavior, claiming they act in God’s name. Others may use the phrase to promote a prosperity gospel message, in which material wealth is seen as a sign of God’s blessing. Additionally, the phrase can reinforce harmful cultural practices such as stigmatizing people with certain health conditions or blaming victims of violence for their

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<sup>15</sup> Duffy, E., 2022. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*. Yale University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Crouse, P., 2023. “A Purpose Set Forth in Christ: God’s Mission of Reconciliation in Ephesians 1–2.” *Journal of the Evangelical Missiological Society*, 3(1): 51–69.

<sup>17</sup> Chibuko, P.C., 2022. “A History and Development of Frican Liturgies in African Catholicism: Liturgical Inculturation for the Future of Catholicism in Africa.” *Handbook of African Catholicism*, 1773.



own victimization. This can severely affect individuals and communities and perpetuate injustice and inequality.<sup>18</sup>

The phrase “cover with the blood of Jesus” is a powerful expression of faith in African Christianity, but it is not without its critiques and concerns. From a theological perspective, the phrase can promote a shallow understanding of salvation and a problematic view of God’s power. From a cultural and social perspective, the phrase can reinforce a culture of fear and superstition and may perpetuate existing power dynamics. Concerns about the potential misuse and abuse of the phrase also highlight the need for critical reflection and responsible use of language in religious contexts.<sup>19</sup>

One response to critiques of the phrase from a theological perspective is to emphasize the redemptive power of the cross and the role of Christ’s sacrifice in Christian salvation. Rather than promoting a superstitious view of God, the phrase can be understood as claiming the protection and salvation that comes through faith in Christ. This view acknowledges God’s grace and power while recognizing the need for human agency and responsibility.<sup>20</sup> In addition, it emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to Christian theology, incorporating Christ’s sacrifice’s protective and redemptive aspects, which is critical. This approach recognizes that the blood of Jesus has both a protective and redemptive role in the Christian faith but also emphasizes the need for responsible action and practical solutions to address problems.<sup>21</sup>

One way to contextualize the phrase in African Christianity is to emphasize the importance of community and social responsibility in African Christian spirituality. Rather than promoting a culture of fear and superstition, the phrase can be understood as expressing solidarity with others and claiming the protection and salvation that comes through Christ’s sacrifice. Another way to contextualize the phrase is to emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness in Christian theology. This includes recognizing the diversity of

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<sup>18</sup> Matthews, G., 2022. “Monuments of Toussaint Louverture at Home and Abroad.” *Caribbean Quarterly*, 68(4): 568–589.

<sup>19</sup> Armstrong, P.F., 2023. “Education Behind Bars: A History of Prisoner Education within the Florida Department of Corrections and Suggestions for the Future.” *Mitchell Hamline Law Journal of Public Policy and Practice*, 44(1), p.1.

<sup>20</sup> Stewart-Kroeker, S., 2022. “Sacrifice in Environmental Ethics and Theology.” *The Journal of Religion*, 102(2), pp.237–261.

<sup>21</sup> Teasdale, M.R., 2022. Extending the Metaphor: Evangelism as the Heart of Mission Twenty-Five Years Later. *Methodist Review* (19465254): 14.



African cultures and the need to engage with these cultures in respectful and meaningful ways. By doing so, the phrase can be integrated into African Christian spirituality respectfully and relevant to local contexts.

### **Suggestions for Incorporating the Phrase into a Broader Theological Framework**

To incorporate the phrase “Cover with the blood of Jesus” into a broader theological framework, it is essential to consider its relationship to other vital theological concepts such as salvation, redemption, and the cross. One suggestion is to view the phrase as a way of expressing Christ’s sacrifice’s transformative power in protecting and redeeming humanity. Another possibility is to incorporate the phrase into a broader understanding of the Christian faith that emphasizes social justice. This approach recognizes that Christ’s sacrifice has both a spiritual and practical dimension, and Christians are responsible for working for justice and the common good<sup>22</sup>.

The phrase has been essential in African Christianity, but addressing critiques and concerns about its use is vital. Theological responses emphasizing the redemptive power of Christ’s sacrifice contextualize the phrase in African Christian spirituality. Incorporating it into a broader theological framework can help address these issues while still affirming the central role of Christ’s sacrifice in the Christian faith.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has explored the implications of the phrase “Cover with the blood of Jesus” in African Christianity, examining its theological, cultural, and social implications and critiques and concerns about its use. It has discussed blood’s historical background and significance in Christian theology and how “Cover with the Blood of Jesus” is understood and practiced in African Christian communities. The article examined the theological implications regarding salvation, redemption, and protection, as well as its cultural and social implications, including its role in African Christian spirituality and its impact on daily life. Additionally, it addressed critiques and concerns about the potential misuse and abuse of the phrase and provided theological responses to these issues. It also explored ways to contextualize the phrase in African Christianity and suggested incorporating it into a broader theological framework. By exploring the complexities and nuances of the phrase “Cover with the blood of Jesus,” the

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<sup>22</sup> Idara, O.T.U., 2023. “Revisiting Inculturation Theology: Theological Considerations for the Church in Nigeria.” *The Nigerian Journal Of Theology*, 37(1): 34.



knowledge of the role of Christ's sacrifice in the Christian faith and its impact on African Christian communities is highlighted. This understanding can inform future research and practice and help bridge cultural and theological divides within Christianity. Future directions for research and practice include a continued exploration of the cultural and social implications of the phrase and its relationship to other key theological concepts. Additionally, there is a need for ongoing engagement with African Christian communities to ensure that the phrase is understood and used in a way that is respectful, relevant, and transformative. This research highlights the importance of theological and cultural sensitivity in Christian practice and scholarship and the need to engage with diverse perspectives and experiences within the global Christian community.



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