

# **The conceptualisation of Christ's salvation in Kwame Bediako and Thomas F. Torrance and its implications for spiritual security in African Christianity**

**C Magezi**

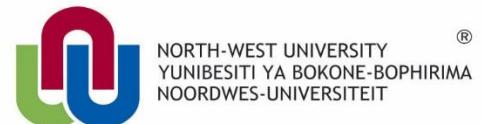
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May 2016

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## **Declaration**

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Date: May 2016

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## Abstract

Some African Christians continue to rely on traditional African powers to address their spiritual insecurity since they perceive Christ as foreign to their culture and see the Gospel as primarily a Western phenomenon. Such perceptions raise questions about their understanding of Christ's incarnation. This study critically examines the relevance of Bediako's and Torrance's positive concepts of Christ's incarnation in contributing to a resolution of the problem of the perceived foreignness of Christ in African Christianity. In dialogue with the incarnational Christological models of Bediako and Torrance, this research study formulates and proposes an Adamic incarnational Christological framework which eradicates the perceived foreignness of Christ in African Christianity.

It is my contention that Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological model reveals a tendency to diminish the actuality of Christ as God incarnate and encourages syncretism in African Christianity. Conversely, once the biblical-theological foundational status of Adamic Christology has been proven using Scripture, an Adamic incarnational Christological framework demonstrates Christ's complete identification with African Christians as the New Adam. Torrance's theology utilises the *anhypostatic* principle (which affirms negatively that the human nature of Christ is without an independent personal centre) and the *enhypostatic* principle (which affirms positively that the human nature of Christ finds its centre and expression in the person of the eternal Son of God), to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is not foreign to African Christians, since the human nature He assumed in the incarnation embraces all humankind. From this perspective an Adamic incarnational Christological model proposes that in the incarnation, God in Christ fully identified with all humankind as the New Adam, acting from the ontological depth of his divine-human existence to save African Christians from sin and all its consequences, including death and opposing spiritual forces. Thus, this model addresses African Christians' spiritual insecurity and emphasises their complete solidarity with Christ as a source of security.

## Opsomming

Sommige Afrika Christene gebruik steeds Afrika tradisionele kragte om hul geestelike behoeftes aantespreek, omdat Christus, volgens hulle, vreemd is vir hulle kultuur, en die evangelie 'n Westerse verskynsel is. Dit laat vrae ontstaan oor hul begrip van Christus se menswording. Hierdie studie poog om kritisies ondersoek te doen na die relevansie van Bediako en Torrance se positiewe konsepte van Christus se menswording. Hierdie konsepte kan dien as moontlike modelle wat kan bydra tot 'n oplossing vir die probleem, die vreemdheid van Christus in Afrika se Christenskap. In gesprek met vleeswording Christologiese modelle van Bediako en Torrance, stel hierdie navorsing voor, dat die Christologiese vleeswording in 'n Adamiese raamwerk geplaas word. Dit sal help om Christus meer persoonlik te maak in die Afrika-Christenskap.

Dit is ons bewering dat voorvaderlike vleeswording Christologiese model van Bediako neigings toon wat die realiteit van Christus as God in die vlees verminder en sinkretisme in Afrika Christenskap aanmoedig. Nadat ons die Bybels-teologiese grondslag status van Adamitiese Christologie bewys, raak dit klaarblyklik dat die bogenoemede in teenstelling hiermee is, en dat Christus inderdaad volledig kan identifiseer met Christene vanuit Afrika as die Nuwe Adam. Die onvolledigheid van die menslike natuur wat Christus deel van geword het (anhypostastic), en die volledigheid wat die menslike natuur van Christus vind in die goddelike persoon van Christus (enhypostastic), in Torrance se teologie, help om te bewys dat Jesus Christus nie 'n vreemdeling is vir Christene vanuit Afrika nie, aangesien die menslike natuur wat Hy inneem in die vleeswording van 'n algemene menslike natuur is wat die hele mensdom insluit. Dit is vanuit hierdie perspektief dat ons Adamiese vleeswording Christologiese model voorstel: dat God in Christus ten volle vereenselwig met die hele mensdom as die Nuwe Adam, waarnemende uit die ontologiese diepte van sy Goddelike-menslike bestaan om Afrika Christene persoonlik te red van sonde en al die gevolge daarvan, insluitende die oorwinning van opponerende geestelike magte. Dus sal ons eie model aandaggee aan die geestelike onsekerhede van die Afrika-Christene, en beklemtoon dat hulle in 'n persoonlike verhouding met Christus volledig sekuriteit en solidariteit kan vind.

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**Key words**

Spiritual insecurity

African traditional powers

African world-view

Kwame Bediako

Thomas F. Torrance

ancestral incarnational Christology

incarnation

vicarious humanity of Christ

*homoousios*

*anhypostasis*

*enhypostasis*

*hypostasis*

eternal union and participation

eschatological consummation

Adamic incarnational Christological framework

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## **Chapter I:**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1. The motivation of the Study**

#### **1.2. The background to the study and the problem of statement**

This research study is prompted by the experience of the ‘inadequacy’ of Christ in protecting African Christians from traditional religious spiritual threats such as witchcraft and angry ancestral spirits. In traditional African religion, protection from spiritual threats of this kind is obtained from charms, ancestors and traditional medical practitioners. At conversion, African Christians are taught to relinquish reliance on these traditional spiritual powers and to trust only in Jesus Christ for their spiritual protection. However, in times of crisis such as when they face sickness, death or inexplicable life situations, some African Christians revert to their previously abandoned traditional forms of security, whilst continuing to believe in Christ as offering eternal salvation.

Yet, in dialogue with Christians from Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa, it has been noted that many are not cognisant of the fact that by virtue of Christ’s incarnation their problem of spiritual insecurity is addressed. Some African Christians perceive Christ as foreign, and so they have difficulty in understanding how Jesus Christ relates to fears which emanate from their traditional beliefs in spiritual powers (Bediako, 2004:23; Banda, 2005:4-7). There is a lack of appreciation of the significance of Christ’s incarnation for their spiritual security. Indeed, this raises the question as to how the incarnation of Christ can be communicated in a way which better grounds African believers’ spiritual security in Christ. Michael (2013:98-99) shares the same concern in arguing that “in particular, African Christians must be pointed back to the mighty power of Jesus in His ability to protect the believer from the powers of witchcraft and evil spirits”. Therefore, in attempting a resolution of this problem, this research study will critically engage with Kwame Bediako’s ancestral incarnational Christology and Thomas F. Torrance’s incarnational Christology (and particularly the inclusion of all people in the vicarious humanity of Christ), so that African believers can in their spiritual insecurity realise their full identification with Christ.

### **1.2.1. Introduction**

Spiritual insecurity is an ongoing issue among African Christians, which has resulted in divergent views as to whether or not African Christians can continue to use traditional African powers to address their spiritual insecurity. Scholars are divided on this issue. Nurnberger (2007:8-42), Kunhiyop (2012:59) and Wijsen (2000:37-60) are some of the major scholars who argue that African Christians ought to discontinue using African traditional powers. In contrast, Brand (2002:102) argues for African Christians' use of traditional African powers for their well-being. However, Brand's stance poses Christological problems about the inability of Christ to protect believers from existential spiritual insecurity. Therefore, it is debatable whether or nor it is truly biblical to continue to consult African traditional powers while claiming salvation in Christ.

#### **1.2.1.1. Christians ought to discontinue using African traditional powers**

A considerable body of research (Kok, 2005:95-101; Anderson, 2001:98-11; Wijsen, 2000:37-60; Light, 2010:21-22, Ireland, 2012:261-277; Nurnberger, 2007:8-42; Kunhiyop, 2012:59; Banda, 2005:2-6 & Michael, 2013:99) finds a form of Christian syncretism operating in African Christians' use of traditional African powers. This approach disapproves of African Christians' use of traditional religious powers, since it is seen as incompatible with biblical salvation. Many scholars (Kok, 2005:95-100; Wijsen, 2000:40-60; Salala, 1998:133-138; Nurnberger, 2007:8-42; Malmela, 1991:9-10) argue for the discontinuity of African Christians' use of African traditional powers, yet do not provide a workable solution to the problem of spiritual insecurity. Instead, they contend that the gospel in Africa has not penetrated all dimensions of African believers' lives<sup>1</sup>, since many African Christians engage in both traditional African religion and Christianity in order to "meet the dual social demand" of their spiritual challenges, which both religions offer (Kok, 2005:95-100). In other words, traditional African religion obtains salvation for social ills, and protection from evil spirits and witchcraft, whilst Christianity offers the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life (Kok, 2005:95-100; Banda, 2005:2-3; Salala, 1998:133-138; Malmela, 1991:9-10). This view reflects that some African Christians do not perceive Christianity and African traditional religion as antithetical.

However, despite the fact that many African Christians utilise African traditional powers, it should not be supposed that they place these agencies at the same level as Christ; since "their involvement

<sup>1</sup> Nurnberger (2007: viii-15) identifies that the gospel has not yet penetrated some African believers' sense of spiritual insecurity, emanating from their fear of traditional religious spiritual threats such as ancestors, witchcraft and spiritual gods.

in Christianity is principled, structural and most important" (Kok, 2005:99). Hence African Christians' use of traditional religious powers is "incidental and not out of intrinsic motivation" (*Ibid*). This view, however, still views Christianity as a religion that is incapable of meeting the criteria of a religion which African people long for – a religion that meets their existential necessities and wishes<sup>2</sup> (Buthelezi, 2011:6-15 & Turaki, 2006:15-19). Consequently the saving power of Christ is undermined, since he is seen as unable to address such spiritual insecurity. This research project seeks to explain the incarnation of Christ in order to better ground African believers' understanding of the nature and extent of Christ's salvation.

Furthermore, a number of scholars (Turaki, 2006:15-35; Boeck, 2009:147; Westerlund, 2011:152-170; Light, 2010:107; Magezi, 2006:6; Brand, 2002:69-70, 197-198) have identified that in order to adequately address the spiritual insecurity of African believers, the world-views of Africans need to be carefully considered. The foundational African world-view is that there is no event without a spiritual cause (Turaki, 2006:15-35; Westerlund, 2011:152-170). Many scholars in a recent volume of essays edited by Haar (2007:3) cogently propound, in Haar's words: "... an unusual angle of approach to the question of witchcraft in Africa, acknowledging the spiritual nature of the issue without losing sight of its material aspects". These scholars contend that both the material and spiritual dimensions of witchcraft are significant, "but it appears that no lasting solution to the problems posed by witchcraft beliefs and accusations will be found unless full account is taken of the spiritual dimension of the matter" (*Ibid*).

Light (2010:107) sees interconnectedness between the physical and the metaphysical worlds and posits that "there is nothing accidental" in African traditional world-view<sup>3</sup>, i.e. there is always an invisible cause in every visible event. The causes of, and answers to the everyday existential challenges of Africans are found in traditional African powers, which have the supernatural power to engage in dialogue with the invisible world in order to bring forth the causes of, and the ultimate solutions to such problems (Ashforth, 2001:218; Ashforth, 2005:201; Anderson, 2001:106 & Light, 2010:107). This is a haunting belief within Africans' perception of reality, which has endured into the present epoch

<sup>2</sup> Turaki (2006:15) argues that African people need a religion that "provides a system of belief and practice to deal with the struggles and problems of human life." Buthelezi (2011:6) further posits that African Christians need a Christian faith, which delivers "them from the practices that enslave them through fear of demonic powers".

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Light's (2010:107-109) concurrence with Mbiti and Imasogie on this point.

despite missionaries' best efforts to eradicate it from the perspective of their Western theology<sup>4</sup>, by dismissing it as either irrational or superstitious beliefs which cannot be scientifically proven (Chike, 2008:221; Adewuya, 2012:253-254; Harriet, 1996:325-328 & Brand, 2002:38, 198).

Despite many scholars' serious consideration of the African world-view in addressing the spiritual insecurity of African Christians, "the spiritual beings are constantly the fears of most African people (Christians), and Christian theology must relate the victory of Jesus Christ in order to address these fears of the African people" (Michael, 2013:99). The truth is that "God also provides answers to the fears and insecurities inherent in African world-view" (Anderson, 2001:101). Therefore, this research project seeks to understand what would be involved in providing an adequate answer to the problem of spiritual insecurity among African Christians.

#### **1.2.1.2. Christians' continual use of African traditional powers**

Brand (2002:198) emphasises the authority of Scripture in pertaining to Christian faith and practice, yet he calls for an integrated approach between traditional African religion and the Christian means of salvation. Wethmar (2006:263) contests Brand's position, since he views Brand's allowance of African Christian use of traditional African powers as incompatible "with the main tenets of Christian doctrine", whilst in principle advocating for Brand's position. However, in accordance with Mbiti's endorsement of African Christians' use of traditional religious powers, owing to Western utilisation of various specialists (such as psychiatrists) to deal with health issues, Brand (2002:102) provides the governing principle that:

These agencies (African traditional powers) should only be used if it does not distract one's faith in God. ...

Africans can continue to use the best means at their disposal to combat evil and promote the good. African Christians would interpret these means as gracious gifts of God and would pray for God's blessing upon its

<sup>4</sup> The theology of some Western missionaries was influenced by the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Thus, they dismissed the African perception of witchcraft as an excise of supernatural power, by regarding it as a mere superstitious belief that could be addressed by a process of civilisation (Imasogie, 1983:46-53). These missionaries attempted to ground Africans in their own "quasi-scientific world-view" which stated that "the knowledge of God is exclusively based on sensory experience" (Oladipo, 2010:42-43; who has based his understanding on Imasogie's work). In doing this, they downplayed the fundamental African belief about the interrelationship between the physical and metaphysical worlds, while Scripture supports the African world-view (e.g. Ephesians 6:12) (Oladipo, 2010:40-43, Brand, 2002:209 & Imasogie, 1983:52-53). The missionaries' dismissal of the existence of the spiritual world as conceived by the Africans and its negative impact on their lives left the African invisible world untouched by the fundamental nature of the gospel (Imasogie, 1983:46-53; Buthelezi, 2011:15 & Anderson, 2001:101-105). Therefore, in this research, the African Christians' belief in the metaphysical forces will be given a biblical warrant (e.g. Ephesians 6:12), as well as evaluating their conception of it against the teaching of the gospel.

use.

Brand (2002:102-104) explains the working out of this principle: African Christians can utilise traditional African powers as the secondary means of their salvation. This is because God is concerned with all aspects of an African believer's life, and thus, He provides traditional African powers as a means of promoting their spiritual security.

However, Brand and Wethmar's authorisation of African traditional powers seems to neglect the fundamental distinction between traditional African powers and Western medical specialists. This is because the traditional African view draws on a spiritual source for diagnosing and treating a variety of multifaceted problems, whilst the Western perspective is purely scientific and material, i.e. not spiritually based. Perhaps this is owing to the fact that Brand and Wethmar have ignored the impact of the Christian doctrine of creation in the West, which grounded the shift in Western culture from a belief in magic to the use of the scientific method upon which modern medical science is built (Torrance<sup>5</sup>, 1995:47-48). One should acknowledge that Christ's redemption encompasses all aspects of life, including the dispelling of human beings' ignorance about God and His ways in the world, which extends to creation, and also to human perceptions about creation (Torrance, 1996:203-204,210).

Furthermore, Brand and Wethmar's understanding of the scope of Christ's person and saving work can be challenged, since their view depicts Christ as incapable of redeeming believers from their spiritual insecurity. If Christ's salvation is all-encompassing, spanning both material and spiritual reality, then Christians' use of traditional African powers for their well-being is offensive to God, since it depends on other powers rather than God's power revealed through Christ. This implies that African Christians' use of traditional religious powers is an incorrect solution to the problem of spiritual insecurity. If this argument is warranted, any concurrence with Brand and Wethmar's position needs to be challenged, since it equates traditional African powers with Christ's power, on the basis that they both possess powers, which meet the needs of African Christians in different contexts and situations. However, this research study hopes to delineate Christ's incarnation in order to better ground African believers' understanding of the nature of Christ's salvation, and in that way reduce the spiritual insecurity of African Christians.

<sup>5</sup> Torrance (1995:48) argues that the long tradition of superstition in the Western world was liberated through "its main missionary task in evangelising the world, disseminating among the nations the saving knowledge of God, mediated through Jesus Christ his Son, and providing the people of God throughout history with an articulate grasp of the substance of the faith."

### **1.2.1.3. Conclusion**

Given the Christological challenges discussed above, which emanate from the authorisation of African Christians' continual reliance on traditional African religious powers to address their spiritual insecurity, further delineation of the significance of Christ's incarnation for the spiritual insecurity of African Christians is essential. This task will be undertaken by drawing pertinent concepts of Christ's incarnation from Kwame Bediako and Thomas F. Torrance. Bediako provides a contextualised ancestral incarnational Christology, whilst Torrance offers a deeper incarnational Christology, which has important aspects that can be used to deal with the issue of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity. Section 1.3 below will expound on how these concepts function in the broader theological framework of Bediako and Torrance's understanding of Christ's security for believers.

## **1.3. Justification of Studying Kwame Bediako and Thomas F. Torrance on the problem of African Christians' spiritual insecurity**

### **1.3.1. Kwame Bediako: Towards a contextualised ancestral incarnational Christological solution to the spiritual insecurity problem**

Kwame Bediako (1994:95-111) has been chosen for consideration in this research study since the relationship of Christ's incarnation to the problem of spiritual insecurity within African believers is important to him. Bediako (2004:23, 1995:217) is one among many African theologians who have taken the African world-view seriously. He emphasises gospel contextualisation as a means of relating the victory of Christ over the spiritual insecurity of African believers, which emanates from their fear of spiritual beings (Bediako, 1995:217). Bediako (1994:95-111) does so by providing the concept of ancestral incarnational Christology, which corresponds with the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration.

Bediako (1994:99-103) arrives at a conclusion about ancestral incarnational Christology by grounding salvation in the redeeming incarnation of Christ. The controlling aspect for Bediako's (2004:24-25) understanding of this saving incarnation is the uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ, which he uses to solve the problem of the foreignness of Christ in the understanding of some African Christians (Bediako, 1994:98-99; 2004:23). This problem is intrinsic within the traditional African ancestral world-view, which requires blood-related ancestors in order for African Christians to be redeemed from their spiritual insecurity (Bediako, 1994:98-99; 2004:23). Thus, Bediako's point of departure is the divinity of Christ, in which he stresses the one being of the Son with the Father (1994:100-101; 2004:24-25). In this way, the humanity which Christ assumed is universal, which

means Christ is the ancestor of every Christian, including African Christians (Bediako, 1994:99-101; 2004:24-25). In this respect, Bediako (1994:99-100; 2004:24) emphasises that in the incarnation, the Son of God became the “savior for all people, of all nations, and of all times”, that is:

... Jesus Christ, himself the image of the Father, by becoming one like us has shared our human heritage. It is within this human heritage that he finds us, and speaks to us in terms of its questions and puzzles. He challenges us to turn to him and participate in the new humanity for which he has come, died, been raised and glorified (Bediako, 1994:100 & Bediako, 2004:24).

Further, by virtue of Christ’s incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension into the sphere of spiritual power’ Jesus Christ has become the “Lord over the living and the dead, and over the living-dead, as the ancestors are also described. He (Jesus) is supreme over all gods and authorities in the realm of the spirits. So he sums up in himself all their powers (the ancestors) and cancels any terrorizing influence they might be assumed to have upon us” (Bediako, 1994:103). In this way, Bediako has extended the notion of *anakephalaiosis*, that all things are summed into Christ their head (Ephesians 1:10), to include the ‘living dead’, or the ancestors, which means, stripping away the powers of ancestors over African Christians, since Christ's redemptive acts have rendered the spiritual ancestral powers powerless (see Colossians 2:15), as well as superseding them once and for all (Bediako, 1994:99-110).

Moreover, Bediako’s (1994:111) ancestral incarnational Christology is held within the notion of eschatological consummation. He believes that although Christ in His incarnation and work has become sovereign over ancestral spirits, nevertheless the fullness of that sovereignty awaits the final consummation (Bediako, 1994:111). As a result, African believers today are not exempt from battling with metaphysical forces (Bediako, 1994:111). However, instead of consulting their ancestors and respected witch-doctors for spiritual security, African believers should now seek out their superior ancestor, Jesus Christ (Bediako, 1994:99-121). This is the effect of Christ’s salvation, which commences as African believers participate in the redemptive acts of Christ through faith (Bediako, 1994:99-100). Therefore, although Bediako (1994:110-111) seems to have an underdeveloped eschatology, his ancestral incarnational Christology is integrated with eschatology to better position African believers’ understanding of the nature of Christ’s salvation.

Given this view, Bediako’s (2004:23) ancestral incarnational Christological concept shows “how the Jesus of the Church’s preaching saves them [African believers] from the terrors and fears that they experience in their traditional world-view”. Thus, he hopes that African believers will be able to manage their existential fears, trials, sicknesses and other calamities without reverting to former

practices that involve consulting traditional African powers. Therefore, this dissertation will seek to analyse and evaluate the ancestral incarnational Christology of Bediako in light of its attempt to ‘deforeignise’ and Africanise Jesus Christ through engaging directly with Bediako’s writings and pertinent secondary literature.

### **1.3.2. Thomas F. Torrance: Towards a deeper incarnational Christology in interrelationship with soteriology and eschatology**

Thomas F. Torrance was a Scottish Protestant theologian who sought to develop an in-depth theological conception of Christ’s incarnation. This research study seeks to distinguish whether or not his conception of Christ’s incarnation can be used to dispel the foreignness of Christ in order to strengthen African believers’ confidence in Christ, which will motivate them to rely on Christ for spiritual security.

Torrance (2009:196) emphasises the *universal range*<sup>6</sup> of the redemption of Christ by arguing that redemption in Christ is “so vast and comprehensive, involving the whole universe, that the reconciling love of God transcends every dimensional barrier, spiritual or physical, past or present or future”. To arrive at this conclusion concerning Christ’s redemption, Torrance employs his leading theological concept about the incarnation, especially the vicarious humanity of Christ, the eternal union and the participation of humanity in Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension, and eschatology. This has an obvious implication for a Christian world-view.

Importantly, in Torrance’s (2008:119-120; 1995:152,184) view, the saving incarnation of Jesus Christ is an indivisible and immutable *hypostatic* union of God with man, which commences in time and stretches into eternity. Here, the controlling theological concept of Torrance’s (2008:95-97) understanding of Christ’s salvation is the vicarious humanity of the divine Logos (Christ as the representative of all humanity), which is determined by two sub-concepts: the union of the *anhypostasis* (human nature has no independent grounding) and the *enhypostasis* (the contingency of the human nature on the person of the Son of God). Since the stability of human nature is based on its *enhypostatic* union in the person of the Son, true humanity is now grounded in Jesus Christ. Therefore,

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<sup>6</sup> Here, Torrance (1995:155-158) concurs with Athanasius' work on the incarnation, which argues for "the validity and the universal range of the saving work of Christ as the Word of God become man."

"the vicarious humanity of Christ thus became integral to the doctrine of the 'atoning exchange' effected by him (Christ) between God and man" (Torrance, 1995:4).

The vicarious humanity of Christ is further grounded in Torrance's trinitarian theology, so that "the very essence of the gospel and the whole of Christian faith depend on the centrality and primacy of the relation in being and agency between Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Torrance, 1995:3). Here, Torrance sustains the oneness of God the Son and God the Father in delineating the adequacy of Christ's salvation in all aspects of a believers' life. If that is the case, in the *hypostatic* union of the Son of God and man on the incarnation; all human beings (including Africans) are confronted with the actuality that in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, God acted within the depths of himself and human existence<sup>7</sup> to save all from sin and its consequences; including death and the invisible forces (Torrance; 1995:4, 155, 161, 175 & 1996:203-204, 211, 224-233).

Moreover, Torrance (2009:213-235 & 1995:4-5, 156) grounds the believers' security and confidence in Christ's salvation by employing the concept of the believers' eternal union and participation in the redemptive acts of Christ through faith. In Torrance's view, being in eternal union and participation in Christ's redemptive acts does not mean one is untouched by the spiritual forces or any other physical challenges (Torrance, 2009:258-261). Instead, the eternal union and participation of believers in Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension puts into perspective the impermanence of believers' physical death from the spiritual forces or any other worldly adversaries (Torrance, 2009:258-261). Thus, Torrance (2009:209) is anchoring believers' confidence and security in their unceasing union and participation in Christ's redemptive acts, since "our human life is carried over across the chasm of death and judgment into our union with the divine life, so that through our sharing in his humanity in death and resurrection we participate in all the fruits of his atoning work."

Torrance (2009:174-197 & 1996:221-234) strengthens the preceding point by recognising that the saving incarnation, especially the vicarious humanity of Christ and the eternal union and participation of

<sup>7</sup> Torrance (1995:155 & 57) amplifies: "since Jesus Christ is himself God and man in one Person, and all his divine and human acts issue from his one Person, the atoning mediation and redemption which he wrought for us, fall within his own being and life as the Mediator between God and man. That is to say, the work of atoning salvation does not take place outside of Christ, as something external to him, but takes place within him, within the incarnate constitution of his person as Mediator. ... The incarnate Logos Christ acts personally on our behalf, and that he does that within the ontological depths of our human existence which he has penetrated and gathered up in himself."

believers with Christ's redemptive acts is inseparable with the entire theological framework of Christ's salvation, which stretches to the eschatological consummation. Torrance (2009:174 & 429) argues that:

Redemption tells us that our world is already reconciled and redeemed, so that it is no longer the devil's world, but God's world, Christ's world, but we do not yet see all things under his feet. The Church still lives under the cross, as the church militant, and is not yet in the *regnum gloriae*, kingdom of glory. But we are already redeemed for that kingdom and are already sealed for that glorification. ... (But) at the heart of the apostolic eschatology, therefore, lies the emphasis upon the present Lordship of Christ, a lordship asserted by his death and resurrection over all principalities and powers and all dominions.

In this regard, Torrance depicts Christ's salvation over the spiritual forces in view of its progressive nature. That is, Torrance's leading theological concepts of the incarnation – especially the vicarious humanity of Christ and the eternal union and participation of believers in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension – are bound within the *eschaton*. Therefore, in delineating the nature of Christ's incarnation, Torrance brings to the fore a deeper and captivating interrelationship between Christology, soteriology and eschatology. Given this, despite Torrance's lack of engagement with the African believers' problem of spiritual insecurity, his incarnational Christology constructed along European lines will be evaluated and analysed to determine how such a Christological conceptualisation can reveal aspects of Christ that challenge Africans' continued reliance on traditional African powers.

## **1.4. The Research Problem**

Spiritual insecurity is an enduring problem among African Christians. The study critically analyses the relevance of Bediako's and Torrance's conception of Christ's incarnation to the problem of African Christians' spiritual insecurity, and considers how they may provide a robust African relevant incarnational Christological framework for a meaningful response to these challenges.

### **1.4.1. The main Research question**

*How can Bediako's and Torrance's concepts of Christ's incarnation provide an African relevant incarnational Christological framework for responding to the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity?*

#### **1.4.1.1. Sub-questions**

1. What are the Christological implications of spiritual insecurity among African Christians?
2. What is Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christology and what are its implications for spiritual insecurity in African Christianity?

3. What is Torrance's incarnational Christology and what are its implications to spiritual insecurity in African Christianity?
  
4. How can one formulate a responsive African relevant incarnational Christological framework from Bediako and Torrance's concepts of Christ's incarnation to deal with spiritual insecurity in African Christianity?

## **1.5. Aims and objectives**

### **1.5.1. Aim**

The main aim of this study is to formulate an African relevant incarnational Christological framework from Bediako and Torrance's concepts of Christ's incarnation, which responds to the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity.

### **1.5.2. Objectives**

- 5.3.1. To study the Christological implications of the spiritual insecurity among African Christians
- 5.3.2. To study and evaluate Kwame Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christology and its implications to the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity.
- 5.3.3. To study and evaluate Thomas F. Torrance's understanding of the incarnational Christology and its implications for the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity.
- 5.3.4. To formulate an African relevant incarnational Christological framework for dealing with spiritual insecurity in African Christianity.

## **1.6. The central theoretical argument**

The central theoretical argument of this research study is that an understanding of the identification of the incarnate Christ with the believer can (i) address African spiritual insecurity by dispelling the foreignness of Christ, and (ii) empower believers to discontinue their reliance on traditional African religious powers.

## **1.7. Research Methodology**

This research study is a literature-based study, which examines the concepts of Christ's incarnation in Bediako and Torrance and their implications for African Christians' problem of spiritual insecurity. Sufficient primary and secondary sources have been identified to facilitate a critical understanding of

Bediako's and Torrance's leading theological concepts. This study is undertaken from the perspective of the Reformed tradition<sup>8</sup>.

*The following methods are used to answer the various research questions:*

1.7.1 To study the Christological implications of spiritual insecurity among African Christians, the traditional African world-view and the basis for African believers' reliance on traditional African religious spiritual powers will be studied and evaluated in light of the questions I raised about Christ's sufficiency. Sources to be used include Mbiti, J.; Turaki, Y.; Bediako, K.; Idowu, E.B.; Nyamiti, C.; and Banda, C.

1.7.2 To study and evaluate Kwame Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christology and its implications to the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity, the research study will analyse and evaluate the ancestral incarnational Christology of Bediako in light of its attempt to 'deforeignise' and Africanise Jesus. The research will engage directly with Bediako's writings along with secondary literature (such as C. Nyamiti; B. Bujo, and J. Pobee).

1.7.3 To study and evaluate Thomas F. Torrance's understanding of incarnational Christology and its implications for the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity, the research study will engage with Torrance's writings and secondary literature (such as Athanasius and Barth). Torrance's incarnational Christology constructed from a European perspective will be evaluated and analysed to determine how his Christological conceptualisation can reveal aspects of Christ that challenge the continued African reliance on traditional African religion.

1.7.4 To formulate an African-relevant incarnational Christological framework for dealing with spiritual insecurity in African Christianity, the research study will use Bediako' and Torrance's concepts of Christ's incarnation.

## **1.8. Delimitation of the study**

This research study is limited to the identified theological concepts of Christ's salvation from the perspectives of Bediako and Torrance. The study addresses the issue of spiritual insecurity, which is

<sup>8</sup> Reformed tradition is the Christian belief which holds to the supreme authority of Scripture, the sovereignty of God and the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ.

an existential challenge for many African Christians within testing African spiritual contexts. Hence, salvation will be addressed from an experiential point of view.

### **1.9. Chapter divisions**

**Chapter 1.** Introduction: (being this chapter)

**Chapter 2.** The Christological challenge in African believers' spiritual insecurity

**Chapter 3.** Kwame Bediako's Ancestral incarnational Christology and African Christian spiritual insecurity

**Chapter 4.** T.F. Torrance's incarnational Christology and African Christian spiritual insecurity

**Chapter 5.** Towards an African relevant incarnational Christological framework of spiritual security

**Chapter 6.** Conclusion

### **1.10. The possible value of the research**

Spiritual insecurity in Africa is a serious problem that affects many African Christians' confidence in Christ. This research will potentially empower African believers to realise the relevance of Christ to their African spiritual struggles, thus enabling them to develop greater confidence in Christ. African Christians' continuing reliance on traditional African powers compromises the integrity of Christ in times of crisis. By 'deforeignising' and Africanising Christ, the integrity of Christ will be enhanced by promoting Christians' reliance on him (Christ) in their moments of crisis. That is, African believers will more fully realise their true identification with Christ.

## Chapter II

### The incarnational Christological challenges in the spiritual insecurity of sub-Saharan African Christians.

#### 2. Introduction

Chapter 1 established that the prompting of this research emerges from a form of Christian syncretism operating in African Christians' use of traditional African practitioners. Such African Christians continually make use of traditional African powers to address their spiritual insecurity, which emanates from their fear of spiritual powers. This phenomenon occurs because when Africans convert to Christianity they encounter an incarnational Christological challenge about the foreignness of Christ. This leads to Christ's irrelevancy and insufficiency in meeting the full spiritual security of African Christians. Therefore, it is essential in Chapter 2 to discuss the nature of the incarnational Christological challenge which prevents African Christians from finding security in Christ. To accomplish this goal, this chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section will provide an overview and description of the nature of the spiritual insecurity which still grips African Christians' by delving into the traditional African world-view of spiritual powers (such as the notions of a Supreme Being, lesser divinities, spirits and ancestors) and the hierarchical relationship of these spiritual powers, as well as their relationship with Africans.

The second section will address the foreignness of Christ as a significant incarnational Christological challenge. Here, Christ's foreignness will be established in view of the central traditional African ancestral world-view, which requires that an African have a blood-related ancestor in order to address their spiritual insecurity. The foreignness of Christ will then be located within the newness that Christ brings to African religiosity, which has been further intensified by the Christian missionary era which depicted Christ from a predominantly Western perspective. This approach perpetuates in African Christianity the concept of Christ's foreignness, which results in the irrelevancy and insufficiency of Christ to address the spiritual insecurity of some African Christians. This section will furthermore address the argument that the foreignness of Christ to African Christians is an indication of their lack of a full understanding of the character, nature and extent of Christ's incarnation. The chapter therefore concludes by proposing the necessity of expounding the incarnation of Christ in a way which dispels the foreignness of Christ, so as to alter the traditional African world-view through an understanding of the fundamental nature of Christ's securing power.

## **2.1. Establishing a world-view definition for the research**

Magezi (2006:6-9) agrees with Hesselgrave (1991:199-102) and Kraft (1999:384-386) in defining people's world-view as their integral way of perceiving reality in the world. Likewise, Naugle (2002:260, 151), who provides a comprehensive historical discussion of the concept of world-view, posits that a world-view "refers to a person's interpretation of reality and a basic view of life". Hiebert (2008:28) further acknowledges the aforementioned concept of world-view by suggesting that "world-views are models of reality—they describe and explain the nature of things—and models for action—they provide us with the mental blueprints that guide our behaviour." A world-view hence denotes people's inbuilt framework for perceiving reality, which governs their behaviours and actions.

Moreover, it is important to note that there is an interconnection between a world-view and culture (Kraft, 1999:385-386). In explaining this interconnection, Naugle (2002:150, 269) argues that a world-view is rooted within an individual's interpretation of reality, which appears to underlie "the character and culture of an entire people". Here, Naugle aligns with Kraft (1999:385) and Hiebert (2008:28-29) in their assertion that a world-view is an internal belief, which is manifested through cultural expression. The internal individual's conception of reality is deepened within various traditions or cultures through visual images and narratives<sup>9</sup>. Hence, although there are subjective interpretations of the world, nevertheless the individual is not an isolated entity. Instead, there are similar interpretations of reality within the human community, and thus individuals sharing similar interpretations develop external cultural values or practices, which express their internal beliefs (Kraft, 1999:385-391; Hiebert, 2008:28-29).

However, the 'modern and post-modern' concepts of world-view seem to provide a further elaboration of the preceding definition of a world-view (Hiebert, 2008:148, 211ff; Light, 2010:47-67). On one hand, the modern concept of world-view is humanistic and rationalistic in nature, determined by some scientific truths and providing an objective perception of reality (Hiebert, 2008:148; Light, 2010:47-50; Naugle, 2002:254). In this case, Naugle (2002:254) explains that the modern concept of world-view "sought to apply the antibiotic of objective, scientific rationality to all serious theoretical enterprise in order to produce an uncontaminated form of knowledge characterised by mathematical precisions". On the other hand, a post-modern concept of world-view is of a subjective interpretation of reality (as the basis of knowledge),

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion, consider Naugle's (2002:97, 269 & 300) explanation that a world-view is a system of mythological narratives and signs which enhances people's view of either perceiving or thinking about the world.

which negates the aspect of objective reality (Hiebert, 2008:211-239 & Light, 59-67). It is accommodative of the scientific methods (empirical) and all other various concepts of a world-view (Heibert, 2008:211ff & Light, 59-67). Nonetheless, the post-modern concept of world-view is innovative in nature since pure reasoning and scientific precisions are challenged, as it holds that:

...it is virtually impossible, and indeed not even healthy, to attempt to quarantine thought, and to rid all conceptual endeavours of the encroachment of personal and cultural contingencies. Theories are not unaffected, but are influenced from the beginning by the various traditions, values, and attitudes of the theoreticians themselves (Naugle, 2002:254).

Therefore, it is worth noting that within the historical development of the concept of world-view, there are some emerging challenges "...when its (world-view) implications or various nuances are considered— what it in fact connotes – and when its relationship to theoretical or scientific thought is explored" (Naugle, 2002:260).

Nevertheless, regardless of the further elaboration of the concept of world-view by the modern and post-modern concepts; this research takes the aforementioned world-view definition by Hesselgrave, Magezi, Kraft, Hiebert and Naugle, which proposes that a world-view is people's perception of reality or thinking about the world, without limiting the concept (of a world-view) to either pure reasoning or any form of scientific truth. This is because, even though people's world-view can be described as counterfeit, irrational or unscientific; still their conceptualisation of reality is central in determining their behaviours and actions in life. Therefore, in line with Kraft, Hiebert, Hesselgrave and Naugle; Magezi (2006:6) encapsulates the working world-view definition of this research in his prolonged description that:

People's world-view provides reasons and interpretation, it assigns meaning and gives explanations, it determines relations to others, adaptation to or decisions on life's issues such as illness, HIV/AIDS, nature, death, God, and everything else in life. In short, a world-view is the lens through which people view life.

If that is the case, then an understanding of people's world-view is fundamental if one wishes to effect a change within that particular world-view, since as Benn (2000:11) argues, "an effective change begins with addressing world-view". That is, the world-view which Africans utilise to ground their perception of reality should be carefully considered, since "it is infeasible for anyone to approach any topic apart from the conditioning presence of the thinker's world-view" (Naugle, 2002:254).

## **2.2. Establishing the common African world-view or views**

It is apparent that African theologians (Imasogie, 1983:53-54; Mbiti, 1989:76<sup>10</sup>, Mashau, 2009:117; Turaki, 2006:86; Lugira, 2009:48-102; Ishola, 2002:46; Wethmar, 2006:249-250 & Light, 2010:98) think that it is difficult to speak of a unitary African world-view or world - views, since there are certain antithetical beliefs within African cultures. On one hand, these theologians concur that there are salient beliefs in African cultures, even though their expression varies. Ishola (2002:46) delineates the divergences and convergences within the traditional African world-view. He argues that, “the plurality of their expression [African beliefs] is due to over one thousand ethnic language groups, each with its own tradition, yet with uniformity in the various people’s understanding of the nature of the world, the nature of human beings and their place in the world, and the nature of evil” (Ishola, 2002:46). In agreement with Ishola, Mashau (2009:117) extends the list of the common African elemental beliefs by positing that, “the commonalities include, among others, belief in a transcendent God, a spiritual world, ancestral spirits, a hierarchy of powers, the notion of cosmic good and African communality, and the use of spiritual powers for good or bad”.

However, within the unvarying beliefs of traditional African cultures is the foundational world-view of the interconnection between the spiritual and physical worlds (Mbiti, 1989:74-85; Louw, 2002:72; Turaki, 2006:34; Dyrness, 1990:44; Lugira, 2009:48). Mbiti (1989:74) encapsulates the interconnection between the physical and the spiritual worlds in the statement that the “spiritual universe is united with the physical, and that these two intermingle and dovetail into each other so much that it is not easy, or even necessary, at times to draw the distinction or separate them”. In this way, various African cultures recognise that the spirit world is inhabited by many spiritual powers, which are in a hierarchical relationship with one another; acting capriciously as an unpredictable influence of good and evil in the lives of Africans (Mashau, 2009:117; Lugira, 2009:36-63; Mbiti, 1989:77-80; Imasogie, 1983:53-54; Light, 2010:99-109; Turaki, 2006:54-66). In concurrence with some African theologians and scholars, Turaki (2006:61) depicts the multiplicity of spiritual powers and their hierarchy, by maintaining that, “African theologians and scholars speak about the transcendence of God, the Supreme Being, and claim that the space between God and human beings is filled with a hierarchy of gods, divinities and spirits who are sometimes called the intermediaries”.

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<sup>10</sup> Mbiti (1989:76) supports that in Africans' belief in spiritual powers, “obviously there are local differences, but the pattern is fairly uniform throughout the traditional environment.”

In this way, although there are divergences in Africans' belief in spiritual powers, there are still convergences, which enable one to expound on the nature of African spirituality (i.e. the belief in spiritual powers) as a significant African phenomenon. In order to describe the spiritual insecurity of Africans, the following sub-sections provide an overview of the nature of African spirituality in view of "the basic pattern and principles at the basis of those religious phenomena" (Wethmar, 2006:250).

### **2.2.1. Africans' spiritual insecurity from their beliefs in invisible powers**

#### **2.2.1.1. Africans' spiritual insecurity due to the Supreme Being (God)**

Importantly, many scholars (*cf.* Mbiti, 1989:15-77; Imasogie, 1983:66; Agyarko, 2010:52-54; Lugira, 2009:36) agree that in the African concept of the spiritual world, the Supreme Being is the head of these spiritual powers, since He is the sole creator of everything that exists, including the lesser spiritual entities. The fact that African people believe the Supreme Being to be the sole creator of all existing things implies that they perceive God as eternal (the one who does not have a beginning or an end) (Mbiti, 1989:30-36). Lugira (2009:36) summarises the predominant African belief in the Supreme Being<sup>10</sup> as the sole creator of everything, in this way: "most Africans' oral traditions have pointed to the existence of a power above which there is no other power, a Supreme Being, Creator, and Originator of the World". Likewise, Mbiti (1970:45, *cf.* Turaki, 1999:27) argues that "our written sources indicate that practically all African peoples consider God as creator, making this the commonest attribute of the works or activities of God".

Nevertheless, in traditional African belief, the Supreme Being is not directly involved in everyday human activities, since he is transcendent and remote from the physical world (Lugira, 2009:36-46; Turaki, 2006:59-61). However, the transcendence and remoteness of God in traditional African belief does not eliminate the concepts of God's omnipresence (his presence in all places, at all times), omniscience (his all-knowing) and omnipotence (his all-powerfulness) (Mbiti, 1989:29-36; 1970:3-18). That is why "African theologians and scholars speak about the transcendence of God, the Supreme Being, and claim that the space between God and human beings is filled with a hierarchy of gods, divinities and spirits who are sometimes called the intermediaries of God" (Turaki, 2006:61). Firstly, this belief seems to come from traditional African stories, which state that the Supreme Being has prescribed various "duties or responsibilities" to the lesser spiritual beings interacting with the physical world (Turaki, 2006:56). Secondly, it also appears to spring from the traditional African belief that

God cannot be approached directly (Turaki, 2006:56-61; Dyrness, 1990:48; Nurnberger, 2007:75; Mbiti, 1989:82; Lugira, 2009:46-48).

In this way, the Supreme Being is “the ultimate peak of the pyramid, but he is too remote and inaccessible to play a role in practical life” (Nurnberger, 2007:75). That is, many Africans believe that “most of the things humans need fall within the sphere of the authority of lesser spiritual beings, there is no need to go to God or bother him unless the lesser beings prove inadequate when it comes to providing powers, needs, purposes and security” (Turaki, 2006:57). In this same respect, since God does not have direct interaction with the physical world, it is not usual for him (God) to be viewed as the fundamental agent of African people’s misfortunes (Westerlund, 2006:79). However, the preceding thought seems to downplay the African belief that the lesser spiritual powers are the agents of God. That is, if the lesser spiritual powers are working in conjunction with God, as his agents, it follows that the causes should be attributed to the Supreme Being. Regardless of this, in traditional African world-view, God's existence is acknowledged, yet he commands less fear than the lesser spiritual powers (Turaki, 2006:56).

However, the aspect of the intercessory role of the lesser spiritual powers between God and man is controversial. This is because it raises the question as to whether African people believe in and worship one God (monotheism) or many gods (polytheism) (Turaki, 2006:62). Mbiti (1989:74-79) inclines to the view that traditional African religion is monotheistic, since the lesser spiritual beings are the agents of God in the sustaining of his creation. Here, Mbiti (1989:74-79) establishes that in an African's spiritual world-view (where God is the head of the government of lesser spiritual powers), when the lesser spiritual beings are worshipped, the Supreme Being is also worshipped. Lugira (2009:37) seems to agree with Mbiti's stance, as he argues that the hierarchical nature of spiritual powers in traditional African world-view itself identifies traditional African religion as monotheistic. However, Lugira (2009:36) appears to be contradicting himself by asserting that traditional African religion is both monotheistic and polytheistic in nature. That is, “in Western religion religious systems are usually classified as either monotheistic, that is, believing in one God, or polytheistic, believing in many gods. In African religion monotheism and polytheism exist side by side” (Lugira, 2009:36).

Nonetheless, Bediako (1995:97-98) appears to be charging Mbiti and Idowu with overgeneralising traditional African beliefs in spiritual powers. Maybe this is because Mbiti and Idowu are both invested in finding consistency between the traditional African world-view in spiritual powers and Christians' belief in and worship of one God (Bediako, 1995:97-99). Bediako (1995:97) captures his concern in this way, “by stressing the centrality and

uniqueness of God in African traditional religions, African theology has, however, left the wider spirit world of African primal religions – divinities, ancestors, natural forces – unaccounted for.” If this is the case, Bediako (1995:99-100) understands the African spiritual world:

...as a universe of distributed power, perhaps even of fragmented power; it is as much a universe of conflict as the rest of the fallen world in that it is a world not of one Centre, God, but many centres, the unity and multiplicity of the Transcendent in the African world also reveals a deep ambivalence. It is this ambivalence to which a creative Christian engagement must answer and do so in terms of the primal imagination itself.

Nevertheless, regardless of the ongoing disagreement concerning the monotheistic or polytheistic nature of traditional African religion, many African people still seem to have a predominant assumption that “if God is active behind the various gods and divinities, he is automatically also approached when they are approached” (Turaki, 2006:56). This is because in traditional African belief, “both the Supreme Being and the lesser (spiritual) beings are part of the same cosmic community” (Turaki, 2006:56).

### **2.2.1.2. Africans’ spiritual insecurity due to the lesser spiritual divinities or gods**

Having probed the nature of the African Supreme Being; Lugira (2009:46-47) argues that the lesser spiritual beings “are ranked according to their nearness to God”. The closest spiritual beings to God are the lesser spiritual divinities or gods (Lugira, 2009:46-47). In this way, Turaki (2006:56-61), Mbiti (1989:74-77), Light (2010:102-103) and Lugira (2009:46-47) understand these lesser spiritual divinities to be God’s associates or intermediaries, who are in conjoint operation with the Supreme Being in the spiritual and physical worlds. Mbiti (1989:75) puts it this way, “divinities are thought to have been created by God, in the ontological category of the spirits. They are associated with him (God), and often stand for his activities or manifestations either as personifications or as the spiritual beings in charge of these major objects or phenomena of nature”. In this way, Africans believe that these lesser spiritual divinities reside in physical objects such as bushes, dams, forests, woods, mountains and rivers (Lugira, 2009:41; Mbiti, 1989:79; Idowu, 1973:174; Turaki, 2006:56).

The places which the lesser spiritual divinities dwell are considered sacred; thus, they are regulated by various taboos<sup>11</sup> by which human beings are to maintain harmony with the lesser

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<sup>11</sup> Here, a taboo is defined by the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2010:1518) as “a cultural or religious custom that does not allow people to do, use or talk about a particular thing as people find it offensive or embarrassing.” In agreement with the above definition of a taboo, the Evangelical Dictionary

spiritual divinities (Mwaura, 2006:137 & Magezi, 2007:657). Magezi (2006:9); Louw (2002:72) and Mbiti (1989:79) argue that, any fracture of these environmental taboos is a serious offence to the spiritual powers. Thus, it is claimed that the spiritual divinities will cause multifaceted diseases, sicknesses and misfortunes in the lives of human beings (Magezi, 2006:9; Louw, 2002:72; Mbiti, 1989:79). In Louw's (2002:72) view, this is one of the reasons for African people perceiving life as "an integral whole of cosmic and social events. This implies that when one breaks society's moral codes, the cosmic ties between oneself and the community are broken". Given this, there is a serious need in traditional African belief for human beings to live in harmony with their sacred environments.

However, although human beings can consciously live in accord with the sacred environmental seats (such as mountain, bushes, etc.) of the lesser spiritual divinities, it is difficult to understand the assigned roles of these divinities (i.e. assigned by the Supreme Being). This is because these lesser spiritual divinities "are seen as mediators acting with the sanction and knowledge of God himself although at other times they act as independent agents" (Turaki, 2006:59). Mbiti (1989:79) understands this to denote that not all lesser spiritual beings operate within the contours of God's good purposes in his creation, because they are "ontologically nearer to God: not ethically, but in terms of communication with him". Thus, although the lesser spiritual divinities are responsible for providing humanity with "aid and guidance in the mundane matters of everyday life", they still cause serious uncertainties and doubts among African people (Turaki, 2006:61).

Nevertheless, despite the spiritual insecurity of African people, which emanate from these lesser spiritual divinities, some Africans still make "requests concerning their needs and desires" (Lugira, 2009:46). These requests are made through "offerings and sacrifices" to the lesser spiritual divinities "for health and happiness, successful crops, the birth of healthy children, and protection from evil" (Lugira, 2009:46). The above-mentioned description of the nature of the spiritual divinities enables one to conclude that Africans live under constant fear of these

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of World Missions provides us with a relevant traditional African religious significance of the word (Akins, 2000:928). That is, religiously, a taboo is used to accommodate African peoples' fear of the invisible powers, such as ancestors, lesser divinities and etc. (Akins, 2000:928). In this way, a taboo is neither interested "with what is morally right or wrong", instead, it is concerned with safeguarding Africans from the offenses which emanate from the invisible forces (Akins, 2000:928). Therefore, peace and prosperity in some African communities is guaranteed by the maintenance of a "health balance between good and bad taboos" (Akins, 2000:928).

spiritual divinities, since they can either bless or harm humans, depending on the state of the volatile relationship between humanity and these spiritual divinities (Imasogie, 1983:66).

### **2.2.1.3. Africans' spiritual insecurity due to the spirits**

According to Mbiti (1989:78) and Igba (2013:28), there is no misconception in traditional African belief concerning the position of the “spirits and the living dead” in their relationship to God. African people believe that “spirits are the destiny of man and beyond them is God. Societies that recognise divinities regard them as a further group in the ontological hierarchy between spirits and God” (Mbiti, 1989:78).

However, in the traditional African world-view, it is apparent that not all deceased people will possess an ancestorship position within their clan, family or tribe (Lugira, 2009:50; Bediako, 2004:30). Lugira (2009:50) understands that some deceased individuals’ spirits are regarded as “ancestors and others are the spirits of the ordinary dead—that is the dead of the community who are neither ancestors nor identified as outstanding members of the community”. In this way, Lugira seems to concur with Mbiti’s (1989:83-84) discontent with African theologians, who limit their definition of human spirits in the spiritual world by using the term ‘ancestor’. Mbiti argues that, whenever the term ‘ancestor’ is used, it applies to the respected spirits of the dead members of African families, tribes or clans, who are regarded by the living people as their guardians (Mbiti, 1989:83-84; *cf.* Imasogie, 1983:57; Lugira, 2009:50). In this case, the term ancestor over-generalises regarding all the spirits of the deceased people in the spiritual world, which have a continual existence after death (Mbiti, 1989:78).

Furthermore, Salala (1998:133), as well as Reed and Mtukwa (2010:148-149) agree with Mbiti’s “distinction between ancestral spirits and spirits”. Here, Mbiti (1989:78-84) and Salala (1998:133) concur that the ‘living dead’ is the deceased but valued person, who is still remembered by the members of his or her family. On the other hand, the spirits are the deceased people, who are not remembered within their clans, tribes or families (Mbiti, 1989:83-84, Reed & Mtukwa, 2010:148-149; Salala, 1998:133). These spirits are ever-present, although Africans are not cognisant of the specific location where they are or what they are doing (Mbiti, 1989:83-84; Salala, 1998:133). Nevertheless, all these spirits are potentially malicious since they can possess people and inflict all kinds of suffering (Mbiti, 1989:80-81; Nuberger, 2007:10). In this regard, human beings need to be protected from them (*Ibid*). Therefore, people are safeguarded from these malicious spirits and ghosts through the use of traditional medicines such as “amulets on their necks and ropes tied to their hands”, which are offered by traditional African practitioners (Mashau, 2009:119-120; Imasogie, 1983:63). However, regardless of the protection which

people can obtain from traditional African practitioners, Africans are continuously afraid of this category of spiritual powers (Mbiti, 1989:80-81).

#### **2.2.1.4. Africans' spiritual insecurity due to the ancestors or the living dead**

The ancestors are those blood-related members of the family, clan or tribe, who have lived an outstanding life during their lifetimes and who have presupposedly acquired supernatural powers after death, which enables them to function as both guardians and protectors of their living descendants (*cf.* Oladosu, 2012: 160-161; Ligura, 2009:48-50; Nyamiti, 2006:3; Bediako, 2004:23). In the traditional African world-view, the ancestors are the most respected and feared spiritual powers (Dyrness, 1990:48; Oladosu, 2012:161). Therefore, ancestors are believed by Africans to be a dominant category among the spiritual powers (Dyrness, 1990:48; Reed & Mtukwa, 2010:148; Triebel, 2002:193). In Dyrness (1990:48) and Mbiti's (1989:82) view, the ancestors are believed to be the dominant spiritual category because they are the closest spiritual powers to living people. Here, Mbiti and Dyrness compare the closeness of ancestral spirits with other spiritual powers to humanity (Dyrness, 1990:48; Mbiti, 1989:82). Mbiti (1989:82) puts it this way:

... the living-dead are therefore the closest link between men and God: they know the needs of men, they have recently been here with men, and at the same time they have full access to the channel of communicating with God directly or according to some societies, indirectly through their own fore-bearers.

This implies that, in traditional African belief, the ancestors are present with the living, and living people rely on them for their prosperity in life (Triebel, 2002:187). Oladosu (2012:161) puts it this way:

... the position and function attached to the concept of ancestral veneration among the Africans identifies their community setting as a continuing unit. This continuity shows influence between the members still here on earth and those that are in the world beyond as the ancestors.

However, the problem which has arisen in ancestral belief is that, although the ancestors are respected, they are nevertheless feared by the living (Ashforth, 2005:208-209; Triebel, 2002:190; Dyrness, 1990:48, 50; Oladosu, 2012:161-162). That is, although in the preceding paragraph, the ancestors are regarded as protectors and guardians of the living, they can still bring curses upon living people in the form of “suffering, instability, poverty, misfortune, sickness and even death” (Dyrness, 1990:48; Triebel, 2002:192; Mbiti, 1989:83). In this instance, the ancestors are constantly watching over the living but any human deviance from “the inherited traditions” incurs curses, whilst the opposite (i.e. compliance with traditions) brings blessings to

the living (Nurnberger, 2007:66). Such inherited traditions include Africans' taking care "to follow the proper practices and customs, especially regarding the burial or other means of disposal of dead bodies", as well as making "libation and food offerings" to ancestors (Mbiti, 1989:83).

Interestingly, Ashforth attempts to substantiate the ancestors' unpredictability by locating the origin of their capacity for causing good and evil in their flawed character (Ashforth, 2005:209). He argues that they "are still human in origin and take with them their human characteristics into the other-world" (Ashforth, 2005:209). Therefore, "if the ancestors carry into the afterlife the same limitations and negative human qualities they had as living members of families – absent, abusive, jealous, unreliable, tyrannical or even just plain evil – then their descendants are sorely in need of other spiritual powers to guard their security and prosperity" (Ashforth, 2005:209). If this is true, one could contend that the ancestors foster real spiritual insecurity within Africans. However, regardless of some African peoples' spiritual insecurity arising from the unpredictable behaviour of the ancestors, Triebel (2002:193) asserts the centrality of ancestors in African traditional beliefs, as he concludes that:

Because the ancestors cause misfortune on the one hand and because on the other hand only they can grant fortune, well-being, life, and a good living—that is, fullness of life—they alone are venerated... Therefore this cult is really the central aspect, the centre of African religion.

#### **2.1.1.5. Africans' spiritual insecurity due to the African concept of spiritual causality behind all existential challenges**

Significantly, the fact that many African people believe in the supernatural causes of diseases and sicknesses does not imply that Africans do not believe in any form of natural causes for their existential challenges (Hastings, 1976:64). Hastings (1976:69); Magezi (2006:7-8); Mwaura (1994:62-102); Westerlund (2006:75-76) and Sogolo (1991:182) provide a helpful distinction between the Western and African way of perceiving the causes of diseases and sicknesses. Magezi (2006:7); Westerlund (2006:75-79) and Mwaura (1994:62-102) indicate that, while African people possess a 'personalistic view' (supernatural causes from the spiritual entities) of illness; the Western world believes in the 'impersonalistic view' (natural causes) of illness. However, the fact that Africans believe in the pesonalistic view of illness does not "diminish the naturalistic causes of illness such as germs, viruses or bacteria" (Magezi, 2006:7).

So, when African theologians and scholars speak of African beliefs in spiritual causes of illness; it does not mean that they are not cognisant of the fact that some forms of sickness have "natural or organic causes" (Magezi, 2006:7). Instead, these African theologians and scholars are arguing

for the centrality of "the supernatural or spiritual causation of illness" within the traditional African world-view (Magezi, 2006:7). Sogolo (1999:182-185) inclines to Magezi and Mwaura's understanding in his categorisation of the supernatural causation of illnesses as 'primary', whilst the natural causation is 'secondary'. Given this, Sogolo (1991:184) carefully concludes that in traditional African thinking, "a clear dichotomy between the natural and supernatural (causation) does not exist...even if it does; the apparent conflict in people's explanations of illness may still be resolved by invoking the difference in principle between primary causes and secondary causes."

Furthermore, Magezi (2006:6); Lugira (2009:96-98); Idowu (1973:190-202) Ashforth (2005:106-108) and Mbiti (1989:165) agree that (besides the supernatural and natural causation of sickness, diseases and misfortune), Africans also believe that diseases, sicknesses and misfortunes are caused by humans (human causation), such as witches<sup>12</sup> and sorcerers. Nevertheless, even though witchcraft is practised by human beings to injure other people; scholars agree that witchcraft always has a spiritual dimension (Ashforth, 2001:207; Lugira, 2009:98 & Haar, 2007:3). In this way, there is a connection between the human and spiritual dimension of witchcraft, as Ashforth helpfully substantiates that witchcraft includes:

...practices where human action directed towards evil ends engages with invisible forces that are variously conceived of as physical, human or extra human in nature. ... The misfortunes which witchcraft can cause are unbounded: illness, death, unemployment, car accidents, divorce, family discord are all within their capacities.

On the other hand, sorcerers or magicians are people who have the ability to control the supernatural forces through inventing various human mechanical means (Idowu, 1973:190). In doing this, these people can live outside the influence of the spiritual powers, since they can have control over their own fate and life interests (Idowu, 1973:190). In this setting, Lugira (2009:98) posits the significance of sorcerers in his assertion that, a sorcerer "makes the unknown less threatening and provides psychological reassurances for potentially difficult or even dangerous situations. Ritual acts and talismans provide magical protection from unknown dangers around the world." However, Lugira (2009:98) and Mbiti (1989:165) concur that a sorcerer or a witch can intensify the spiritual insecurity of African people. This is because the sorcerers or witches can

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<sup>12</sup> Lugira (2009:99-100) explains that witches are those African people who are "possessed by extra-human forces that can do evil or harm" to others. They (witches) can either inherit extra-human powers from their parents (which implies that one can be born a witch), or else purchase it from other witches (Lugira, 2009:99-100). These witches can cause multifaceted existential challenges to other people, such as "failure to bear children, diseases, failure in life, illness, and death" (Lugira, 2009:99). In this way, witches are capable of causing social and economic unrest among African people (Lugira, 2009:100).

manipulate their powers to impinge diseases, sicknesses and misfortunes towards other people (Mbiti, 1989:165; Magezi, 2006:9 & Lugira, 2009:98). Given this, one can sustain that:

Africans recognise other types of forces that are neither superhuman nor simply human but lie somewhere between. These mystical forces include magic, witchcraft, and sorcery. Like spiritual forces, they affect people's lives and the lives of their community (Lugira, 2009:96).

#### **2.2.1.6. The centrality of African traditional powers in solving Africans' spiritual insecurity**

Mbiti (1989:165-174) helpfully classified the traditional African practitioners into two categories: the “medicine men, and the diviners and mediums”. Nakah (2006:32) agrees with Mbiti in his categorisation of traditional African practitioners as the herbalist (medicine men) and the diviners (including spiritual mediums). However, the distinction between the diviners and medicine men is unclear, since one can hardly see a traditional herbalist who can provide any form of traditional medicine without practising some mode of divination<sup>13</sup> (Nakah, 2006:32 & Sogolo, 1991:185). This depicts the centrality of divination within the traditional African practitioners (of both categories) because their “primary concern is with the patient's background in socio-cultural and in divine/supernatural relations” (Sogolo, 1991:182). In agreement, Imasogie (1983:60) maintains that, since in the traditional African world-view, every existential challenge has a supernatural cause; the traditional African practitioners are responsible in assisting people to “look beyond physical events to their spiritual etiology.” That is, even though the traditional African medical practitioner is concerned with the natural dimension of diseases, sicknesses and misfortunes; the supernatural dimension is fundamental in the diagnoses, since all African existential challenges emanate from a metaphysical aspect of their interpretation of reality (Mbiti, 1989:162-174 & Sogolo, 1991:177-182).

Furthermore, Mbiti (1989:165) endorses that, in the midst of various existential challenges (which emanate from the supernatural entities such as spirits, ancestors, witches, sorcerers and etc.); the African traditional practitioners detect the “cause of the sickness, find who the criminal is, diagnose the nature of the disease, apply the right treatment and supply the means of preventing the misfortune from occurring again” (Mbiti, 1989:165). This implies that the medicine men and diviners are to be understood as “able to decipher the past, the present and the future – as well as to uncover the human and the spiritual causes of events and the possible solution to the problems of life” (Imasogie, 1983:60). If this is the case, just like the Western specialists<sup>14</sup>; the medicine

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<sup>13</sup> However, this does not necessarily mean that there are no traditional herbalists who do not practice the aspect of divination.

<sup>14</sup> Sogolo's (1991:179) argues that the Western specialists and traditional African practitioners seem to

men and the diviners do not seek to change the “normal course of events,” since “the order of nature is believed to be laid down and it is not subject to change by mortals” (Sogolo, 1991:179). In this circumstance, one can conclude that the traditional African practitioners are essential in solving the spiritual insecurity of African people.

### **2.3. The foreignness of Christ as an incarnational Christological challenge**

#### **2.3.1. An incarnational Christological challenge stemming from the African ancestral world-view**

It is significant to highlight that the spiritual insecurity of African Christians discussed in the section above anticipates a Christ who addressees terrors and fears which emanate from African spiritual powers, i.e. African Christians expect a Christ who reigns over the aforementioned “natural world of divinities, spirits and evil forces” (Hood, 1990:150). In his classic essay which fleshes out the meaning of salvation from an African perspective, Okorocha (1994:62) seems to agree with Hood in arguing that African Christians expect Christianity will safeguard them from the invisible powers which threaten their well-being. Many African converts are haunted by “an overriding concern for spiritual power from a mighty God to overcome all enemies and evils that threaten human life and vitality” (Turner, as quoted by Okorocha, 1994:62).

African Christians long for spiritual security, as provided by Christ. However, the traditional African ancestral world-view requires a *consanguineously* related or blood-related ancestor to the earthly community, family or clan (see section 2.2.1.4) (Nyamiti, 2006:3, 9). This view makes it impossible for Christ’s securing power to penetrate within African spiritual insecurity challenges. Despite the spiritual insecurity which traditional African ancestors paradoxically pose for their related communities, families or clans (see section 2.2.1.4.), it is apparent that they play a major role in providing security for African people<sup>15</sup> (Hood, 1990:219-221 & Nyamiti, 2006:3 & 9-10). This is because the ancestors are said to have acquired a supernatural power, which enables them to protect the earthly communities, families or clans from the misfortunes caused by other spiritual powers (Hood, 1990:220-221). It is against the

concur that “events of misfortune will always occur” to their patients under treatment. That is, both the Western specialists and traditional African practitioners cannot cease the “events of misfortune” to happen in the lives of people. Instead, they are capable of guaranteeing their patients that they are “susceptible to such events” of misfortune. Therefore, “when the practice of divination in traditional Africa is seen in this way, it is clear, contra Horton, that traditional explanatory models are not intended for control of natural phenomena” (Sogolo, 1991:179).

<sup>15</sup> The ancestors are believed by Africans to be "a model or exemplar of conduct in society, and as a source of tribal tradition and its stability" (Nyamiti, 2006:3).

backdrop of the traditional African ancestral world-view (which requires a blood-related ancestor) that Jesus Christ seems to be unable to identify himself with Africans. Thus, some African Christians understand Christ as unable to save them from their spiritual insecurity (Bediako, 2004:22).

Therefore, for Christ to be accepted by Africans and to fulfill expectations for addressing their spiritual insecurity (the presupposed role of ancestors and African traditional practitioners), the overarching concern posed by Pobee (1979:81), Reed and Mtukwa (2010:158-161) and Bediako (2004:23) is about the relationship between Jesus Christ of Nazareth and African people, since they do not belong to the same “clan, family, tribe and nation”. Owing to this lack of relatedness many African Christians “.... are uncertain about how the Jesus of the church’s preaching saves them from the terrors and fears that they experience in their traditional world-view” (Bediako, 2004:23). If Christ is depicted as a foreigner, he is perceived as unable and insufficient to address their spiritual insecurity (Banda, 2005:4-7). Indeed, this understanding of Christ as a foreigner is an incarnational Christological challenge in the sense of his inability to identify himself with some African Christians in their spiritual insecurity.

Hence the notion of the foreignness of Christ means that he is seen as irrelevant to protect African believers from the misfortunes and illnesses which emanate from spiritual powers. Christianity is therefore viewed as a religion incapable of addressing the African individuals’ existential necessities and wishes (Buthelezi, 2011:6-15; Turaki, 2006:15-19; Dyrness 1990:43). This suggests that African people view religion as a vehicle for salvation and for providing an answer to their contemporary existential challenges (Okorocha, 1994:61). If this is the case, one can argue that the search for salvation “is the putative force behind African conversion to Christianity, it then means that that same factor will determine both their allegiance to, and continuity in Christianity, as well as the shape and meaning of Christianity in Africa” (Okorocha, 1994:91). Banda (2005:24) seems to support this point in his clear affirmation that “in the African perception of attaining a stable life, secured from the attacks of the witches and other such evil forces, religion is an absolute necessity”.

Hence one can argue that the notion of the foreignness of Christ (which emanates from the traditional African ancestral world-view) is a significant incarnational Christological challenge, which requires the dispelling of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity by providing a deeper explanation of the nature and extent of Christ’s incarnation. African Christians ought to be able to fully identify themselves with Christ, as well as understand Christ’s involvement in all their existential challenges. Failure to dispel the notion of the foreignness of

Christ encourages syncretism in African Christianity, i.e. African Christians revert to traditional African practitioners (Gill, 1992:42) because they believe that traditional African practitioners understand their needs, as well as being capable of addressing their terrors and fears, which emanate from the spiritual powers (Mbiti, 1989:165; Gill, 1992:41; Imasogie, 1983:60). In concurrence with Banda (2005:27), “this is a Christological indictment, for Jesus is the essence of Christianity”.

### **2.3.2. An incarnational Christological challenge stemming from the newness of Christ to African religiosity**

The notion of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity is further deepened by the newness of Christ in African religiosity (Banda, 2005:4). This newness of Christ in the traditional African world-view has created difficulties regarding the conceptualisation of Christ for many African Christians (Banda, 2005:4; Mugabe, 1991:343). Section 2.2.1.1 has demonstrated the common African world-view in a spiritual universe and the spiritual powers which inhabit it. However, within this common African world-view, God is a universal feature, whilst Jesus is not part of the traditional African belief system. Hood (1990:145) argues that “theologically the Afro traditionalists affirm the supreme god as one who reigns over a cosmos that includes not only humankind, but also spirits, divinities, ancestors, and other forces in animate and inanimate beings”, but that “it is not the Christian God who causes problems for Afro cultures; it is the Christian Christ”. As a result of Jesus Christ’s newness within the traditional African world-view, many African Christians seem to be unaware of how Christ relates to them, as well as how he can save them from their terrors and fears of spiritual powers.

#### **2.3.2.1. The intensification of Christ's foreignness in African Christianity due to the early Western missionaries' era of Christianity in Africa**

Banda (2005:5) affirms that the newness and foreignness of Christ in African religiosity is further connected to “the fact that Jesus Christ was not part of African religiosity until the arrival of Western missionaries”. The general understanding in scholarship is that early Western missionaries imposed their presupposedly superior world-view upon African people “mainly at a presuppositional level” (Hutchison, 1982:174, as cited in Bosch, 1993:292). Most missionaries were believed to have presented Jesus Christ in Africa in a way which depicted Christ as a Westerner (Taylor, 1963:16; Ezigbo, 2008:2-17; Waliggo, 1998:111). Therefore, they depicted Christ as only capable of addressing that world-view (Taylor, 1963:16; Ezigbo, 2008:2- 17; Waliggo, 1998:111-112).

In this respect, some missionaries were concerned with the promotion of Western culture (Setiloane, 1976:89; Aguwa, 2007:127-128), and were convinced that their cultural beliefs were superior to traditional African beliefs. Interestingly, the Western missionaries' mindset was so dominant that any cultural differences between Western missionaries and any particular group of Africans "would have been mere evidence of how depraved and uncivilized the lower (African) races were" (Setiloane, 1976:89). The early Western missionaries presented Christ as a Westerner, primarily concerned with the existential challenges of the Western world-view. There is a shared understanding among African theologians that most early Western missionaries were dismissive of traditional African beliefs in invisible forces, which had real negative impact on African lives (Adewuya, 2012:253-254; Ezigbo, 2008:2-18; Aho Ekue, 2005:102; Ishola, 2002:44-60). These missionaries regarding such beliefs as merely superstitious or irrational beliefs that could be addressed by a process of civilisation (Imasogie, 1983:46-53; Ezigbo, 2008:2-17; Ncozana, 2002:147; Haar, 2009:45).

However, in addition to the superiority complex of Western missionaries, scholars argue that some Western missionaries were influenced by the 18th century Enlightenment (Bosch, 1993: 263-266; Kalu, 2007:7; Shaw, 1996:129; Salala, 1998:137; Imasogie, 1983:51). Bosch (1993:262) argues that both the Protestant and Catholic missionaries of the eighteenth century were "in one way or another, profoundly influenced by the Enlightenment". This influence was rooted in two of the Enlightenment's philosophical principles (Bosch, 1993:263). The first principle was that human reason or the mind was considered the basis of knowledge (Bosch, 1993:264). This new method in perceiving reality advocated a breaking away from the "norms of traditions or presuppositions" (Bosch, 1993:264). The second principle was Bacon's 'empirical approach', which posited nature as the physical object for inquiry by humanity, instead of its apprehension as God's creation (Bosch, 1993:264). In this way, people's direct experience (sensory experience) determines the validity of their traditional beliefs or assumptions (Bosch, 1993:264-267). These philosophical principles influenced the ways in which some early Western missionaries viewed reality.

Bosch (1993:267) acknowledges Mesthene in arguing that, owing to the Age of Enlightenment "the demonic, external power of nature was at last surrendering to human planning and reasoning, thus, enabling humans to remake the world in their own image and according to their own design". Thus, they dismissed traditional African beliefs as unscientific, superstitious or irrational (Imasogie, 1983:46-53; Ncozana, 2002:147; Haar, 2009:45; Adewuya, 2012:253-254; Salala, 1998:137). In doing so, some Western missionaries are believed to have attempted to

ground Africans in their own quasi- scientific world-view which stated that “the knowledge of God is exclusively based on sensory experience” (Oladipo, 2010:42-43, who based his understanding on Imasogie’s work). As Bosch (1993:291) points out, “the scientific and technological advances [had] … put the west at an unparalleled advantage over the rest of the world”.

Eugene Casalis (1861:vi, xvii, 270-271), who arrived in Africa in 1833, is one of the early Western missionaries who dismissed traditional African beliefs as irrational, unscientific or superstitious, and which could be addressed by the process of civilisation. Similarly, David Livingstone, a British medical doctor, missionary and explorer, believed that traditional African beliefs were superstitious beliefs which could be eradicated through civilisation (Conradie, 2013:118-130). Conradie (2013:119) argues that Livingstone encouraged a “cultural value system that would facilitate education, health and law and order” as a means of eliminating traditional African beliefs in the negative influence of spiritual powers in their lives. Nevertheless, Africans’ belief in invisible forces which have a real impact on their lives is a persistent belief which has endured into the present epoch, despite some Western missionaries’ best efforts to eradicate it by dismissing it as either irrational or superstitious (Ferdinando, 1999:3; Hastings, 1976:69).

Whether the early Western missionaries dismissed the traditional African beliefs in spiritual powers unintentionally or deliberately; the truth is that these missionaries downplayed the fundamental African belief concerning the interrelationship between the physical and metaphysical worlds, despite the fact that Scripture (Ephesians 6:12) supports this concept<sup>16</sup> (Oladipo, 2010:40-43; Amanze, 2011:9-11; Ejenobo, 2009:77; Adewuya, 2012:251-258 & Imasogie, 1983:52-53). In this case, instead of rejecting the Africans’ belief in invisible powers; the missionaries should have accepted the existence of the invisible powers on the basis of Scripture (and affirmed Africans’ perception of them). They then should have analysed and evaluated the African conception of them (spiritual powers) against the backdrop of Scripture and outline its inconsistency. Kunhiyop (2012:53) correctly points out that the traditional African

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<sup>16</sup> The apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:12 posits the actual existence of the spiritual forces and its impact on humanity. Here, Paul argues that, the ‘Ephesian world-view’ of spiritual powers was similar to the ‘biblical world-view’; hence his (Paul) message has a real impact on his contemporary audience (Amanze, 2011:9-11; Adewuya, 2012:251-258 & Imasogie, 1983:52). In this way, Paul states that the struggle of believers is not against the flesh or blood; instead, it is against the powers of darkness and the spiritual forces of evil. Nevertheless, irrespective of this reality, some missionaries preached Ephesians 6:12 to Africans, yet disconnected this verse’s real impact from Paul’s contemporary audience (the Ephesian believers), as well as the African Christians (current audience) (Imasogie, 1983:52).

religion superficially correlates with the biblical concept of God as the sole creator of everything, including the spiritual powers, which occupy the invisible world. These spiritual powers have either a ‘positive or negative impact’ in all dimensions of African peoples’ lives (Kunhiyop, 2012:53). Therefore, traditional African world-view seemingly correlates with the biblical world-view concerning some antithetical categories of spiritual powers as either good or evil in their nature (Kunhiyop, 2012:53). Thus, one should acknowledge the existence of the spirit world, since the spiritual powers exist from a scriptural perspective, and they are scripturally categorised.

Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean all early Western missionaries were dismissive of the traditional African world-view<sup>17</sup>. For instance, one of the early Western missionaries, Dr Walter Angus Elmslie of the Livingstonia Mission (Hastings, 1994:315), understood the centrality of Africans’ belief in the power of witchcraft, which seems to cause many Africans to live in fear (Elmslie, 1899:59-60). Although Elmslie does not show us how he provided a Christian redemptive response to the spiritual insecurity of African Christians, it is apparent that he took it seriously. Elmslie (1899:59-60) concludes that:

...the belief in witchcraft is the most powerful of all the forces at work among the tribes, a slavery where the Africans had found no release. It pervades and influences every human relationship and acts as a complete barrier to all advancement wherever it is found to operate.

Likewise, Elphick posits Johannes Theodorus Van Der Kemp (a Protestant missionary, who ministered among the Xhosa people in 1799-1811, and is currently regarded as the founder of Xhosa Christianity) as one of the Western missionaries who identified that Christ’s salvation was a “highly egalitarian message in the spiritual realm...” (Elphick, 2012:25). However, Elphick does not provide his readers with how Van Der Kemp related Christ’s salvation to the spiritual insecurity of African Christians.

Nonetheless, in most cases, Western missionaries’ “cultural superiority informed their approach, with a conflation between Christianity and European culture shaping their vision” (Chitando, 2005:184). In doing so, they depicted Christ as a Westerner and a saviour with a Western world-view, making Christ irrelevant to addressing the spiritual insecurity of African Christians. The result is that “many Africans perceive Jesus as both a foreign and new idea”, specifically with his “initial emergence and association with white settlers” (Banda, 2005:5). Given this, Taylor (1963:16) concludes:

Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would ask, the solution to the needs that Western man would feel, the Saviour of the world of the European world-view.

African Christians' perception of Christ as a Western Saviour is a significant incarnational Christological challenge, undermining the universally salvific nature of the incarnation of Christ. Indeed, the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity has resulted in his perceived inability "... to identify, understand and solve the African person's innermost problems" (Banda, 2005:6).

Crucially, once Christ is depicted as foreign, it is apparent that Christ will be viewed as unable to offer holistic salvation to African Christians (Mbiti, 1986:158; Ahu Ekue, 2005:104). Christ's holistic salvation should encompass both physical and spiritual salvation, instead of limiting Christ's salvation in relation to sin or the soul, as some early Western missionaries did (Ahu Ekue, 2005:104; Mbiti, 1986:158-159). Western missionaries' failure to preach salvation beyond the soul was due to their particular world-view which influenced their interpretation of the existence of good (Ahu Ekue, 2005:104). Thus, African Christians revert to traditional African religion to find assurance of security from the dangers and threats which emanate from their traditional beliefs in invisible forces (Mbiti, 1986:158). African Christians have great difficulty in trusting in Christ insofar as his inability to secure them from their terrors and fears stemming from the invisible forces is concerned because:

Mystical realities belong to the traditional African world-view. It would be clearly fitting that biblical salvation should penetrate into the world of mystical realities, so that no corner of existence is out of reach of the saving works of God. Africans feel that there are mystical enemies of life, and people have to be protected and saved from these enemies (Mbiti, 1986:172).

### **2.3.3. A preliminary conclusion to the incarnational Christological challenge of the foreignness of Christ**

Given the preceding discussion, an important concern is about how African Christians can experience spiritual security from Christ if they consider him to be a foreigner. It is essential for Christ's incarnation to be delineated in order to 'deforeignise' and Africanise Christ, so that African Christians can understand that in the *hypostatic* union of the Divine Logos (the Son of God) and man in the incarnation, all human beings (including Africans) are confronted with the meaning of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. That is, God acted within the depths of Himself and human existence to save African Christians from sin and all its consequences, including death and spiritual forces. Otherwise, without dispelling the foreignness of Christ by delineating the nature and extent of Christ's incarnation, African Christians will not understand how Christ identifies with them, and addresses their spiritual insecurity. As a result, African believers will continue to reflect:

...a religious syncretism that is suitable to their social requirements, going to church on Sundays, but consulting the traditional religious priests during the weekdays. Perhaps this is one of the reasons

why in theological circles in the African continent, there is a cry for a contextualization of the Christian's faith within the African society (Ejenobo, 2009:77-78).

## **2.4. Conclusion**

The discussion above brings one to the conclusion that many African people are living in spiritual insecurity, derived from their fundamental traditional belief in the interrelationship between the physical and metaphysical worlds. This spiritual insecurity persists among Africans who convert to Christianity. Although Africans believe in natural causes of misfortunes, every existential challenge is seen as having a metaphysical cause. Here, the traditional African "concept of reality and destiny [is] deeply rooted in the spirit world, for the activities and actions of spirit beings are believed to govern social and spiritual phenomena" (Turaki, 2006:26).

Africans need a Saviour who addresses their terrors and fears which emanate from beliefs in spiritual powers. As a result of the perceived foreignness of Christ, many African Christians struggle to see how the Jesus of the Church's preaching identifies with them and saves them from their innermost spiritual insecurity. Hence, the spiritual insecurity of African Christians requires one to *deforeignise* and *Africanise* Jesus Christ by providing a deeper explanation of the nature and extent of Christ's incarnation "to the extent that the African Christians will rely on Him [Christ] as their only solution to their African dilemmas" (Banda, 2005:7).

## **Chapter III:**

### **The implications of Bediako's Ancestral incarnational Christology to spiritual insecurity in African Christianity**

#### **3. Introduction**

Chapter 1 established that there is a form of Christian syncretism operating in Africa: Christians are continuously employing traditional African powers to address their spiritual insecurity, which is caused by their fear of spiritual powers. Chapter 2 developed this thesis by proposing that this problem presents a challenge to the Christian model of the incarnation of a 'foreign Christ'. This foreignness of Christ is perceived by the traditional African world-view, which requires a mediatory blood-related ancestor to the earthly community, family or clan as a means of addressing this problem. Furthermore, the foreignness of Christ was perpetuated by the early

missionary era of Christianity that depicted Christ from a mainly Western perspective. In light of the above-mentioned setting, chapter 3 seeks to critically analyse and evaluate Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological concept in the light of its attempt to *deforeignise* and *Africanise* Jesus Christ. This will be done by engaging directly with Bediako's own work, as well as some secondary literature. The *deforeignisation* and *Africanisation* of Christ in Bediako's theology is considered in order to explore how Bediako attempts to fully identify Christ with African Christians (or appropriate Christ for African Christians); that is making Christ's redemption relevant and sufficient in addressing the spiritual insecurities of African Christians.

To achieve this objective, this chapter will move from Bediako's broad theological interests to discuss his ancestral incarnational Christological construct. The first section will provide a brief biography of Bediako and his theological interests, such as the de-construction of Christianity as a Western Religion, Bediako's hermeneutic of identity (mother tongue hermeneutical concept), together with his interface between pre-Christian religion and Christianity. Related to our study of Bediako concerning the interface between pre-Christian tradition and Christianity, there are three possible theological models or positions which can be adopted. These theological models are pluralism, exclusivism and inclusivism<sup>17</sup>. Here, we will briefly present all these possible outlooks in order to see where Bediako fits. In doing this, we will seek to propose a solution to this matter in light of the broader perspective of Scripture. This first section will also argue that within the broader theological interests of Bediako lies his ancestral incarnational Christological concept.

The second section will suggest that although Bediako (2004:24-25) does not use the term "ancestral incarnational Christology" directly, his theology of the *deforeignisation* and *Africanisation* of Christ, nevertheless, reflects an incarnational Christological perspective. That is, although he does not use the word "incarnation" in his title of ancestral Christology, the concept of incarnation is primal in his employment of the aforementioned concept. This section will then discuss Bediako's attempt to deforeignise and Africanise Christ in African Christianity by his use of the incarnate uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ, the connection between the doctrines of creation and redemption and the appropriation of the promises of the patriarchs of Israel (especially the Abrahamic linkage) by African believers through faith in Jesus Christ. The

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<sup>17</sup> Ferdinando (2007:124) and Kärkkäinen (2003:17-29) categorise these positions in a threefold manner as pluralism, exclusivism and inclusivism. An examination of these positions will help us to identify whether Bediako's perception of the interface between pre-Christian tradition and Christianity is informed by the broader scope of Scripture; or whether he chooses some specific texts to foster his own agenda.

third section will then proceed to outline Bediako's understanding of the implications of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension in relation to the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration. Here, Bediako's view concerning the significance of the sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ (as guaranteeing the Lordship of Christ in the invisible world which is inhabited by multiple spiritual powers) will also be considered. Likewise, his ancestral incarnational Christological concept will be viewed as further embedded within his eschatology.

The fourth section will provide a brief critical appraisal of Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological concept in the African context. This critical appraisal will examine the credibility of Bediako's employment of ancestral incarnational Christology in his attempt to deforeignise and Africanise Christ; and therefore depict the challenges associated with his application of the ancestral category to Christ. Also, in this section, a prospective *Adamic incarnational Christological model* which draws from both Bediako and Torrance's positive concepts of Christ's incarnation will be proposed for the forthcoming chapter 5. That is, through discussing and appropriating Bediako and Torrance's incarnational Christological models of Christ's incarnation, this section will propose an Adamic incarnational Christological model as a root metaphor, which views Christ as the new Adam, who truly identifies himself with African Christians (cf. Romans 5). Unlike the ancestral incarnational Christological model, this prospective framework will seek to enhance African Christians' understanding of Christ's full solidarity with them without compromising the gospel or reducing the validity of African contextual needs. At this juncture, this model will merely be introduced, but it will receive a comprehensive handling in chapter 5. In doing this, this prospective model will further keep in line with the main purpose of the research; that is, through the mystery of the incarnation, Christ fully identifies himself with African Christians in their innermost spiritual insecurity. The chapter will then conclude by pulling some central discussions to the forefront.

### **3.1. Bediako's biography and his broad theological interests**

#### **3.1.1. Bediako's Biography**

Kwame Bediako was one of the most influential African theologians and pastors of the late 20th century (Omenyo, 2008:388; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:5). His death in 2008, at the age of 63 years, was a huge loss for the church in Africa and beyond (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:6). Bediako's basic education and his Bachelor of Arts degree were obtained in Ghana (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:11; Omenyo, 2008:387). In the late 1960s, Bediako moved abroad, to the University of Bordeaux to embark on his Masters and Doctoral degrees in French, with particular focus on French African Literature (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:11; Omenyo, 2008:387). Significantly, while in France Bediako underwent a spectacular conversion experience.

Omenyo (2008:387) says that Bediako “had a dramatic experience with Christ which saw him being converted from atheism to a fervent Christian life”.

After his conversion, Bediako concluded that all academic pursuits which were not rooted in Christ were pointless (Omenyo, 2008:387). Asamoah-Gyadu (2009:11) states that Bediako’s conversion enabled him to understand the central tenet that “Christ is the Truth, the integrating principle of life as well as the key to true intellectual coherence, for himself and for the whole world.” Soon after his dramatic conversational experience, Bediako commenced his formal studies in theology at the London School of Theology from 1973 to 1976 (Omenyo, 2008:387). He was ordained in 1978 in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (Omenyo, 2008:387). Soon afterwards Bediako left for Aberdeen University in Scotland to complete his doctoral studies in theology under the supervision of Professor Andrew Walls (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:5; Omenyo, 2008:388). After his return to Ghana, he founded and led the Akrofi-Christaller organisation for Mission and Applied Theology<sup>19</sup> (Walls, 2008:188; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:10).

Bediako wrote many highly rated academic works, and worked at various universities as a visiting lecturer, as well as obtaining various qualifications and appointments at local and international institutions. To mention a few, Bediako was a visiting lecturer at Edinburgh University in Scotland, teaching African Theology (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:9; Omenyo, 2008:388). He was granted an honorary professorship at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, as well as an appointment to the fellowship of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1995, as an acknowledgement of his accomplishment in the domain of academic scholarship (Omenyo, 2008:388). Omenyo (2008:388) concludes that “Bediako was a widely travelled man, whose expertise was sought by reputable organizations and institutions, both locally and internationally.... He brought his high quality work and knowledge to bear on international networks, agencies and institutions.”

### **3.1.2. Bediako's broad theological interests**

#### **3.1.2.1. The deconstruction of Christianity as a Western Religion**

Bediako was interested in the question of theology and identity in African Christianity, as evidenced in his quest to develop African Christianity by initially de-constructing<sup>18</sup> Christianity

<sup>18</sup> Here we are using the word “deconstruction” to indicate Bediako's enterprise in clarifying to African Christians that Christianity is a non-Western religion.

in Africa as a Western religion. Bediako's endeavour to de-construct some African Christians' conceptualisation of Christianity as a Western religion emanates from his "reading about the encounter of Western Christianity with African cultures" (Wagenaar, 1999:365). Here, "many questions rise to the surface", particularly about the negative attitudes of the Western missionaries "to the indigenous cultures and traditional religions" of African people (Wagenaar, 1999:365). In agreement with Stinton (2004:25-36), Bediako (1999:226-228) argues that most early Western missionaries' negative attitudes towards indigenous beliefs and cultural practices were so widespread that they were determined to destroy traditional African world-views and cultural practices by conflating the Gospel and Western culture, and then imposing them upon African people.

Bediako (1999:230; 1992:227-228) argues that many early Western missionaries considered traditional African culture and the African world-view both inferior and invalid compared to a Western 'civilised' world-view. African Christians were expected to accept both Christianity and so-called civilised Western thought<sup>19</sup> in order for them to be authentic Christians (Bediako, 1999:230-240), i.e. Africans were expected to become like the Christian religious authorities [missionaries] in their cultural beliefs and practices (Bediako, 1999:234-240). Bediako is dissatisfied primarily "with the perspective from which the Christian enterprise" was undertaken by the early Western missionaries seeking to destroy the traditional heritage of African Christians by replacing it with their Western heritage (Bediako, 1999:235). In this way, most early missionaries created an undesirable situation in which "many African Christians will continue to be men and women living in two levels, half African and half European, but never belonging properly to either" (Bediako 2004:23).

Because of this, Bediako saw the need for God to meet, and speak and reveal himself to African Christians "in their particular circumstances" in a manner that reveals they are assured that they are "authentic Africans and true Christians"<sup>20</sup> (Bediako, 2004:23). Bediako's (1999:245) main theological interest was to decolonise or de-construct Christianity as a Western religion on the basis of Christ's universality. Because of the universality of Christ, "Christianity is fundamentally universal and so beyond any language, tribe or nation" (Wagenaar, 1999:365-

<sup>19</sup> See chapter 3 for a detailed explanation of the early Western missionary's negative perception of African traditional beliefs and cultural practices.

<sup>20</sup> In this respect, one can ask if this is only needful for African Christians or must the West also be encouraged to return to the basics. However, we can only suggest that there are possibly various theological opinions about this reasoning.

366). Bediako took it upon himself to clarify that “Christianity and European civilization are not identical”, as well as “to prove that Christianity is a non-Western religion” (Wagenaar, 1999:366).

### **3.1.2.2. The hermeneutic of identity or the mother-tongue hermeneutic**

Following on Bediako’s seeking to decolonise Christianity in Africa, he points out that the “era of African theological literature as reaction to Western misrepresentation is past” (Bediako, 1994:17). Bediako (1994:17) suggests that “what lies ahead is a critical theological construction which will relate more fully the widespread African confidence in the Christian faith to the actual and ongoing Christian responses to the life experience of Africans”. In doing this, Bediako stresses in his theological framework that the Church in Africa should “possess a viable heritage of Christian tradition in its indigenous language” through the translatability of the Gospel into various traditional African cultures (Bediako, 1995:61). For Bediako (1995:109), “translatability is also another way of saying universality” and “the translatability of the Christian religion signifies its fundamental relevance and accessibility to persons in any culture within which the Christian faith is transmitted and assimilated”. Bediako does not employ the universality of the Gospel to produce a pre-Christian “cosmic” Christ in traditional African religion; instead he uses universality to argue that all people should possess the Scripture in their indigenous languages. Bediako’s approach to African theology is known as the “hermeneutic of identity” or “mother tongue” hermeneutic (Olsen, 1997:258).

Bediako is conscious of the dangers associated with his hermeneutic of identity approach. In his view, African theology does not seek to indigenise Christianity or theology as such; instead it attempts to confront culturally relevant issues, such as the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity,<sup>21</sup> with the gospel (Olsen, 1997:258). Here, Bediako is advocating that African Christians can have an adequate understanding of the gospel through its application within traditional African categories or thoughts, such as the ancestral category (Kalu, 2007:6-7; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:16; & Aho Ekue<sup>22</sup>, 2005:105). That is, “through reading, hearing, and interpreting the Scriptures in African mother-tongues and therefore in dynamic relation to indigenous categories of thought and to the psychological and spiritual realities at work in them”

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed discussion concerning the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity, see chapter 2, section 2.3; 2.31, 2.3.2 & 2.3.2.1.

<sup>22</sup> Aho Ekue (2005:105) argues that “there are those African theologians who are influenced by debate and culture, who stress the necessity of the translation of the gospel into the realities of the people. Here Bediako seems to be one of them.”

(Balcomb, 1998:12), African Christians will reflect a deeper understanding of the saving work of Christ.

### **3.1.2.3. The interface between primal religion and Christianity**

Bediako (1995:82-83; 1999:244-245) understands traditional African religion as follows: “African traditional religion has been a serious preparation for the gospel in Africa and forms [a] major religious substratum for the idiomatic and existential experience of Christianity in African life” (Bediako, 1995:82-83). However, he is not the first African theologian to wrestle with this matter as he acknowledges and supports his predecessors, namely, John Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu<sup>23</sup> (Bediako, 1999:267-334). These theologians are in concurrence with the understanding that monotheism, being a belief shared by both traditional African religions and Christianity, establishes the authenticity of traditional African religion as a preparation for Christianity (Bediako, 2000:21), i.e. the God of Christianity (who was proclaimed by the early Western missionaries) is the same God who has been worshipped in traditional African religion (Bediako, 2000:21). In his discontent with some early Western missionaries’ presentation of the gospel in Africa, Bediako (2000:21) argues that:

...for many years African theologians have refused to accept the negative view of African religion held by western missionaries and have shown consistently the continuity of God from the pre-Christian past into the Christian present.

Bediako agrees with his predecessors, Idowu and Mbiti, in arguing for both continuity and discontinuity between traditional African religion and Christianity but unfortunately does not qualify the nature of such continuity or discontinuity (Bediako, 2000:21).

In recognising monotheism as a point of continuity between traditional African religion and Christianity, Bediako (1999:245) argues that the New Testament provides a solution to the issue of the interface between Christianity and pre-Christian traditions, on the basis of the universality of Christ (his central theological tenet). Based on Paul’s speech at Athens (Acts 17:22-31), he argues that:

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<sup>23</sup> Bujo (1992:81) and Nyamiti (2006:16) are two of the African theologians who argue that African traditional religion was the forerunner of the gospel for Africans. They both understand that the African traditional ancestors were the forerunners of Christ. In Bujo’s view (1992:81), this implies that Jesus Christ is “the ultimate embodiment of all the virtues of the ancestors, the realisation of the salvation for which they yearned.” Likewise, Nyamiti (2006:16) argues that the “ideal and fulfilment of African views on ancestorship kinship and its values are found in Christ.” This understanding of the interface between Christianity and African traditional religion is a unique approach in African theology, which came about because Westerners challenged African worldviews.

It can rightly be said therefore that the apostle who grasped most firmly the significance of Christ for the entire universe, and who strenuously preached Jesus to Jews as the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament, proclaimed with equal conviction that Jesus was to Gentiles also the fulfiller of their deepest religious and spiritual aspirations (Bediako, 1999:245).

In using this biblical passage, Bediako contends that Christ is the fulfilment of the religious aspirations in traditional African religion; since God's general revelation is within pre-Christian religions and is a preparation for the gospel. In this way, Christian conversion for Bediako (2000:21) is not an introduction "... to a new God unrelated to the traditions of our past, but to One who brings to fulfilment all the highest religious and cultural aspirations of our heritage".

It is uncertain whether Bediako is crediting salvation to non-Christian religions, since he also draws a robust parallel between African Christianity and Hellenistic Christianity from the second century (Bediako, 1999:441). In his own words, Bediako (1999:441) agrees with Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria's position by concluding that the "Hellenistic Christianity in the second century and the emergent theological self-consciousness of African Christianity in the twentieth century, belong to one and the same story". This is questionable because in Kärkkäinen's (2003:56-62) historical discussion of the interface between Christianity and non-Christian religions, Justin and Clement's<sup>24</sup> position has the risk of crediting salvation to non-Christian religions. However, based on this evidence, one cannot be justified in concluding that Bediako attributes salvation to non-Christian religions. This is because Bediako is clear that there is no salvation in pre-Christian religions (salvation is only in Christ); since pre-Christian religions only serve as preparation for Christ to its adherents.

However, Bediako's perception of African traditional religion as a preparation for the gospel is problematic, prompting critical analysis of the possible scholarly positions about the interface between non-Christian religions and Christianity. Race (1983:7), Ferdinando (2007:124), Okholm and Phillips (1995:7-26) and Kärkkäinen (2003:17-29) categorised these positions in

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<sup>24</sup> For a detailed understanding of Justin and Clement's position concerning the interface between Christianity and pre-Christian religions, one should visit Kärkkäinen's (2003:57-62) study of biblical, historical and contemporary perspectives. Kärkkäinen's (2003:57-62) observes that both Clement and Justin perceive a compatibility between Greek philosophy and the Gospel. They argue that, out of God's common grace, human philosophy serves as a vehicle of salvation, as well as the means of achieving salvation in itself (Kärkkäinen, 2003:57-62). That is, based on the belief that all profitable things come from God, Clement and Justin believe that pagan philosophy was given to the Greeks as a stepping stone to the full knowledge of God, if it is used properly (Kärkkäinen, 2003:62). In this way, both Clement and Justin argued for the possibility of the existence of Christians in non-Christian religions. However, Clement and Justin's understanding seems to lack biblical warrant even though they may claim to have it.

a threefold manner: pluralism, exclusivism and inclusivism. These aforesaid positions will be discussed in the following sections, with the purpose of identifying the category which best fits Bediako's position. The question of whether Bediako's perception of the interface between pre-Christian tradition and Christianity is informed by the broader scope of Scripture will also be examined

### **3.1.2.3.1. Is Bediako a pluralist?**

Race (1983: viii) and Hick (1987:33-34 & 1993:140-147) are two of the adherents' of the pluralist position. In Ferdinando (2007:124), Race (1983:72-73), Sinnott (2005:309) and Hick's (1987:33) understanding, pluralism is the claim that all religions lead to equal salvation in diverse ways. This is why Hick (1987:33) (who is an advocate of pluralism) further explains that pluralism "is not a radical departure from the diverse and ever-growing Christian tradition." Instead, it is a "further development in ways suggested by the discovery of God's presence and saving activity within other streams of human life" (Hick, 1987:33). This is because, pluralists contend that the cosmic Christ (Colossians 1:17), who is the saviour of all men (1 Timothy 4:10) is perceived in his approaching death as a source of blessing for many people (Mark 10:45) (Hick, 1987:33). In establishing this, the question of salvation to the unevangelised people or those who lived before the incarnation of Christ (either Jews or Gentiles) is not an issue, since every religion is capable of attaining salvation for its adherents'.

Christianity claims to be the only true means of salvation, because of the uniqueness of the incarnation of Christ, the eternal Son of God (Barth, 1956:346 & Race, 1983:7). For this reason, Hick (1993:ix) de-constructed the Orthodox Christian doctrine of Christ's incarnation. In order to parallel Christianity with non-Christian religions, Hick (1993:ix) argues that the incarnation of the Divine Logos should be understood in a metaphorical sense. That is, "Jesus embodied, the ideal of a human life lived in faithful response to God...and he accordingly embodied a love which is a human reflection of the divine love" (Hick, 1987:21). In this way, Hick denies Jesus' claim (in John 10:30 & John 14:9) to be in one being with the Father (Hick, 1995:53). He argues that these words were put in Jesus' mouth sixty or seventy years after Jesus' death by the Scriptural authors, who expressed their ideas which were developed during the expansion of the early Church (Hick:1995:53). However, Hick's serious weakness is his presumptuous claim to know Jesus better than the disciples, who knew him directly.

Pluralism seems to be a modern<sup>25</sup> or post-modern endeavour, which succumbs to what is acceptable in multicultural society at the expense of the Biblical truth of salvation (McGrath, 1995:151). In doing this, pluralists credit salvation to non-Christian religions at the expense of the fundamental truth that Christianity is the only religion, which offers authentic restoration of man's eternal fellowship with God, based on Christ's life, death and resurrection (John 14:6 & Acts 4:12). We agree with Demarest (1991:152) that "other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God but to judgement, for Christ is the only way". In this way, "religious plurality is a global manifestation of sinful humanity's flawed responses to general revelation and that the dogma of religious pluralism is false" (1991:152). However, because Bediako understands pre-Christian religion as a preparation for Christ, he does not fit with the pluralism category.

### **3.1.2.3.2. Is Bediako an Exclusivist?**

Exclusivism is a position which maintains that salvation or truth "is found only through an explicit knowledge and confession of Christ" (Ferdinando, 2007:124). Even though there are three distinct forms of exclusivism<sup>26</sup>, Morgan (2008:39) argues that all exclusivists are concerned with the means which God uses in bringing people to the saving knowledge of Christ. Some evangelical adherents of this position are Demarest (1991:135-152), Morgan (2008:79-39); Ferdinando (2007:124-135), Barth (1956:309), Calvin (1960:42-68), Strange (2008:72), Edgar (2008:93-95) and Schnabel (2008:99, 121). Peterson (2008:193) argues that all exclusivists refuse the sufficiency of general revelation in bringing people to the saving faith by employing Romans 1:18-23. They argue that in Pauline theology, general revelation is only capable of securing condemnation for both Jews and Gentiles (Peterson, 2008:192). In this way, the purpose statement for the epistle of Romans (1:16-17) warrants the exclusivists' view that salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is solely grounded in their faith in Jesus Christ (Peterson, 2008:192). In sustaining this, Strange (2008:61-62) argues that all exclusivists agree that "the universality and depth of sin is pervasive throughout this section of the letter and both Romans 1:18 begins and Romans 3:20" ends with sin. Therefore, exclusivists do not perceive non-Christian religions as a preparation for

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<sup>25</sup> Race (1983:71) argues that pluralism "does not exist in Christian history, rather it started existed in the modern period."

<sup>26</sup> Morgan (2008:39) highlighted three identical forms of exclusivism, namely "church exclusivism, gospel exclusivism and special revelation exclusivism." These exclusivism sub-categories are arguing that salvation is only found in Christ, but from a different angle (Morgan, 2008:39). Church exclusivists contend that there is no salvation outside of the church; gospel exclusivists present that there is no salvation without hearing the gospel; and the special revelation exclusivists sustain that there is no salvation apart from God's special revelation in Christ (Morgan, 2008:39).

the gospel, since “general revelation is insufficient for salvation both in terms of its mediation and its message” (Strange, 2008:72).

In view of Paul's speech at Athens (Acts 17:18-31), exclusivists disagree with Bediako's “notion of the universal nature and activity of Christ among the heathen” (Ferdinando, 2007:125. For example, Ferdinando (2007:124-125), Demarest (1991:139) and Gempf (1993:53) argue that there is none of the continuity or fulfilment which Bediako sees between the Athenian god and the God of Christianity which Paul was preaching to the Athenians. Here, Paul quoted from pagan literature and philosophy in order to demonstrate the mistakes or inconsistencies intrinsic within the Athenians' pagan belief system about God. Therefore, Paul is correcting the Athenians misconception about God in view of God's self-revelation in Christ. In this way, all exclusivists perceive non-Christian religions as a non-preparation for the gospel, since they have nothing to do with Christianity. Demarest (1991:139) summarises the exclusivist position in light of Acts 17 (v. 18, 23), as follows: “the Athenians were caught in huge confusion and error, hence Paul declared against their distorted truth by declaring the personal, wise and sovereign God of heaven and his saving action in the resurrected Jesus Christ.” Schnabel (2008:113) expands Demarest's summary in his prolonged argument that Paul's speech at Athens contradicts the Athenians' belief system. Schnabel (2008:113) puts it this way:

Paul here does not regard the Athenians' various systems of faith and worship as less or more identical with or at least similar to, the Christians' convictions concerning God, the world, humankind, history, and salvation. He does not argue for essential continuity between the revelation of the God whom he proclaims and the convictions of pagan poets and philosophers. Instead, he disputes the Athenians' understanding of the divine.

In this way, the exclusivists are correct in disagreeing with Bediako's appropriation of Acts 17 as affirming continuity between the God of traditional African religion and Christianity (Gempf, 1993:51-53). Nonetheless, it is important not to deny that Paul at Athens is using some points of contact to communicate the gospel to his audiences. The doctrine of general revelation from a broader scriptural perspective implies understanding that general revelation provoked to the heathens a sense of the existence of the creator God (Psalms 92). Thus, when Paul quotes from the Athenians' pagan philosophy (Epicurean and Stoic philosophy) and literature (Aretas), he uses its distorted belief system about God in order to create a conversation, as a means to rectify the Athenians by pointing them to the actual God, who revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ (Acts 17:16-34). Affirming this view means neither inclining towards Bediako's understanding of traditional African religion as a preparation for the gospel, nor claiming that Paul proclaimed the identical God, whom the Athenian non-Christians were

already worshipping improperly.

### **3.1.2.3.3. Is Bediako an inclusivist?**

Inclusivism is difficult to define, since it encompasses a “broad spectrum of opinions” (Pinnock, 1995:98). There are two major sub-categories of the inclusivist position. Sennett (2005:309-318) and Rahner (1966:119) are two major scholars within the inclusivist category. All these theologians are pre-occupied with the question of whether God can use non-Christian religions or general revelation to bring people to salvation (Morgan, 2008:38). Adherents of the first sub-category of inclusivism (including the Second Vatican Council) are more cautious about the depth of sin, since they do not view non-Christian religions as a vehicle for Christ’s salvation, i.e. owing to the problem of sin, they see all non-Christian religions as bound to falsehood or wickedness (Pinnock, 1995:99). Such thinkers perceive God’s general revelation within non-Christian religions as only capable of giving its adherents’ a perception of God’s existence, which neither amounts to their salvation nor to their preparation for the gospel (Pinnock, 1995:99). The more cautious inclusivists have a positive view of general revelation, but maintains that salvation or truth is solely found in people’s definitive confession of Jesus Christ. One can argue that there is no clear distinction between more cautious inclusivism and exclusivism.

Furthermore, Rahner (1966:119) and Sennett (2005:313-314) represent less cautious inclusivism, which holds a more positive perception of non-Christian religions. Nevertheless, Rahner and Sennett’s less cautious inclusivism has some internal distinctions. On the one hand, Sennett (2005:313-314) establishes a bare bones inclusivism through his philosophical interpretation of Romans 1:20, which takes a different shape from Rahner’s inclusivism. Sennett’s bare bones inclusivism argues that God’s condemnation of non-Christians based on general revelation (in Romans 1:20) can only be justified in one way, that is, if non-Christians have the capacity to respond negatively or positively to general revelation (Sennett, 2005:314- 316). Hence God is not justified in condemning non-Christians on the basis of general revelation, since he predisposes them (non-Christians) to the incapability of responding appropriately to it (general revelation) (Sennett, 2005:314-316). Sennett (2005:313) contends that it is coherent to philosophically claim that general revelation is capable of bringing salvation to non-Christians without hearing the gospel, if they respond appropriately to it (general revelation). The opposite is true in that general revelation also brings condemnation if non-Christians respond inappropriately to it (Sennett, 2005:313). In doing this, Sennett (2005:314) opens up a possibility of salvation to the unevangelised, including those who lived before the incarnation of Christ.

Nevertheless, Sennett's philosophical interpretation of Romans 1:20 is problematic (Peterson, 2008:192), since he argues for the possibility of unbelievers' appropriate response to general revelation, which Paul did not mention<sup>27</sup> (Peterson, 2008:192).

Rahner (1966:119) diverges from Sennett in that he perceives God's general revelation in non-Christian religions as capable of saving them; however, this salvation is still Christ's work through various religious means. This implies that "the knowledge of God which humans can reach through the cosmos is already on their part a response to a revelation of the Logos, for creation is itself a divine manifestation" (Kärkkäinen, 2003:59). Hick (1993:148) suggests that Rahner "recognises the spiritual values of other religions and the occurrence of salvation within them and yet at the same time implicitly affirms the final superiority of his own religion over all others". In this respect, just like Sennett, Rahner opens up the possibility of having anonymous Christians among the unevangelised, including those who lived before the incarnation of Christ.

Race (1983:39) asserts that all inclusivists who hold to Rahner and Sennett's position have an optimistic view of God's operation within non-Christian religions through the interpretation of Acts 14:16-17 and Acts 17:22-31. They use Acts 14:17 to argue for the general revelation of the cosmic God in all non-Christian religions, since God did not leave humanity without a witness of himself (Race, 1983:39). The common grace and the goodness of God is evident by his provision of rain to everyone in every season (Acts, 14:17b) (Race, 1983:39). The amplification of this notion climaxed in Acts 17:22-31, in which inclusivists believe that Paul at Athens "includes the impressive spiritual life of the men of Athens in the Christian way of salvation by conferring a name on the God whom they have already worshipped but did not truly recognise" (Race 39-40). In arguing this, these inclusivists show continuity between non- Christian religions and Christianity.

<sup>27</sup> In agreement with Peterson, Romans commentators, like Schreiner (1998:86) and Moo (1996:106) contend that Paul's theology of natural revelation (in Romans) is simply that natural revelation is impossible to bring one to the saving knowledge of God. According to Schreiner (1998:82), in Pauline theology (Romans 1-2:23), both Jews and Gentiles possesses the knowledge of God from natural revelation, however, this is the same knowledge they are prone to suppress owing to their inherent Adamic fallen nature. In agreement with Schreiner (1998:86-87), in Pauline theology "the rejection of God is concurrent with the knowledge of him, with the result that it is impossible to excavate one's past and find a point in which there was saving knowledge of the true God through natural revelation." Likewise, Moo (1996:106) understands that Paul in Romans is affirming the actuality that general revelation "in and of itself, leads to a negative result. ... It is vital if we are to understand Paul's gospel and his urgency in preaching it to realize that natural revelation leads not to salvation but to the demonstration that God's condemnation is just: people are without excuse."

Given the differences within the inclusivist category, Bediako can be classified as a more cautious inclusivist. This is because he perceives non-Christian religions as preparation for the gospel, as well as recognising that non-Christian religions are incapable of attaining salvation for their followers without their definitive confession of Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, Bediako's position does not seem to acknowledge the broader perspective of Scripture, i.e. that conversion from traditional African religion (or any other non-Christian religion) to Christianity is not just a fulfilment of something which Africans have already partially experienced in their pre-Christian tradition, nor is conversion just a completion of a pre-Christian religious experience (Ferdinando, 2007:131). Indeed, such views diminish both the newness and the transformational (or the countercultural) aspect of the gospel in conjunction with the agented work of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning Christian conversion, the New Testament defines it as "an act of radical transformation" based on faith in Jesus Christ (Ferdinando, 2007:134). Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, suggests the exact meaning of conversion as he says that the Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (Ferdinando, 2007:134). Moreover, Paul set himself as a paradigm of Christian conversion in Philippians 3:7:8, as he argues that his transition into Christianity necessitated "the surrender of the heritage and piety which he once treasured" (Ferdinando, 2007:134). Once conversion to Christianity, the convert is biblically described as a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). Ephesians 2:12-13 describes the status of Christians prior to their conversion into Christianity as being without hope and without God; however, owing to their faith in Christ they are now reconciled with God (Frerdinando, 2007:134). Given this, Bediako understanding of traditional African religion as preparation for the gospel tends to detract from the biblical meaning of Christian conversion.

Furthermore, Ferdinando (2007:133) argues that Bediako's perception of traditional African religion as a preparation for the gospel has the danger of equating non-Judaist religions with Judaism. The contention against Bediako is that God solely reveals himself salvifically in Judaistic religion, i.e. Judaism is the only religion which God has historically used as a preparation for the gospel. Therefore, taking traditional African religion as a preparation for the gospel seems to be misidentifying the unique place of Israel in God's redemptive history of the world, which found its climax in the salvific incarnation of Jesus Christ. Ferdinando (2007:133) contends that Jesus himself warranted Judaism as the only religion, which holds the special promise of salvation, and which serves as preparation for the gospel, evident in Jesus' explanation to his disciples that the Old Testament is an authentic attestation "of his

coming and work" (Ferdinando, 2007:133). Paul makes similar remarks in Romans 1:2 (*cf.* Romans 11:17-25), as he maintains that the gospel of Christ which brings salvation to both Jews and Gentiles (through its fulfilment by Jesus Christ) was promised in advance by the Old Testament prophets (Ferdinando, 2007:133-134), i.e. the revelation of God in the Old Testament only prepares the Jews for the gospel, although they rejected Jesus Christ, who fulfilled their salvific prophetic promises from God (Mark 6:1-6; Matthew 13:54-58).

However, this discussion does not downplay the significance of general revelation. Instead, it repudiates Bediako's understanding that God's general revelation equals the preparation for the gospel (Ferdinando, 2007:132). In this respect, the writer holds an exclusivist position, arguing that in Pauline theology (Romans 1:18-32) general revelation grants humanity a very limited insight into the divine nature, i.e. general revelation has nothing about Jesus, since all the general revelation offered to Gentiles is sufficient solely to secure their condemnation by God (Demarest, 1991:140-142). Such an understanding fits well with the argument of Romans 1-3, namely that God's will revealed in natural revelation (Romans 1) and in the Jewish law (Romans 2) does not amount to anyone's salvation. Instead, Romans 3 presents the vital truth that all people can only be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Here, Romans 3:23 is a central verse for the entire argument of Romans 1-3, since Paul unwaveringly affirms: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". However, based on Psalm 19, this researcher also subscribes to the notion that general revelation cannot amount to anyone's salvation. Instead it "affords all people of all times and places rudimentary knowledge of God as Creator and moral law-giver" (Demarest, 1991:151).

### **3.1.2.3.4. Preliminary conclusion**

It appears possible to conclude that Bediako used the universality of Christ in attempting to establish that Christianity is not a Western religion. His endeavour to de-construct Christianity as a Western religion (or as identical with Western civilisation) arises from his reading of the negative perceptions of early missionaries regarding traditional African world-view and culture, which they saw as irrational, superstitious and unscientific. Bediako also used the universality of Christ to argue for the translatability of Scripture into various vernacular African languages. Here, Bediako appears to affirm that the gospel should be applied to various African categories or thoughts, so as to confront African culturally rooted questions with the gospel.

However, a problem has been identified in Bediako's understanding of the interface between traditional African religion and Christianity, arising from his notion that natural revelation in pre-Christian traditions prepares its adherents for the gospel. This is the preparation which found its fulfilment in the universality of Christ. However, based on Scripture, it can be argued that natural revelation does not amount to anyone's saving knowledge of God, nor does it prepares Gentiles for their salvation in Christ. Instead, natural revelation merely arouses awareness of God's existence in the heathens. Specifically, in Pauline theology, general revelation has the negative result of securing people's condemnation by God. In this case, it is important to understand that general revelation within all pre-Christian religions (with the exception of Judaism) does not prepare its adherents for the gospel. Such an understanding avoids misidentification of the unique place of Israel in God's redemptive history, and avoids diminishing the biblical meaning of conversion and the newness of the gospel. Despite these aforesaid theological challenges, Bediako should be remembered for upholding his theological "interest and passion ... in the development of African Christianity, mother-tongue hermeneutics and the interface between primal religion and Christianity" (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009:9).

### **3.2. Towards Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological concept in deforeignising Christ in African Christianity**

#### **3.2.1. Bediako's theology reflects an ancestral incarnational Christology**

Bediako (1994:99-103) relates his Christology and soteriology to the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration by grounding salvation in the redeeming incarnation of Christ. In

doing so, Bediako applies the redemptive acts of Christ to the unavoidable questions which arise from the African ancestral world-view of the Akan people in Ghana (Bediako, 1994:95- 111). Here, the major issue which Bediako deals with is the relationship between Jesus Christ of Nazareth and African people, since they do not belong to the same “clan, family, tribe and nation” (Bediako, 2004:23). Bediako initially addresses this question to confront three areas of religious meaning in Ghanaian society, namely “the practice of sacrifice, priestly mediation and ancestral function” by the redemptive work of Christ (Bediako, 1995:84; Bediako, 2004:28-32).

Bediako contextualises the doctrine of the incarnation<sup>28</sup> (hence Christology) in the African ancestral concept to dispel the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity (*cf.* Wagenaar, 1999:370 & Maluleke, 1997:20). He finds a problem not with the Western doctrine of the incarnation of Christ<sup>29</sup>; but with the failure of most early Western missionaries to apply the gospel to the world of invisible powers<sup>30</sup> (Bediako, 1995:226-240). Bediako does not bring new insight into the Western doctrine of incarnation specified in the Nicene Creed (A.D. 325) or the Chalcedonian Creed (A.D. 451). The Nicene Creed declares the one being of God the Father with the Son, whilst the Chalcedonian Creed professes that Jesus Christ is both true God and true man united in the one eternal person of the Son of God (the Second Person of the Trinity)<sup>31</sup>.

However, if Bediako’s doctrine of the incarnation does not bring any new insight, is his critique of the Western doctrine of incarnational theology justified? Bediako does not appear to criticise the Western doctrine of incarnation. He agrees with the Western doctrine of incarnation<sup>34</sup>, as he used it to ‘deforeignise’ and Africanise Christ, especially through his treatment of the doctrine of Christology under the category of ancestor. In

<sup>28</sup> We are citing the incarnation as a subsection of Christology.

<sup>29</sup> Here, we are referring to the western doctrine of incarnation in a general sense.

<sup>30</sup> For an expanded discussion concerning some early Western paternalistic mindset and scientific world-view, see chapter 2, section 3.2.1. However, one can briefly say that this presupposed paternalistic mindset and scientific world-view of the early Western missionaries caused them to dismiss the existence of the invisible forces and the negative impact they pose upon Africans (Bediako, 1995:226-240).

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed explanation of the Nicene formulation of the one being of God the Father and the Son, as well as the Chalcedonian doctrine of the unconfused true divine and true human nature in the one person of the Son of God, see Need (2008) and George (2011).

Bediako's view, the humanity which Christ assumed in the incarnation is universal, which means that Christ is the ancestor of every Christian, including African Christians. The novelty of Bediako's theology lies in its incorporation within the doctrine of Christology of the African traditional category of ancestor, as well as his application of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension to the traditional African world-view of ancestral reverence.

### **3.2.1.1. Bediako's use of the incarnate uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ to deforeignise and Africanise Christ**

In line with the creed of Chalcedon (in A.D. 451), Bediako (2004:24-33 & 1994:98-121) uses the controlling aspect of the uncompounded<sup>32</sup> divine-human nature of Christ to solve the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity. As noted previously, the traditional African ancestral world-view requires the existence of a blood-related ancestor for African Christians to be redeemed from their spiritual insecurity<sup>36</sup> (Bediako, 1994:96-99; 2004:23-25). Bediako (2000:24-25) argues for the universality of Christ by starting from his divine origin as God. Bediako's 'deforeignisation' and Africanisation of Christ commencing from Christ's divine origin does not downplay Jesus' particularity as a Jew (Bediako, 2004:24). Bediako himself puts it this way: "by insisting on the primacy of Jesus' universality, we do not reduce his incarnation and its particularity to a mere accident of history" (Bediako, 2004:24). By beginning with the divinity of Christ, Bediako's (2000:24-25) intention is to show African Christians that "... Jesus Christ is not a stranger" to them; since the divinity of Christ points African Christians to the fact that in the incarnation, God the creator came within space and time to identify himself with all humanity. Also, in Bediako's (1995:84-85) view, the divinity of Christ points to the sovereignty or supremacy of Christ over the ancestors. This is evidenced in Bediako's (1995:84-85) discussion of his ancestral Christology, in which the divinity of Christ is central to his (Christ) sovereignty over the ancestors and all other spiritual forces.

In order to 'deforeignise' and Africanise Christ by emphasising his divinity, Bediako grounds the divinity of Christ within the trinitarian concept of the one being of the Son with the Father, so as to show that Jesus Christ was truly God (Bediako, 1994:99-101 & 2004:24-25). In upholding the oneness of the Son with the Father, Bediako is in agreement with the Nicene creed of 325 AD which states that Jesus Christ is "... of one substance with the Father"

<sup>32</sup> By uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ, we are referring to the existence of the unmixed yet united natures (divine and human) in the one person of Christ.

in being (Schaff & Wace, 1991:3). Here, Bediako understands that “[e]vangelical theology is simply trinitarian theology” in nature (Nkansah-Obrempong, 2010:294). Bediako agrees with Nyamiti (1989:31) that “all truly profound theology must therefore be ultimately rooted in the Trinity – so much so that without this grounding it is bound to be radically superficial” (Nyamiti, 1989:31), because “without the Trinity, Christ himself (and hence, Christology) would lose his personality” (*Ibid*). In other words, Bediako (2004:25) understands that the being of Jesus Christ as identical to God can only be maintained by grounding his divinity in the Christian doctrine of the trinity, so as to retain Jesus Christ’s pre-existence (as truly God) in the mystery of incarnation.

In stressing the oneness of the Son with the Father, Bediako understands that for universal salvation to take place, it is necessary to preserve the unity between the doctrine of the trinity and the incarnation (Bediako, 2004:24-25). In arguing for the one existence of the Son with the Father, Bediako (2004:25; 1994:101) has in view the doctrine of universal sin, i.e. Bediako is cognisant of “the relevance and importance of a Christ who is both true God and true man” as “radically and essentially different from that of Jesus who is a mere man, however perfect a man he might be” (Nyamiti, 1989:31). Therefore, in substantiating the one being of the Son with the Father, Bediako (2004:24-25; 1994:100-101) uses John 1:18 to reinforce that it is God the Son who is of one substance with the Father, who was incarnated and became deeply involved in the condition of sinful humanity (Bediako, 2004:24). Bediako is in agreement with Bujo’s (1992:82) description that in the mystery of the incarnation, “God so truly became part of this world, part of the reality and of the history of the cosmos.” Therefore, the “meeting between God and humankind in this mystery (of incarnation) is the highest stage in the realisation of the human identity” (Bujo, 1992:82).

In further confirmation of his understanding of the uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ, Bediako (2004:41-42) outlines that it is in the mysterious act of the incarnation that Christians are confronted by the redemptive reality that “God humbled himself and identified with human kind in Christ’s birth as a human baby, born of woman, and endured the conditions of ‘normal’ human existence – in other words the incarnation is the unique sign and demonstration of divine vulnerability in history.” Once the divine-human nature of Christ is grounded in the Trinitarian concept, Bediako is ready to move to a conclusion, in which he approaches “the doctrine of Christ under the figure of ancestor” (Olsen, 1997:259). That is, the

humanity which Christ assumed in the incarnation is universal, which means Christ is the ancestor of every Christian, including African Christians (Bediako, 1994:99-118 & 2004:24-33). Here we must suggest that Bediako's viewpoint raises a problem, since it is one thing to say Christ shares our humanity, and another thing to say that he is our ancestor. In other words, one can ask Bediako the following question: does Christ's sharing in our humanity make him our ancestor? One supposes this is a problem because the Bible does not present Christ as an ancestor<sup>33</sup>, and the dangers of this approach will be discussed in section 3.4.1. Nevertheless, in spite of this potential criticism, Bediako (1994:99-100 & 2004:24) thoughtfully emphasises that in the incarnation, the Son of God became the “Saviour for all people, of all nations, and of all times.” That is to say:

... Jesus Christ, himself the image of the Father, by becoming one like us has shared our human heritage. It is within this human heritage that he finds us, and speaks to us in terms of its questions and puzzles. He challenges us to turn to him and participate in the new humanity for which he has come, died, been raised and glorified (Bediako, 1994:100 & Bediako, 2004:24).

Nevertheless, the challenge one faces in attempting to understand Bediako's use of the uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ in ‘deforeignising’ and Africanising him is that Bediako neither explores nor develops the theological meaning of the doctrine of incarnation. Rather, he assumes the validity of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation established by the councils of Nicea (in A.D. 325) and Chalcedon (in A.D. 351), and then applies this doctrine to the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration, which requires a blood-related ancestor in order to address the spiritual insecurity of Africans.. That is, Bediako does not have a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of incarnation; therefore, his incarnational theology does not demonstrate to us how the various tenets of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation are related to his endeavour of ‘deforeignising’ and Africanising Christ. Once this is granted, it is difficult for us to present Bediako's broad theological understanding of the incarnation in relationship to his ancestral incarnational christological construct

<sup>33</sup> The reason for Bediako's designation of the ancestral category on Christ is that he parallels God's revelation of himself in Jewish culture to African traditional culture. Thus, he justifies the use of a category in which God was at work revealing himself in the same way he used the priestly category of the Jews. This approach is evident in Bediako's (1995:224-225) argument that "...a theology of ancestors is about the interpretation of the past in a way which shows that the present experience and knowledge of the grace of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ have been truly anticipated and prefigured in the quests and the responses to the Transcendent in former times, as these have been reflected in the lives of African people."

### **3.2.1.2. Bediako's use of the interconnection between the doctrine of creation and redemption in deforeignising and Africanising Christ**

Having initially dispelled the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity through the uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ, Bediako (2004:25) further dispels the foreignness of Christ by depicting a close relationship between the doctrine of creation and redemption. Concerning the doctrine of creation, Bediako (2004:25) argues that the opening verses of John's Gospel (chapter 1:1-14) echo the doctrine of creation in which the divine Logos (Jesus Christ) is the creator of the universe and everything in it. This implies that Jesus Christ has been the source of life for everyone (Bediako, 2004:25). Here, Bediako (2004:25) understands the creation of the first man (Adam) to be the first revelation of God to humanity, as well as God's first covenant with human beings (Genesis 1). In doing this, Bediako (2004:25) is moving towards his crucial point that, "it was in the creation of the universe and especially of man that God first revealed his kingship to our ancestors and called them to freely obey him". In correspondence with the traditional African world-view of God as the originator or creator of everything (see Chapter 2, section 2.1.1.1.), Bediako (2004:25) now claims that the Scriptural doctrine of creation has an important implication for the traditional world-view of Africans, since Africans "are given more biblical basis for discovering more about God within the framework of the high doctrine of God as Creator and Sustainer"<sup>34</sup> of everything.

Moreover, the doctrine of sin (Genesis 3) is very important for Bediako, since this passage stresses the entrance of sin into the world, which brings forth abiding negative effects in the lives of humanity (Bediako, 2004:25). In contrasting Adam and Christ (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 15:22), Bediako (2004:25) argues that scripture clearly indicates that all human beings die in Adam, since as our first ancestor he sinned and disregarded his privilege of being under God's presence and rule (Bediako, 2004:25). Bediako agrees with Nyamiti's (2006:12) delineation that "Christ (the New Adam), the Head and Ancestor of the new humanity, is contrasted with the first Adam by being presented as comparably more beneficial to his descendants as Adam was injurious to them."

In bringing the universal fall into perspective, Bediako (2004:25) asserts that "the experience of ambiguity that comes from regarding the lesser deities and ancestral spirits as both beneficent and malevolent can only be resolved in a genuine incarnation of the Saviour from

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed discussion of African traditional religion thought about God, see the first section of chapter 2.

the realm beyond”, i.e. the incarnation is closely related to the reality that Christ is the creator and the sustainer of everything. Thus, based on his eternity (not his biological existence), Christ is warranted as the source of life for African Christians. This is in direct contrast to some African Christians’ attribution of the source of life to their traditional ancestors. In other words, in Bediako’s treatment of Christ in the ancestral category, he dismisses the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity by arguing for a close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption (*cf.* Colossians 1:15ff), in which both creation and redemption are accomplished “in and through Jesus Christ”, the universal ancestor (Bediako, 2004:25).

### **3.2.1.3. Bediako’s use of African believers’ appropriation of the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel to deforeignise and Africanise Christ**

Bediako’s establishment of the universality of Christ as the ancestor of African Christians through the doctrine of the incarnation, and the close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption, does not exclude the particularity of Jesus Christ as a Jew (Bediako, 1999:99). As Wagenaar (1999:371) acknowledges, Bediako “returns to the traditional theology that chooses its beginning in the particular perspective of Israel, but then contains a universal promise”. Bediako understands that faith is key to universalising the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel and to Israel as a nation (Bediako, 1999:99-100). Here, Bediako integrates the Old Testament and New Testament theology to establish that the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel (and Israel as a nation) pertain also to the Gentiles, based on their faith in Christ, who fulfilled all the Old Testament promises (Bediako, 1999:99-100). Bediako understands that the Old and New Testaments are the movement of one redemptive story, which should be interpreted with Christ as its centre. This is the interpretation of Scriptural redemptive history from an incarnational perspective, in which the universal Christ (in the New Testament) is perceived as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises.

Through faith in the incarnated Son of God, African Christians “share in the divine promises given to the patriarchs and through the history of ancient Israel” (Bediako, 1994:99). In this way, those promises pertain also to African Christians because although Christ’s salvation is “from the Jews” (John 4:22), it is not “thereby Jewish” (Bediako, 1994:99-100). This is clearly shown in Bediako’s apprehension that Jesus in John’s Gospel (8:43-44) identifies the Jews who were not listening to Jesus’ words as the children of the devil, not of Abraham. One can concur with Bediako that this was offensive from the Jewish

perspective, since Jews had the right to physically identify themselves with Abraham. Romans 4:11-12 becomes the centrepiece for Bediako's appropriation of the Gentiles, including Africans, as sharing in the Abrahamic promises. Gentiles appropriate the Abrahamic promises as they believe in Jesus Christ, who both fulfilled and extended the Abrahamic promises to all who believe in him. Thus, in paraphrasing Romans 4:11-12, Bediako concludes that "the true children of Abraham are those who put their trust or faith in Jesus Christ in the same way that Abraham trusted in God"<sup>35</sup> (Bediako, 1994:100).

Once this is established, Bediako unswervingly maintains that "our true identity as men and women made in the image of God, is not to be understood primarily in terms of racial, cultural, national or lineage categories, but in terms of Jesus Christ himself" (Bediako, 1994:100). Walls (2008:191) argues that while Bediako depicts the particularity of Jesus as a Jew, he also argues for the universality of both the Abrahamic and Israelite promises in terms of the adoptive past, through which African Christians are covenantally joined to the promises through faith in Jesus Christ, i.e. through faith in Jesus Christ, all Christians "share the same ancestors and those ancestors belong to every tribe, kindred, and nation".

Hence sections 3.2.1.1, 3.2.1.2 and 3.2.1.3 have shown Bediako formulating an *ancestral incarnational Christological concept* which attempts to dispel the problem of Christ's foreignness in African Christianity. However, after 'deforeignising' and Africanising Jesus Christ in African Christianity, Bediako proceeds to apply Christ's death, resurrection and ascension in a way that dismisses African Christians' fears of ancestral spirits, as section 3.3 below will show.

### **3.3. The application of the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ in Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christology to the African world-view of ancestral veneration**

Once Bediako (2004:26-27) dispelled the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity, he proceeds to apply the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ to the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration. This is because Bediako understands that the dispelling of the foreignness of Christ (in order to reduce the spiritual insecurity of some African Christians)

<sup>35</sup> Here, commentators like Hultgren (2011:183-182), Kruse (2012:208-211) and Cranfield (1975:234-238) are in support of Bediako's interpretation of Romans 4:11-12.

cannot succeed through the mere proclamation of Jesus' divine-human nature. Bediako argues that the question of African Christians' relationship with Jesus Christ of Nazareth is similar to the question which the author of Hebrews addresses to his audience. Furthermore, the epistle of Hebrews fits well within Bediako's (1995:84) perception of Christ as the fulfiller of the aspiration of "African traditional life", namely, the "practice of sacrifice, priestly mediation and ancestral function<sup>36</sup>." Given this, Bediako's utilization of the epistle of Hebrews deserves attention.

In Bediako's (2004:28) view, "the universality of the Lord from heaven as the Saviour of all people everywhere, forms the basis of the call of Hebrew people to take him seriously as their Messiah", i.e. although the law of Moses (Exodus 29:44-46) clearly sets out that the Jewish priests were to come from the male descendants of Aaron, Bediako (2004:22; 1995:84) contends that the author of Hebrews suggests "that the High Priesthood of Jesus is not after the order of Aaron, the first Hebrew high-priest"; instead, he is from a non-Jewish priestly line of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:8, cf. 7:13-17). Ellingworth (1993:371-375) and Koester (2001:357-362) concur with Bediako that the central focus of Hebrews 7-8 presents Jesus Christ as the superior high priest who supersedes Melchizedek, the greatest Old Testament priest (*cf.* Genesis 14). Like Melchizedek, "Jesus would have no right to be a priest" since he is not a Levi offspring in the line of Aaron (*cf.* Hebrews 7:13).

Although Jesus Christ belongs to a non-priestly family of Judah, the author of Hebrews presents Jesus as the greatest high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is in fact greater than Melchizedek, since he is the eternal high priest who fulfils the promise of Psalm 110:4 (Ellingworth, 1993:375; Koester, 2001:363-368). The relevance of Christ's superior priesthood over all people is based on the fact that he is the eternal non-Jewish high-priest in the order of Melchizedek, the very God himself, who identifies with all humankind and saved them once and *for all* by his redemptive work (Bediako, 2004:26-26, *cf.* Hebrews 2:5-18). Therefore, Bediako (2004:28) is ready to use the epistle of Hebrews to argue that:

...the priesthood, mediation and hence the salvation that Jesus Christ brings to all people

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<sup>36</sup> That is, the epistle of Hebrews provides a basis "within an inherited body of tradition, for new ideas, for new realities which, though seemingly entering from the outside, come in to fulfil aspirations within the tradition, and then to alter quite significantly the basis of self-understanding within that tradition" (Bediako, 1995:84).

everywhere belong to an entirely different category from what people may claim for their clan, family, tribal and national priests and mediators. The quality of the achievement and ministry of Jesus Christ for and on behalf of all people, together with who he is, reveal his absolute supremacy... The uniqueness of Jesus Christ is rooted in his radical and direct significance for every human person, every human context and every human culture.

Bediako's conviction stems from the fact that in the epistle to the Hebrews, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Elder Brother in every way, fully identified himself with all humanity (Hebrews, 2:14-18) (Bediako, 2004:26, *cf.* Bruce 1984:48-53; Hughes, 1990:110- 124; Jewett, 1981:45). On behalf of all human beings, Jesus Christ offered his flesh and blood as an eternal sacrifice, not to be repeated (Hebrews, 10:10; Hebrews 9:28) (*cf.* Koester, 2001:429; Hughes, 1990:386-389). Jesus Christ hence also identified with African Christians and shared in their African experience in all aspects of their lives (except in their sin), and by his death on the cross, he destroyed the devil who holds the power of death (Hebrews, 2:14-15) (Bediako, 2004:26). Through the cross, Jesus Christ "desacralised all worldly power, relativising its inherent tendency, in a fallen universe, to absolutise itself" (Bediako, 1995:125). To phrase this differently, the cross of Christ defeated the principalities and powers of darkness (including the feared influences of ancestors) which are an inherent feature of the traditional African world-view (Bediako, 1995:145). Bediako (1995:245) appears to combine Hebrews and Paul's terminology (Colossians 1:13-14) of the cross in order to forcefully designate the Lordship of Christ over the spiritual powers.

In displacing the mediating role of the traditional African ancestors (and the sacrifices offered to the ancestors by some Africans), Bediako (2004:26) employs the close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption in order to argue that "Jesus Christ, the second Adam from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47) becomes for us the only mediator between God and humanity" (*cf.* 1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus Christ is the superior mediator of a better covenant between man and God, as his mediatorial power brings all human beings into a direct relationship with God (Hebrews, 8:6). The superiority of Jesus Christ's mediation is further rooted in the reality that his promises for all believers (including African Christians) in the new covenant supersede the old covenant promises (Hebrews 8:6). In a profound sense, Jesus Christ is the high priest of all believers because he completely meets all their mediatorial (Hebrews 8:6) and sacrificial needs once and for all (Hebrews, 10:10; Hebrews 9:28). In this way, Bediako (2004:29) summarises Jesus' assumption of human nature: it

Enabled him to share the human predicament and so qualified him to act for humanity. His divine

origin ensures that he is able to mediate between human community and the divine realm in a way no human priest can. As himself God-man, Jesus bridges the gulf between the Holy God and sinful humanity, achieving for humanity the harmonious fellowship with God that all human priestly mediations only approximate.

Bediako contends that after the overwhelming victory of Jesus Christ over the powers and authorities of darkness at the cross (Colossians, 2:15), the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ implies that Jesus "... has now returned to the realm of the spirit and therefore of power" (Bediako, 2004:26), i.e. "from the stand-point of Akan traditional beliefs, Jesus has gone to the realm of the ancestral spirits and the gods", which they believe to be the source of all "power and resources" (Bediako, 2004:26-27). Given the incorporated significance of Christ's death, resurrection and accession (in relation to the problem of ancestral veneration for some African Christians), Bediako encapsulates that Jesus Christ has become the:

Lord over the living and the dead, and over the living-dead, as the ancestors are also described. He is supreme over all gods and authorities in the realm of the spirits. So he sums up in himself all their powers and cancels any terrorizing influence they might be assumed to have upon us (Bediako, 1994:103; Bediako, 2004:27).

Bediako understands that Jesus Christ "possessed an indestructible life through his death and resurrection. This can never be said of any ancestor in the Akan tradition. He points out that the ancestors do not owe their existence in the realm of the spirit through such demonstrable power" (Aye-Addo, 2010:105). In this way, Bediako moves towards his extension of the notion of *anakephalaiosis* (recapitulation), that all things are summed up into Christ their head (Ephesians 1:10), to include the 'living dead', the ancestors. In affirming this, Bediako is allowing Christ to renew the categories of African religion, instead of having African religious categories forced upon his person and work. Given this, Bediako (1994:103-110) drives out the powers of ancestors over African Christians, since Christ's redemptive acts have rendered the spiritual powers powerless (e.g. Colossians 2:15), as well as superseded them once and for all.

In Bediako's (1995:246 & 2004:31) view, the nullification of the powers of ancestors<sup>37</sup> (over

<sup>37</sup> Importantly, Bediako identifies the natural ancestors in the way that Evangelicals see them. Bediako, an Evangelical Christian, sees the ancestors as demons or fallen angels. This is evident in his

African believers) by Christ does not necessarily mean that the ancestors or any other spiritual powers do not exist anymore. Instead, the overwhelming victory of Christ over the natural ancestors should invoke African Christians to discover the answers to their spiritual insecurities in Christ (instead of their ancestors) as their only solution (Bediako, 1995:246), because the ancestors no longer determine African Christians' existence, since the ancestors were rendered powerless by the redemptive acts of Christ. Bediako (2004:31) argues further that the victory of Christ (through his death, resurrection and ascension) over the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration opens up a way for African Christians to fully appreciate Jesus Christ as their "... only real and true ancestor and source of life for all mankind", who both fulfils and transcends all "... the benefits believed to be bestowed by lineage ancestors".

In establishing the reality of Jesus Christ as the Lord over all the spiritual powers through his redemptive acts, Bediako never misplaces his central focus on the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Bediako maintains the significance of Jesus' divine and human nature for the salvation of African Christians and others. Although the humanity and divinity of Christ are both significant for the dispelling of Christ's foreignness in African Christianity, it is possible to agree with Igba's assessment (2013:33, citing Bediako, 2004:22-24) that Bediako unquestionably utilises the divine origin of Christ "as the marker for the surpassing worth of his priestly mediation, and calls for an end of any other form of priestly mediation, he also persuasively grounds his conceptualising of Jesus as the 'ancestor and sole mediator' in a theological reflection on the Bible, especially the epistle to the Hebrews." In Bediako's (1995:85) understanding:

Jesus attains his singular position not by legal succession, but by divine designation, not by physical descent, but by spiritual achievement – by a quality of life that triumphed over evil, by an inimitable passion and death, and the power of an indestructible life in resurrection – in short, in the realm of power, in the realm of spirit. That is, on that basis Christ becomes significant for all, and available to all. In the higher sense of the attribute, in the spiritual sense, Jesus becomes the ancestor of all (Jesus Christ becomes the ancestor of all who believes in him).

identification of the African traditional beliefs in traditional ancestors as "the product of the myth-making imagination of the community" (Bediako, 2004:30). Therefore, since Bediako knows that deceased people do not impinge on physical reality, he is merely confronting the African traditional ancestral world-view with the gospel. In Chapter 5, a repudiation will be given of the spirits of deceased humans in terms of active spiritual powers that impinge on physical reality

### **3.3.1. The significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit in Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christology in relation to Christ's death, resurrection and ascension**

The sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ is inherent within Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological concept. In Bediako's view, the sending of the Holy Spirit guarantees that Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension has inaugurated Christ as Lord in the spiritual realm (Bediako, 2004:27). In stressing this, Bediako establishes the interconnection between the sufficiency of Christ's salvation and the function of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives in this Christian interim period (Bediako, 2004:27).

Bediako (2004:27) specifies the various roles of the Holy Spirit within the lives of African believers and non-believers, including the Holy Spirit's role of applying salvation to non-Christians<sup>38</sup>, through his examination of John 16-17. The roles of the Holy Spirit, pertinent to African spiritual insecurity, are: (i) "to give them [African believers] understanding of the realities in the realm of the spirits"; (ii) the assurance of "the close association of the defeat and overthrow of the devil (ruler of this world) with the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus" (John 12:31) (Bediako, 2004:27); and (iii) the "thought of the 'keeping' and protection of the followers from the evil one", which "forms an important part of Jesus' prayer" in John 17 (Bediako, 2004:27). Given the aforementioned roles of the Holy Spirit, Bediako assures African Christians of the supremacy of Christ over their terrors and fears of invisible forces, i.e. through Christ's sending of the Holy Spirit, he is present dynamically in the lives of African Christians and evidences himself as the Lord over the spiritual universe. More importantly, in affirming the significance of the sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ, Bediako actually closes a gap between the redemptive work of Christ and its historical, present and continuous effect on African Christians' lives. African Christians should not experience spiritual insecurity from invisible forces because they are completely secure in Christ.

### **3.3.2. The integration of eschatology in Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christology**

In addition to the above-mentioned interconnection between the Lordship of Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives, Bediako's (1994:111) ancestral incarnational

<sup>38</sup> Bediako's understanding of the Holy Spirit's role of applying salvation to non-Christians is an interesting point to expand. However, nothing more can be said since Bediako mentions it in passing. Likewise, Bediako does not actually devote much attention to discuss the pertinent role of the Holy Spirit to African believers' spiritual insecurity.

Christology is further embedded within an idea of the second return of Christ to consummate his kingdom. Bediako believes that although Christ in his incarnation and redemptive work has become sovereign over ancestral spirits, the fullness of that sovereignty awaits the final consummation (Bediako, 1994:111). Bediako does not mean Christ was not sovereign before the incarnation; instead, his sovereignty is in the context of the nature and extent of Christian salvation in the now-but-not-yet era. As a result, in this epoch, African believers are not exempt from battling with metaphysical forces (Bediako, 1994:111). However, instead of consulting with their ancestors and witch-doctors for spiritual security, African believers should consult their superior ancestor, Jesus Christ. In this respect, Bediako seeks to aid African believers in dealing with their existential fears, trials, sicknesses and other calamities without reverting to their former practices of consulting traditional African powers. This is a commendable pastoral application of Bediako's theology.

Christ's salvation commences as African believers participate in the redemptive acts of Christ through faith (Bediako, 1994:99-100). Within the interrelationship between his ancestral incarnational Christological framework and the eschatological consummation, Bediako is nevertheless clear that African believers can be physically defeated or possibly even die in their battle against some spiritual forces (Bediako, 1994:111). However, in view of the effective nature and extent of Christ's salvation, the possible death or defeat of African believers does not mean that they have lost their spiritual battle against some spiritual powers. Instead, the salvation of African believers is intrinsic within their eternal union and participation in Christ's redemptive acts through faith. Bediako (1994:111) rightly puts it in this way:

The message is quite clear: the heart of the encounter of the good news with our context is our understanding of Jesus Christ, how our faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, relates to our existence and destiny in the world. With such faith comes a firm conviction that in and through Christ, we have found and been found by, ultimate truth, which is utterly dependable for interpreting our human experience. We also are bound to discover that we are involved in struggle to the death. It is not with flesh and blood, but with more subtle powers and intelligences who would hinder men and women from perceiving the nearness of Christ as one who has opened for us a new way, a living way, into the presence of God, through his own body and as one of us (*cf.* Hebrews 10:20).

Nonetheless, Bediako does not provide a comprehensive treatment of the interrelationship between the doctrine of eschatology and his ancestral incarnational Christological construct.

Instead, he assumes the impact of the doctrine of eschatology for African Christians by hinting at its significance in passing, as the preceding paragraphs have established. Thus, Bediako's doctrine of eschatology is underdeveloped. However, Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christology is integrated with eschatology to better ground African believers' understanding of the nature and extent of Christ's salvation.

### **3.4. Towards a Critical Appraisal of Bediako in an African context**

#### **3.4.1. The credibility of Bediako's methodological framework of ancestral incarnational Christology in its attempt to deforeignise and Africanise Christ**

Methodologically, Olsen (1999:258) argues that Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological concept is grounded in Scripture, because Bediako understands that in elaborating Christology, one has "to be faithful to Jesus and the witness of the Gospels and the Apostles" (Olsen, 1999:258). This seems to be evident in Bediako's (1994:99; 2000:24) critique of John Pobee (his contemporary leading Ghanaian theologian, who also challenges the traditional African ancestral world-view, seeing Christ as the Great Ancestor), who "approached the problem largely through Akan wisdom sayings and proverbs", thus, "he does not deal sufficiently with the religious nature of the question". In this way, Bediako argues that Pobee did not allow the biblical revelation to have a real encounter with the Akan traditional world-view of ancestral veneration (Bediako, 1994:99; 2000:24). Wendland (1995:113-114) agrees with Olsen in his classical evaluation of current contributions in African Christologies, since he rates Bediako's ancestral Christology highly as "the best presentation of a context-sensitive Christology", which is grounded in Scripture.

Olsen (1999:258) and Wendland (1995:113-114) seem to contend that in moving from Scripture to the African traditional world-view of ancestral veneration, Bediako is dissimilar to many African theologians, who move in the opposite direction<sup>39</sup>. In respect of the approaches in African theology, Nyamiti (1989:18) argues that there are two main methodological approaches. Here, Bediako represents the methodological approach in African theology, which starts from the "biblical teaching about Christ and strive[s] afterwards to find from African cultural situation the relevant Christological themes" (Nyamiti, 1989:18). In the same

<sup>39</sup> Bujo (1992:79); Pobee (1979) and Wanamacker (1997:282) are few of the examples of African theologians who use the African context as the point of departure for their ancestral Christology. This implies that these African theologians are using the African traditional beliefs in ancestors as their starting point for their contextualised Christology.

vein, Frederiks and Mashau (2008:116) explain this approach as taking Scripture as “the point of departure and which from there seek[ing] to apply the message by moving to the context.” The alternative methodological approach in African theology “begins with African cultural background as the starting point for the development of African Christologies” (Nyamiti, 1989:18). In agreement with Nyamiti, Frederiks and Mashau (2008:116) expand this definition by saying that this second theological approach in African theology initially provides:

...an analysis of the context, after which reflection and action takes place. They therefore use an approach of moving to the context, from the context to the text, thus bringing issues from daily life to the text, in order to seek answers and transformation of society; this method is known as ‘the reversion of the hermeneutical circle’.

Although Bediako seems to have commenced his ancestral incarnational Christology on the basis of Scripture, it is unclear whether he fully remains within the biblical framework (Wegaaner, 1999:373). Bediako’s methodological framework is problematic, since he appears to follow the Evangelical doctrine of Christ’s incarnation, yet introduces Jesus Christ in African cultural trappings, thus deviating himself from the biblical concept of Christ as one being with God the Father. Here, Bediako is “approaching Christology through [an] ancestral perspective”, which is an ongoing endeavour for many African theologians (Wacheche, 2012:27), including Bujo (1992:79), Nyamiti (2006:24), Pobee (1979:94), Milingo (1984:85), Kwesi (1984:197-198); Kabasele (1991:123-124) and others.

Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study, our focus is on the problem associated with Bediako’s ancestral incarnational Christological construct in African Christianity. This is the problem of “the application of ancestral category as a method of Christological endeavour for the Akan” (Aye-Addo, 2010:107). In the application of Christology to the ancestral category, one faces the challenge of “relevance without syncretism” (Aye-Addo, 2010:107; Olsen, 1997:266; Reed and Mtukwa, 2010:157). Olsen (1997:266) points out that “the risk in contextualisation is particularly sharp when it comes to the contextualisation of central doctrinal themes, particularly concerning the person and work of Christ”. Bediako (1995:85) appears to be cognisant of the challenge, since his desire is to establish an African-relevant ancestral incarnational Christology without syncretism. Bediako’s concern is currently encapsulated by Nkansah-Obrempong (2010:298) in his assertion that the “dilemma African evangelicals are facing is to develop an African Christianity that is authentically African and

truly biblical”. The challenge for African evangelicals is “... being faithful to scripture while taking seriously the African cultural, religious, socio-economic and political contexts” (Nkansah-Obrempong, 2010:295).

In spite of Bediako’s awareness of the challenge of relevance without syncretism, it is important to acknowledge that his designation of Christ as an ancestor does not do justice to the supremacy of Christ, or to the distinction between Christ and the traditional African ancestors (Mkole, 2000:1138), i.e. his application of the ancestral category to Christ seems to compromise the supremacy of Christ. The conceptualisation of Christ as an ancestor may lead African Christians to think of Christ as merely human, instead of him as God the incarnate (Reed & Mtukwa, 2010:157; Palmer, 2008:71; Mkole, 2000:1138). In this way, the appellation of Christ as an ancestor might encourage some African Christians to conceptualise Christ in terms of their former understanding of natural ancestors, which ignores the actuality that Christ transcends the ancestral category (Mkole, 2000:1138; Wacheche, 2012:28; Palmer, 2008:71).

Although Bediako’s application of the ancestral category to Christ takes seriously the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration, this endeavour seems to undermine the supremacy of Christ over the spiritual universe (Afeke & Verster, 2004:59). It is reminiscent of the danger of encouraging African Christians to continue thinking of Christ in view of their former traditional understanding of ancestors, in spite of the fact that Christ is the incarnated God, whose “Lordship, authority and Supremacy can meet all spiritual needs” (Afeke & Verster, 2004:59). Perhaps this is why the Christological paradigm and metaphorical expression of Christ as an ancestor lacks practical value at the grassroots level in African Christianity (Olsen, 1997:251). Palmer (2008:65) similarly contends that many Protestant and Catholic theologians “have referred to Jesus as an ancestor. Yet at the grass-roots there is still significant resistance to such a concept (ancestral concept).” It is apparent that the conceptualisation of Christ as an ancestor might encourage African Christians to continue to perceive their natural ancestors as mediators between Africans and God (Reed & Mtukwa, 2010:157). African Christians might continue to look to both Christ and their natural ancestors for spiritual security, since they perceive no distinction between the two. Therefore, African Christians might continue to worship their former traditional ancestors by placing them “in a position that only God should hold by offering to them sacrifices and oblations” (Reed & Mtukwa, 2010:157).

In order to enable African Christians to break away from the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration, it is necessary to establish a biblical model which best describes Christ's identification with Africans other than the ancestral category. Such a new African-relevant incarnational Christological framework could assist African Christians to understand how Jesus Christ completely identifies with them in their innermost anxieties, woes and hardships, and provide a real solution to African believers' spiritual insecurity without encouraging syncretism. In contrast, by applying the ancestral category to Christ, Bediako's hypothesis of contextualisation merely replaces one problem with another, i.e. exchanging a Christ in Western trappings for a Christ in African cultural trappings. Because of the ways in which Africans perceive their ancestors (see Chapter 2, section 2.1.1.4), it is not a solution to apply the ancestral category to Christ. Above all, the application of the ancestral category to Christ is currently resisted at grass-roots level, and this suggests that ancestral Christology is an endeavour which lacks practical meaning for the African church.

### **3.4.2. An alternative Prospective Model: An Adamic incarnational Christological Model**

The discussion above suggests a need to learn from Bediako's 'deforeignising' of Christ, namely, the uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ, the interconnection between the doctrine of creation and redemption, and African believers' appropriation of the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel through faith in Jesus Christ. These theological concepts in Bediako's thought come together to construct the theological truth of the movement of the eternal Son of God in time and space to assume the human nature for our salvation. However, a problem lies with Bediako's contextualisation which seems to treat the doctrine of Christology under the category of ancestor, as established above. Therefore, an alternative Adamic incarnational Christological framework will be pursued in Chapter 5, which will attempt to address African spiritual insecurity and bring peace to African Christians in this regard. This model will seek to better describe African Christians' identification with Christ, without compromising the gospel.

The prospective Adamic incarnational Christological framework will draw on Torrance's deeper incarnational Christology in its interrelationship with soteriology and eschatology, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. The focus in Chapter 4 will be on Torrance's understanding of Christ's salvation as bound up with the vicarious humanity of Christ (Christ

as the representative of humanity) (Torrance, 2008:94-104). Thereafter, in Chapter 5, based on Bediako and Torrance's positive understanding of Christ's incarnation in view of Scripture, we will attempt to construct a vigorous Adamic incarnational Christological framework.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is clear that Bediako is one of the African theologians who takes the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity seriously. In 'deforeignising' Christ in African Christianity, Bediako affirms that the divinity and humanity of Christ are equally important. Nevertheless, he commences from the divinity of Christ in order to stress the Godhood of Christ, therefore, establishing the universality of Christ. Although Christ is a Jew by birth, Bediako understands that his divinity precedes his particularity as a Jew. In asserting this, Bediako concludes that in the mystery of the incarnation, Christ assumed the universal human nature, giving him authority as the ancestor of every Christian, including African Christians, i.e. Christ's uncompounded divine-human nature qualifies him as an ancestor of all people. Here, Bediako further embeds the universal ancestorhood of Christ in a close link between the doctrine of creation and redemption, and the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ in African Christians' appropriation of the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel and through the history of ancient Israel. However, Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological construct does not contribute something new to the orthodox Christian doctrine of Christ's incarnation. His contribution rests rather on his application of Christ's redemptive acts to the traditional African world-view of ancestral veneration, as well as the treatment of the doctrine of Christology under the category of ancestor.

Nevertheless, Bediako's application of the ancestral category to Christ fails to reflect a Biblical language about Christ. Thus, Bediako's application of the ancestral category to Christ appears to encourage African Christians to continue to think of Christ in their former traditional category of ancestor. In this way, African Christians can continue to hold on to both Christ and their natural ancestors for spiritual security. However, such an understanding ignores the actuality that Christ is beyond the category of ancestor owing to his being as the incarnated God. There is a need to learn from Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological concept, and to reconstruct a more robust and relevant incarnational Christological framework, which responds to the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity without encouraging syncretism. With this in mind, a prospective Adamic incarnational Christological

framework, which views Jesus Christ as the New Adam, is proposed, and will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 5.

## Chapter IV:

### **The implications of Torrance's incarnational Christological model on spiritual insecurity in African Christianity**

#### **4. Introduction**

This chapter provides a critical analysis and evaluation of Torrance's incarnational Christological model, in order to determine how Torrance's incarnational Christological conceptualisation can open up aspects of Christ's incarnation so as to fully identify Christ with African Christians, and to challenge African Christians' continual reliance on traditional African powers to address their spiritual insecurity. In order to achieve this objective, the chapter will move from a consideration of Torrance's broad theological interests to discussion of his incarnational Christological concepts. The next section will provide a brief biography of Torrance and an overview of his theological interests, namely, his trinitarian and Christological theology. Here, Torrance's incarnational Christological model will be presented as a challenge to the Western misconception of the divine, which divides God and his creation (resulting in a dualistic framework) and, therefore, denies the authentic union between God and man in the incarnation.

The second section will establish Torrance's ontological inclusivity of all humankind in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, by foregrounding Torrance's incarnational Christological concepts, such as the vicarious humanity of Christ, determined by two concepts from Greek patristic theology, namely, the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union. *Anhypostasis* affirms the negative – that the human nature of Christ is without an independent personal centre, whilst *enhypostasis* affirms the positive – that the human nature of Christ finds its centre and expression in the person of the eternal Son of God. Unfortunately, Cassidy advances an inaccurate reading of Torrance's incarnational Christological model, which results in his conclusion that Torrance does not explain the aspect of the sinlessness of God in his incarnational Christology. In refuting Cassidy's inaccurate reading of Torrance's incarnational Christological model, this section will consider the breadth of Torrance's writings in order to establish Torrance's position that in the incarnation, the Son of God assumed Adam's human nature after the fall; however, it was sanctified in its real union with the divine nature of the eternal Son of God. Here, Torrance's perception of the divine sign of the virgin birth will play a significant role in demonstrating the sinlessness of the assumed human nature of Christ by the person of the eternal Son of God. Once this is done, the section will proceed to discuss Torrance's delineation of the connection between the doctrines of creation and redemption, the interpretation of Israel's redemptive

history from an incarnational perspective, and the integration of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension with eschatology.

In order to keep in line with the prospective Adamic incarnational Christological framework proposed in Chapter 3, the final section will identify and explain Torrance's incarnational Christological concepts which will assist in enhancing African Christians' understanding of their complete identification with Christ, i.e. an explanation will be provided of how the identified theological concepts of Torrance will assist in 'deforeignising' Christ in African Christianity without applying them to the prospective Adamic incarnational Christological model. The chapter will conclude by pulling some overarching arguments together.

## **4.1. Torrance's biography and his broad theological interests**

### **4.1.1. Torrance's biography**

Thomas F. Torrance was a Scottish Protestant theologian, who was born to missionary parents in China in August 1913 (Cassidy, 2008:165). Many of Torrance's contemporary theologians regarded him as one of the most significant theologians in Europe and beyond (McGrath, 1999:xi). McGrath (1999:xi) argues that the significance of Torrance is apparent in the numerous "doctoral theses devoted to an analysis of aspects" of his thought. This suggests that Torrance was "a man of ideas who ha[d] a passion for the life of the mind as it is encountered by the reality of God" (McGrath, 1999:xiii). Torrance completed his bachelor of divinity studies at New College (in 1934) in preparation for Christian ministry (McGrath, 1999:29). Here, Torrance graduated *summa cum laude*, which granted him an opportunity to correspond with Barth. Torrance's direct contact with Barth was inevitable since he was given an Aitken fellowship (due to his academic performance), which allowed him to further his studies at any university of his preference (McGrath, 1999:34). Torrance chose Basel University, where he studied under his "theological master", Karl Barth (McGrath, 1999:42, 45 & Cassidy, 2008:165).

Because of Torrance's interest in "Greek patristic theology", Barth encouraged<sup>40</sup> him (Torrance) to commence his PhD thesis, entitled "The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers" in 1937,

<sup>40</sup> Colyer (2001:25) argues that "Torrance's early encounter with Barth played a formative role in the development of his vision for scientific theology." However, even though Torrance sat under Karl Barth (his theological master), McGrath (1999:45) affirmed that Torrance was also critical of Barth's theology, especially his understanding of the "the incarnation of the Word and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit."

which he completed in 1946 (McGrath, 1999:46 & Molnar, 2009:7). While his PhD project was underway, Torrance left Basel and engaged in a lecturing tour in various seminaries, including Auburn Theological Seminary (in America, New York) in 1938-39 and McCormick Seminary in 1939 (McGrath, 1939:47, 57-58 & Molnar, 2009:7). However, Torrance's interest in theological lecturing does not necessarily mean that he lacked an interest in the pastoral ministry of the church (Cassidy, 2008:165). On the contrary, he was concerned with both the academic domain of theology and the church's pastoral ministry, since he took up ministerial positions during his lifetime (McGarth, 1999:60-62). For example, on 30 March 1940, Torrance took over the ministerial position at Alyth Church of Scotland and he worked there for three years (McGrath, 1999:60-62).

After acquiring his PhD in 1946, Torrance assumed a lecturing position at Edinburgh University in 1950 (McGrath, 1999:84). Torrance's arrival at Edinburgh University (where he remained for 27 years) was the turning "point of his life" (McGrath, 1999:85). This was because "a door had finally opened, apparently allowing Torrance to enter into the sphere of ministry to which he believed that he had been called" (McGrath, 1999:85). In 1952, Torrance was appointed to the chair of Church Dogmatics as a result of the previous incumbent's termination of his service owing to bad health (McGrath, 1999:87, 90, 102). After assuming the aforesaid position, Torrance was appointed as Professor of Church Dogmatics<sup>41</sup> at Edinburgh University, as well as "moderator of the General assembly of the church of Scotland" (McGrath, 1999:102). Torrance retired from Edinburgh University in 1979 (McGrath, 1999: xiii, 6, 90, 102). During his career he published approximately 320 academic works, including journal articles and academic monographs (McGrath, 1999: xiii, 6, 90, 102). After his retirement, he published more than 260 academic works, which include his two key systematic monographs, namely, *The Trinitarian Faith* (in 1988) and *The Christian Doctrine of God* (in 1996) (McGrath, 1999:107). Colyer (2001:15) argued that many of Torrance's contemporary theologians continued to regard him as "the most outstanding living Reformed theologian in the Anglo-Saxon world".

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<sup>41</sup> McGrath (1999:102) contends that Torrance occupied various leadership and lecturing opportunities after his appointment as a Professor of Church Dogmatics at Edinburgh University. Some of these positions came after Barth's retirement at Basel in 1961. After Barth's retirement in 1961, Torrance was invited to Basel to take over Barth's chair of Church dogmatics at Barth's own recommendation (Cassidy, 2008:165 & McGrath, 1991:102). However, due to various reasons, including the education of his children in the German language, Torrance declined the offer (McGrath, 1999:103).

## 4.1.2. Torrance's broad theological interests

### 4.1.2.1. In overview: Torrance's Trinitarian and Christological theology

It is important to acknowledge that Torrance's theology is grounded in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God is one being, yet three distinctive persons, namely, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Torrance, 1996:15; 1995:131). Here, the word "persons" in reference to the triune God does not necessarily mean that there are three "personalities in God" (Barth, 1960:403). This aforementioned understanding would result in the notion of a God who is *tritheistic* in nature (Barth, 1960:402-403). In guarding himself against this potential challenge of *tritheism*, Torrance (1995:110-145, cf. 131) argued that God is one incorporeal being, comprised of three distinctive persons without being separated or divided. Torrance affirms the distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (but in inseparable relationship with one another), which is determined by the indivisible oneness or unity in being (consubstantial) among the persons of the Godhead (Torrance, 1995:131). The distinctive persons of the Godhead interpenetrates each other (*perichoresis*), since the Father in John's (14:10) Gospel is entirely in the Son and the Son entirely in the Father (Calvin, 1960:143).

In upholding the Christian doctrine of the trinity, Torrance understands that God revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ<sup>42</sup> in a three-fold way as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 11:25-27 & Luke 10:21-22) (Torrance, 1992:54, 124, 127; 1994:115; 1996:15-16 & 1980:151-152). In Torrance's (1996:16 & 1994:115) view, all humankind conceives the knowledge of God through his self-revelation and self-communication in and through Christ<sup>43</sup> (Ephesians 2:18). However, this has to be understood in conjunction with the Holy Spirit's role of revealing God to us (1 Corinthians 2:9-12). Torrance also understands that the doctrine of the Trinity is not only directed at our knowledge of God. Instead, it is also fundamental to our comprehension of the redemption of sinful humanity (Torrance, 1992:126). Torrance (1992:126) himself encapsulates the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to the salvation of all humankind in this way:

Thus belief in the Holy Trinity does not have to do simply with our knowledge of God as he is in his inner life and being, but with the very substance of the Gospel of salvation grounded in and flowing

<sup>42</sup> Torrance (1980:151-152) understands that we gain knowledge and access to God through Jesus Christ, not simply by human intelligence or rationality.

<sup>43</sup> Here, "it is only through Christ and in the Spirit that we are given access to the Father" (cf. John 14:6) (Torrance, 1996:17).

from the very love which God eternally is in himself. It is indeed, God's threefold giving of himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit that is our salvation.

Torrance establishes that the doctrine of Christology is integral to the doctrine of the trinity, since humanity solely knows God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit owing to God's self-revelation and self-communication in and through Jesus Christ's incarnation in the economy of salvation (Cassidy, 2008:178). Here, Christology reflects the indivisibility of the unity of Jesus Christ's "divine-human reality as God became man" (Torrance, 1995:114). In this respect, the "Christian doctrine of God is thus inescapably and essentially Christocentric, for it pivots upon God's self-revelation and self-communication in the incarnation" (Torrance, 1996:17). Since Christ is identical with God, it is apparent that in Jesus Christ's incarnation, human beings are confronted with the objective knowledge of God which overcomes a "distance between God and us" (Torrance, 1996:17). Therefore, "it is specifically in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son, that God has communicated himself to us" (Torrance, 1995:203).

In this way, Torrance's (1996:133) trinitarian doctrine of God stresses the interrelationship between the economic and the ontological trinity, since in the doctrine of the trinity, "everything hinges, then, upon the ontological and dynamic oneness between the economic trinity and the ontological trinity". Torrance understands that since we know the ontological trinity (the knowledge of God as he eternally exists within himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit) via his self-revelation and self-communication (in and through Jesus Christ) in the economy of salvation (economic trinity)<sup>44</sup>, therefore, "what God is toward us in the economy of salvation is what he is eternally" (Molnar, 2009:67). However, even though Torrance stresses the interrelationship between the economic trinity and ontological trinity, he is conscious of the limitations we ought to have in making identification between the two (1996:109). For example, one of the overriding limitations is that the incarnation is an event which happens within time and space (in the economy of salvation), therefore, one should not read back the incarnation into "the eternal life of God" (ontological trinity)<sup>45</sup> (Torrance, 1996:109, cf. 214).

<sup>44</sup> The economic trinity is the starting point for Torrance in order to know our "relations with the immanent or ontological Trinity" (Molnar, 2009:18, 68).

<sup>45</sup> However, this does not mean that the incarnation was not always in the mind of God or the plan of God (cf. Proverbs 8:22-23). In saying this, we are aware that some recent work on Proverbs can possibly question the foregoing understanding of Proverbs 8:22-23. For a detailed discussion, see Kidner (1964:78) Longmann III (2006:203-213) and Fox's (2000:279-281) commentaries on Proverbs.

Furthermore, the above-mentioned overview of Torrance's conceptualization of the trinitarian and Christological doctrine is hinged on the Nicene theological formulation of *homoousion*, that is, the Son is of one substance with the Father. This Nicene theological formulation of "*homoousion*" allows Torrance to make the ontological relation between God's being and his act as identical" in the economy of salvation, so as to argue for the adequate salvation for sinful humanity (Cassidy, 2008:179, cf. Ford, 2013:6). That is, Torrance (1992:124; 1980:160-161; 1995:115 & 1996:30, 95) recognised and endorsed the council of Nicea's formulation of *homoousion*, since without "a relation of oneness in being and act between Jesus Christ and the eternal God", the ontological trinity falls out of the redemptive work of Christ. In this case, *homoousios*:

...expresses at once the distinction and the oneness between the incarnate Son and the Father, so it enables us to speak both of the distinction and of the oneness between the economic and the ontological trinity and without detracting from the crucial significance of either (Torrance, 1996:30). ...What God is toward us in the revealing and saving acts of Jesus Christ he is eternally and immanently in himself, and what God is in himself eternally and immanently as Father and Son he actually is toward us in the revealing and saving acts of Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1992:112).

Once the trinitarian and the Christological doctrines are given their proper place in Torrance's theology, we can better see how the incarnation of Christ plays a central role in his thinking (Torrance, 1996:18). In Torrance's (1996:18) theology, the incarnation "constitutes the one actual source and the one controlling center of the Christian doctrine of God, for he who became man in Jesus Christ in order to be our Savior is identical in Being and Act with God the Father". The centrality of the incarnation in Torrance's (2009:196) theology is evidenced by his emphasis of the universal range of the redemption of Christ in arguing that the redemption of Christ is "... so vast and comprehensive, involving the whole universe, that the reconciling love of God transcends every dimensional barrier, spiritual or physical, past or present or future".

#### **4.1.2.2. The Backdrop of Torrance's incarnational Christological theology: The Western misconception of the divine (God)**

Torrance (1992:59-60) was opposed to the Greek cosmological dualism, which drives a wedge between God and His creation. In Torrance's view, this disjunction between God and His creation causes Christians to pose some serious questions concerning the actuality of the fundamental Christian doctrine of the incarnation. Normally, these questions will result in Christians diminishing the adequacy of Christ's salvation in their existential challenges. The successive questions frequently asked by Christians concerning the divinity of Christ are: "Will God really turn out to be what we believe him to be in Jesus Christ? Is God really like Jesus?" (Torrance, 1992:59). In Torrance's (1992:59) perspective, these aforementioned questions are

often posed by many people in moments of life-threatening crises, such as death and sickness. It is at this moment of life-threatening crisis that Christians struggle to connect the relationship between Jesus Christ and God in their Christian faith (Torrance, 1992:59). Indeed, this reminds Torrance of “the insidious damage done to people’s faith by dualistic habits of thought which drive a wedge between Jesus and God” (Torrance, 1992:59).

The disjunction between God and his creation is intrinsic to Greek philosophical thinking, which believes in the existence of the real and the unreal worlds (Torrance, 1992:63; cf. Mascall, 1946:14; Purves, 2001:52). On one hand, the real world is the eternal world of the *immutable* and *impassible* God (the world of good), while, on the other hand, the unreal world is the creaturely world of “decay and change” (the world of evil) (Torrance, 1996:34-35). Here, the real and unreal worlds do not interact with each other. Concerning the real world, the doctrine of impassibility implies that “God is not subject to suffering”, whilst the doctrine of immutability holds that “God is not subject to change” (Torrance, 1981:5). Moreover, since the Western Christian understanding of God was developed in the domain of dominant Greek philosophical thoughts about God, the Church adopted these forms of thinking (i.e. the concepts of God in terms of immutability and impassibility) and redefined them according to the true being of God revealed in Scripture. Therefore, Torrance is aware that the incarnation of Christ can be challenged by Greek philosophical thinking concerning the immutability and impassibility of God, if not handled cautiously (Torrance, 1992:63).

Greek cosmological dualism poses the question: “How can God who is impassible and changeless be thought of entering into our changing world and living within contingent and temporal existence?” (Torrance, 1996:34). In Mascall’s (1946:13) view, this is a genuine question because “the incarnation is, at least at first sight, not something happening to human nature, but something happening to God”. Therefore, the prevailing question is: Is the doctrine of incarnation “compatible with the ... immutability of God? (Mascall, 1946:13). In answering this question, theology reflecting Greek influence would conceive that the unreal world “partakes of reality (eternal reality) in so far as it is a passing reflection of the eternal, then we may interpret the biblical doctrine of the incarnation ... of the Son of God as a passing image of some timeless truth in God” (Torrance, 1996:34). In Torrance’s (1992:63-64) view, this Greek cosmological dualism is a misconception of the divine (God), which challenges the doctrine of incarnation (hence, Christology), since it “drives a wedge between Jesus’ divinity and humanity”. In this regard, Torrance (1981:7) argues that:

... the integrity of the Christian Gospel is at stake if God is not in his own eternal being what he is towards us in his incarnate activity in Jesus Christ, for then there would be no movement of God's own being in the life, passion and resurrection of the Saviour of the world.

In saying this, Torrance (1992:63) is in agreement with Purves (2001:52), namely, that Greek cosmological dualism was an error which stemmed from human wisdom and threatened to distort the primary teaching of Christianity, which is the doctrine of the incarnation. With regards to the relationship between the doctrine of the incarnation and the Christian doctrine of the impassibility and immutability (unchangeability) of God<sup>46</sup>, Torrance (1981:6-7 & 1996:237) is in agreement with Barth<sup>47</sup> (1957:269) and Mascall (1946:14). In line with Barth and Mascall, Torrance (1981:6-7 & 1996:237) argues that a fully Christian doctrine of immutability simply connotes God as an “intrinsically and eternally dynamic being”<sup>48</sup>, who cannot be caused to move by anything external to himself. Out of his *eternal love* (1 John 4:8-16), God in the incarnation moved himself to assume our creaturely existence for the sake of our redemption (Torrance, 1996:244-246). The doctrine of impassibility implies that God cannot be caused to suffer by something external to himself (Torrance, 1981:6). In this case, Torrance wants us to “...think of all the changes in God's mighty acts of creation and redemption which constantly surprise us as flowing from and reposing upon his eternally unchanging life” (Torrance, 1996:236). This is because:

...in his eternal stability and invariant reliability, he remains transcendent over all such passion and change. But this does not mean that God does not move himself, or that he is incapable of divine passion. On the contrary, while God is serene and tranquil in the face of any disturbance, trouble, or hurt that may arise in the universe, he is nevertheless the living, self-moving God who is in his own fullness a communion of love, who though he is not eternally Creator was free to become the Creator of all things visible and invisible (Torrance, 1981:6).

<sup>46</sup> Torrance (1996:235-237) understands that the doctrine of the immutability of God is taught by both the Old Testament (in Exodus 3:13, 14) and the New Testament Scriptures. The New Testament's clearest passage on the unchangeability of God is Hebrews 13:8, in which Jesus Christ is spoken as the same “yesterday, today and forever.”

<sup>47</sup> Barth (1957:269) indicates his understanding of the doctrine of God's immutability, as he argues that “God is not the being moved in and by us which we think we know or think we know as our movement of nature and spirit.” Rather, God's movement is self-motivated since his decision is “independent of the decisions by which we validate our existence...” (Barth, 1957:269 & 271). In other words, Torrance agrees with Barth that God cannot be moved by something external to himself (Barth, 1957:271). Rather, God's movement is “his executed decision – executed once for all in eternity, and anew in every second of our time, and therefore in such a way that it confronts what is not being, not as mere possibility, but always as a self-containing reality” (Barth, 1957:271).

<sup>48</sup> This implies that within his inner being, God is not *static* but he is *dynamic*. He has a personal movement within himself as God (Torrance, 1996:237).

In affirming this, Torrance (1981:4) assumes the significance of the interrelationship between the doctrine of creation and the incarnation as central in affirming that “God lives and acts in lordly freedom over all that is not God.” Here, as Mascall (1946:13) cumbrosomely puts it, God is the one “...who has made that (human) nature, like every other being in the universe, God himself alone excepted, it has been drawn out of non-existence by him, it is altogether under his control, and he is incessantly present to it at the very root of its being, in the creative act by which he preserves it from moment to moment”. In other words, this understanding is integral to Jesus Christ as the creator of all the invisible and visible things out of nothing; the creation which is contingent on the Son of God, the infinite God, who lives and acts in “lordly freedom” over his creation (Torrance, 1981:4). Here, Torrance (2008:9, 98 & 1995:113) is destroying any form of dis-junction between God and his creation, as well as any denial of the true union between God and man in one person of the divine Logos, the eternal Son of God. In doing this, Torrance (2008:9, 98 & 1995:113) ultimately denies an elusive understanding of Jesus Christ as an ideal God or mere man (docetism). Likewise, he rejects the misconception of Jesus as a true man, whom God (out of his favour) has adopted at a particular point to be in a special relationship with himself (God) (Torrance, 2009:452). The former (docetism) denies the true humanity of Christ and the latter (adoptionism) denies the “pre-existence” of Christ (Erickson, 1991:532).

Torrance (1992:10-23) is clear that there is no dis-junction between God and his creation because prior to God's direct-interaction with his creation *in and through* Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he (God) was in a covenantal relationship with his unmeritoriously chosen nation of Israel. Colyer (2001:168) contends that even though there are some existing differences between God and humanity (for example, the reality of God being the creator and human beings as created beings by God out of nothing), Torrance is convinced that these distinctions do not disallow God's triune involvement or presence within his creation. One's failure to understand this reality can result in the honour and adoration of God the Father at the expense of God the Son and the Holy Spirit (Torrance, 1995:112). Here, Torrance (1996:199) affirms that the one who was incarnated is the *Son of God*, thus, holding up an “exclusive incarnation” in which neither the Father nor the Spirit became man. Torrance's (1996:199) ‘exclusive incarnation’ “decides the hypothetical question whether the incarnation of another divine person was a possibility”. Therefore, in Torrance's (1995:150) view, the incarnation of the Son of God “was not the bringing into being of a created intermediary between God and man, but the incarnating of God in such a way that in Jesus Christ he is both God and man in the fullest and proper sense” (Torrance, 1995:150).

Once this is accomplished, Torrance unswervingly sustains that “the hypostatic union of God and man in the incarnation through the Spirit is our union with Christ—thus the source of both our

knowledge in theology and of our salvation” (Cassidy, 2008:165-166). Here, Torrance formulates his doctrine of incarnation by establishing it mainly from a trinitarian perspective of God as absolutely one yet three inseparable distinctive Persons (Molnar, 2009:108). Torrance is capable of formulating his doctrine of incarnation from a trinitarian perspective because of his robust Christology which commences from the divinity of Christ<sup>49</sup> (Molnar, 2009:108-111). This is because the divinity of Christ is considered by Torrance (1996:46) as the “supreme truth of the Gospel, the key to the bewildering enigma of Jesus, for it provides it with a central point of reference consistent with the whole sequence of events leading up to and beyond the crucifixion.” So, in upholding the absolute oneness of the Father with the Son, Torrance is arguing against the dualistic framework which separates God the Father and God the Son in the incarnation. Thus, Torrance (1981:xviii) correctly perceives that:

it is upon that relation of identity and fidelity between the Son and the Father, between Christ and God, that the truth and integrity of the Gospel depend, so that it must be guarded from any kind of damaging dualistic framework of thought which would undermine the evangelical and catholic faith by tearing Jesus Christ away from God when he would become a mythological construct of pathologically disturbed and unhealed souls.

## **4.2. The ontological inclusivity of all humankind in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ**

### **4.2.1. The vicarious humanity of Christ: anhypostasis and enhypostasis in Torrance's incarnational Christological model**

Once the movement of the eternal Son of God within space and time is appropriately understood, Torrance (2008:231) proceeds by delineating the nature of the vicarious humanity of Christ (as

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<sup>49</sup> Concerning christological approaches, Green (2003:30-71) argues that Moltmann proposed that there are two-fold christological models, which have dominated the history of Christianity, namely “anthropological and cosmological Christologies.” Here, anthropological Christology refers to Christology from below and cosmological Christology refers to Christology from above. The former commences from the person and earthly ministry of Christ in order to provide the means for the divinity of Christ. The latter commences from the pre-existence of Christ as the eternal Word of God. On one hand, Molnar (2007:312) is one of the scholars who opt to commence his Christology from the divinity of Christ (Christology from above); on the other hand, Pannenberg (1968:35) and Runia (1984:37) are some of the scholars who commence their Christology from the humanity of Christ (Christology from below). Often Christology from above tends to emphasise the divinity of Christ at the expense of his humanity, and Christology from below tends to emphasise the humanity of Christ at the expense of his divinity. Torrance’s (1996:114) approach is, however, vital because it does not emphasize the divinity of Christ at the expense of his humanity and vice versa, since he is aware that taking one approach in isolation produces distortion. What is needed is to think both into each other, namely, the divinity and humanity of Christ. In other words, the proper theological procedure we adopt in Christology is not to seek “to understand the person and work of Jesus Christ by approaching him either from below or from above... for it is in the light of what we learn from below that we appreciate what derives from above, and in the light of what derives from above that we really understand what we learn from below...we apprehend both together” (Torrance, 1996:114). We are persuaded that Torrance’s approach is consistent with Scripture (cf. John 1 & Luke 1-4).

the representative of all humanity) in relation to our salvation. Torrance (2008:84, 230-232 & 2009: lxxii) understands that in the incarnation, there is a once and for all solidarity between “Christ and all mankind”, therefore, the incarnational human nature of the divine Logos identifies with all people.

Torrance (2008:84) arrived at his conclusion about the ontological inclusivity of all humankind in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ by his utilisation of the two inseparable Greek patristic theological concepts (which are the two qualifications that need to be made about the relation of the humanity of Christ to his divine person), namely, *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union (Torrance, 2008:230, 2009:lxxii-lxxiii). These Greek theological concepts determine Torrance’s (2008:233) doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ, hence his soteriological Christology. Concerning the *anhypostatic* union, Torrance (2008:84, 229 & 2009:lxxiii) agrees with Barth (1958:49) and Moltmann (1974:231) that this concept asserts the negative, i.e. that the general or common human nature of Jesus Christ has no independent grounding. The concept of *enhypostatic* union affirms the positive, that in the incarnation, the human nature of Christ is grounded in the eternal person of the divine Logos, which implies that the human nature of Christ acquires real existence and stability in the existence of God (Torrance, 2008:84, 230; cf. Barth, 1958:49).

Torrance's promoter, Karl Barth (1958:49) conceives the potential objection which is associated with the *enhypostatic* concept, especially in its relationship to the doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ (hence, Christology). He stated that the concept of *enhypostastic* union seems to deny the actual humanity of Christ (docetism), if not understood properly (Barth, 1958:49). Nevertheless, Torrance's explanation of the concept of *enhypostatic* union is cognisant of the aforesaid challenge, since Torrance qualified what he means and does not mean by his use of the *enhypostastic* concept. That is, by employing the concept of *enhypostatic* union to the vicarious humanity of Christ, Torrance (2008:230) does not mean that “...in the incarnation there was no particular individual called Jesus existing as a particular human being, with a rational human mind and will and soul.” Instead, Torrance (2008:230) believes that Jesus was a true human being, who possessed a full “human mind and human soul and human will” in his “*hypostatic* union with divine life.”

Given the aforementioned challenge, Torrance (2008:230) further encapsulates the couplet significance of the *anhypostastic* and *enypostastic* concepts in relation to the doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ, as he argues that: “the *anhypostasia* stresses the general humanity

of Jesus, the human nature assumed by the Son with its *hypostasis* in the Son, but *enhypostasia* stresses the particular humanity of the one man Jesus, whose person is no other than the person of the divine Son.” Importantly, the concepts of “...*anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis*” are “a very careful way of stating that we cannot think of the *hypostatic* union statically, but must think of it on the one hand, in terms of the great divine act of grace in the incarnation and on the other hand, in terms of the dynamic personal union carried through the whole life of Jesus Christ” (Torrance, 2008:84). To put it differently, in Torrance's (2008:232) view, the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* concepts can be summarized in the following way:

The *anhypostatic* assumption speaks of God's unconditional and amazingly humble act of grace in assuming our humanity in the concrete likeness of the flesh of sin. But within that, *enhypostasia* speaks of the fact that the person of Christ was the person of the obedient Son of the Father, who in his humanity remained in perfect holy communion with the Father from the very beginning, and so was sinless, and absolutely pure and spotless and holy (Torrance, 2008:232).

However, even though Torrance claims that he used these terms in line with Patristic classical definitions; Habets (2009:69) indicates that the inseparable usage of the *anhypostastic* and *enhypostastic* concepts in Christology was not evident in the patristic writings. Torrance (2008:84) himself acknowledges the absence of the couplet usage in the writings of the patristic fathers, as he contends that “the ancient Catholic Church never really came to put *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* together in full complimentary” significance. Given this, Habets (2009:69) argues that Torrance combined these two concepts in his treatment of the doctrine of Christology in order to uphold “...the two natures of Christ within the one person” of the divine Logos. In this way, the *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* doctrines are closely linked in affirming the incarnational mystery of the divine and human nature in the one person of the eternal Son of God (Torrance, 1996:131). However, regarding the stability of human nature, *anhypostasis* is the logically prior concept in that it recognizes that Jesus human nature does not have an alternative centre for grounding and expression, other than its *enhypostatic* grounding in the person of the divine Logos. Once this is established, it follows that all human beings find their true humanity in their *enhypostatic* existence in the existence of God (Torrance, 2008:84).

Moreover, in determining the vicarious humanity of Christ by the *anhypostastic* and *enhypostastic* concepts, Torrance consistently grounds his doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ in the trinitarian construct. Torrance (1995:3) grounds his doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ in trinitarian theology, so that “the very essence of the gospel and the whole of Christian faith depend on the centrality and primacy of the relation in being and agency between Jesus Christ and God the Father.” Here, Torrance sustains the oneness of God the Son and God the Father in being

and agency in order to delineate the adequacy of Christ's salvation in all aspects of believers' lives. The oneness in being and agency between God the Son and the Father<sup>50</sup> rests upon the *homoousion* concept, which states that the Son is of identical substance with the Father (Torrance, 1995:199). This oneness in being of the Son and the Father does not cease in the event of the incarnation (Torrance, 1996:214). Instead, it is an indivisible unity between the Son and the Father, which is in operation in the Son's redemptive work in the economy of salvation.

Thus, in the economy of salvation, we are confronted with the actuality that in becoming man, the Son of God never ceases to be identical with the Father, since they are of the same indivisible substance yet distinguishable. Here, "through the *homoousion*, the incarnational and saving-revelation of God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was traced back to what God is *enhypostatically* and coinherently in himself, in his own eternal being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Torrance, 1995:199). In agreement with Torrance, Moltmann (1974:234) contends that "if this divine-human nature in the person of the eternal Son of God is the centre which creates a person in Christ", it follows that Christ saved humanity from the depth of his existence, as he suffered and died (on their behalf) for the sake of their redemption. That is, human salvation is not something external to God, but a permanent internal act of God in redeeming humanity from sin and all its consequences.

In this way, one can argue that in expressing his doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ, Torrance upholds the doctrine of trinity and Christology together. This is why Habets (2009:68) contends that Torrance's theology is "Pro-Nicene- and Pro-Chalcedonian" in nature<sup>51</sup>. Hence, in integrating the Nicene doctrine of trinity and the Chalcedon doctrine of Christology (in order to forcefully delineate the vicarious humanity of Christ), Torrance (1995:155) agrees with Athanasius that:

....since Jesus Christ is himself God and man in one person, and all his divine and human acts issue from his one Person, the atoning mediation and redemption which he wrought for us, fall within his own being and life as the Mediator between God and man. That is to say, the work of atoning salvation

<sup>50</sup> The few passages which Torrance (1992:53) uses to depict the one being of the Son with the Father are Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22. In Torrance's (1992:54) view, these passages were used by the Church fathers (Patristic Fathers) because they affirm the exclusive "mutual knowing between the incarnate Son and God the Father, which implied a mutual relation of being between the Son and the Father...." Here, "the Father dwells in the Son and the Son dwells in the Father in a fully mutual relation of being and agency upon which the very substance of the Christian Gospel depends" (Torrance, 1992:54).

<sup>51</sup> For a detailed explanation of the Nicene formulation of the one being of God the Father and the Son, as well as the Chalcedonian doctrine of the unconfused true divine and true human nature in the one person of the Son of God, see Need (2008: 41-60 & 93-107).

does not take place outside of Christ, as something external to him, but takes place within him, within the incarnate constitution of his Person as Mediator.

There are thus, three movements or theological constructs in Torrance's thought that come together to configure the theological truth of the ontological inclusivity of all mankind in the humanity of Jesus Christ with its salvific consequences, namely, *homoousios*, *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis*. Therefore, in the *hypostatic* union of the Son of God with man in the incarnation, all human beings (including Africans) are confronted with the actuality that in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, God acted within the depths of himself and human existence to save all mankind from sin<sup>52</sup> and all its consequences; including death and the *negative impact of the invisible forces to humanity* (Torrance, 1995:4, 155, 175 & 1996:203-204, 224-233, emphasis added).

The aforesaid actuality of Christ's salvation in all aspects of believers' lives commences as they are eternally united to and participate in the vicarious humanity of Christ through faith in him and his redemptive work (Torrance, 2009:213-235 & 1995:4-5). This eternal union and participation in the vicarious humanity of Christ is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5 & Romans 8:15) in uniting us to Christ<sup>53</sup> (Torrance, 1992:110 & 1996:249-250, 238). Owing to the divine alliance between Christ's redemptive acts and the agented work of the Holy Spirit (the work of the Holy Spirit is not apart from the work of Christ), all Christians are ushered into their eternal communion and fellowship with the triune God (Torrance, 1995:156). That is, Christians are "not saved or renewed by the activity of Christ without being united to him and partaking of him" through the Spirit (Torrance, 1995:139). Through faith in Christ "our human relations with God, far from being allowed to remain on a merely external basis, are embraced within the Trinitarian relations of God's own Being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Torrance, 1992:64). Therefore, Christians are "in union with God in and through Jesus Christ" in whom their "human nature is not only saved, healed and renewed but lifted up to participate in the very light, life and love of the Holy Trinity" (Torrance, 1992:66).

#### **4.2.1.1. Christ as a sinless representative of all mankind**

Once the vicarious humanity of Christ is determined by the Greek patristic theological concepts,

<sup>52</sup> At this juncture, Torrance (1992:xii) emphasises that in the incarnational "healing and saving relations with us, Jesus Christ is engaged in personalising and humanizing activity" in order to make us truly human: this is what God intends us to be.

<sup>53</sup> The activity of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation (for humanity) is related "to the atoning substitution in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (Torrance, 1996:238).

namely, the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union, the potential challenge which one can face is that: if God in Christ identifies with sinful humankind in the incarnation, how can we escape the challenge of ending up with a sinful God in the incarnation? Cassidy (2008:193) poses this question of Torrance's incarnational Christological model: "Once Torrance allows for the creation to constitute the divine nature, what is to prevent us from affirming a sinful God?" In Cassidy's (2008:193) view, this "problem remains unanswered by Barthian theologians". However, Cassidy seems to be misunderstanding Torrance's incarnational Christological theology. That is, he is inaccurately presenting Torrance's actual position, since the breadth of Torrance's writings addresses this question. Therefore, in answering Cassidy's challenge to the doctrine of the sinlessness of God in the incarnation, one should turn to Torrance's (2008:87-104) understanding of the supernatural sign of the virgin birth in his writings. Torrance employs the divine sign of the virgin birth to argue that the Son of God in the incarnation was not sinful; instead, he was a perfect, holy and righteous God, who assumed our sinful human nature and sanctified it for the sake of our redemption.

In Torrance's (2008:8-9,119-120; 1996:17-18 & 1995:152-184) view, the incarnation in its essence is God's gracious downward movement to within the bounds<sup>54</sup> of space and time in order to identify with all mankind for the sake of our redemption. Here, Torrance (2008:94 & 1995:161) contends that the Virgin Mary's conception of Jesus in her womb through the initiatory work of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18-25 & Luke 1:26-38) is key in arguing that the human nature in which Christ assumed in the incarnation, was a sinless human nature<sup>55</sup>. In Torrance's (2008:88, 101 & 102-104) view, the doctrine of the virgin birth proves the insignificance of Joseph as the father of Jesus (though he is significant in his Davidic lineage, cf. Matthew 1:1-16), since God the Spirit graciously took the initiative in the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb<sup>56</sup>. In affirming this,

<sup>54</sup>We are not making a case here for God's restriction within the finite world, only that he came to it.

<sup>55</sup>In Torrance's (2008:88) view, the gospel of Matthew and Luke are the only gospels which "bear witness to the virgin birth of Jesus," pointing to both the divinity and humanity of Christ. However, Torrance (2008:89) argues that Mark also implicitly mentions the virgin birth (the divine instigation of the birth of Christ). Mark alludes to the virgin birth in the Nazareth incident, where he referred to Jesus as the Son of Mary without any reference to Joseph as his Father (Torrance, 2008:89). Matthew and Luke are interested in both the divinity and the humanity of Christ (the question in Matthew is whether Jesus was the carpenter's son, whilst in Luke the question is whether Jesus is the son of Mary); whilst Mark is interested in the divine origin of Christ, therefore, his failure to refer to Jesus as the son of Joseph was deliberate (Torrance, 2008:88-89).

<sup>56</sup>In this way, Torrance constantly maintains that the incarnation was the gracious act of God, in which the Virgin Mary was not in co-operation (synergism) with the Spirit of God; instead, the incarnation was entirely the divine work of God (Torrance, 2008:101). This fits well with Mary's response which was that of gratitude and "humble submission and surrender to the will of God" (Luke 1:38) (Torrance, 2008:101). However, the

Torrance is in agreement with Athanasius (1953:34); Barth (1956:190-196), O'Collins (1995:273-278) and Macleod (1998:225) on the theological significance of the faultless sign of the virgin birth in its connection to the sinlessness of the human nature of Christ. Athanasius (1953:34) indicates that the absence of the “agency” of a “human father” is vital in pointing out that Christ took upon “spotless” or “a pure” human flesh in the incarnation. Likewise, Barth (1956:191 & 192) explains that in the miraculous sign of Jesus’ conception, “sin is excluded and nullified.” However, the exclusion of male involvement in Mary’s conception of Jesus in her womb does not designate the Virgin Mary as sinless. Here, one does well to concur with Barth’s (1956:192) explanation that:

It is not as if virginity as a human possibility constitutes the point of connection for divine grace ...  
The sinful life of sex is excluded as the source of human existence of Jesus Christ, not because of the nature of sexual life, nor because of its sinfulness, but because every natural generation is the work of willing, achieving, creating, sovereign man.

However, in stating this, we are not inclining towards Macleod’s (1998:229) conclusion that the human nature which Christ assumed at the incarnation was Adam's pre-fallen human nature<sup>57</sup>. Even though the divine sign of Mary’s conception nullifies the Adamic sin in Jesus Christ, Torrance (2008:63) and Barth (1956:155) are of the opinion that Jesus Christ assumed Adam’s human nature after the fall which was both unique and similar to our human nature. In other words, the virgin birth points us to the sinlessness of the human nature of Christ in relation to the Adamic sin or original sin from Genesis 3 (Macleod, 1998:221-222). Torrance (1995:184) strongly contends that even though the human nature of Christ was Adam's human nature after the fall, the divine sign of the virgin birth points us to the actuality that “when the holy Son of God took our sinful humanity upon himself, he did it in such a way that instead of sinning himself he brought his holiness to bear upon it so that it might be sanctified in him.” In using the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* concepts, Torrance is in line with Sumner (2014:211-212) in that the immaculate

doctrine of the virgin birth does not only denote the divine origin of Christ, instead, it has a couplet significance: it points us to the divine *and* human nature of Christ (Torrance, 2008:98; cf. O'Collins, 1995:273-278). By this, one means that the scriptural assertion that Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary depicts Jesus' actual human existence (Torrance, 2008:98; cf. O'Collins, 1995:273-278). Here, Jesus Christ was not a mere human (docetic thinking), since he underwent all the “...embryonic processes of the womb just as other human beings” (Torrance, 2008:98). That is to say, Torrance does not employ the supernatural sign of the virgin birth to downplay the true humanity of Christ; instead, the virgin birth enables him to hold the existence of both the divine and human nature of Christ in the one person of the eternal Son of God.

<sup>57</sup> Even Macleod cannot sustain this position when confronted by the question of whether or not Christ was capable of sinning. He has to opt for an alternative human nature to both a pre-fallen and post-fallen human nature assumed by Christ: Macleod (1998:229) concedes that since Adam “could fall... With regards to the Last Adam, however, we must take a higher ground.”

sign of the virgin birth affirms that the human nature of Christ “is *anhypostatically* fallen and *enhypostatically* sanctified” in the person of the divine Logos. That is to say, the human nature of Christ was sinless by its grounding in the divine person of the eternal Son of God in the incarnation. However, the sanctification of the human nature of Christ in the incarnation does not imply its divination or consumption by the deity of Christ, instead, it points to its (Christ's human nature) elevation by God's pure grace in the incarnation (Torrance, 1995:161 & 2008:9).

That is, in the incarnation, Jesus' human nature was both similar and dissimilar with Adam's human nature after the fall (Torrance, 2008:61). Torrance (2008:61, cf. 78) captures the symmetry of the human nature of Christ with Adam's human nature after the fall in this way:

There can be no doubt that the New Testament speaks of the flesh of Jesus as the concrete form of our human nature marked by Adam's fall, the human nature which seen from the cross is at enmity with God and needs to be reconciled... In becoming flesh the Word penetrated into hostile territory, into our human alienation and estrangement from God.

Nevertheless, owing to the immaculate sign of Jesus' birth, there is a robust continuity and discontinuity between Jesus Christ's human nature and Adam's sinful human nature (Torrance, 2008:94). Here, one should approve of Leftow (2011:44) and Cole's (2013:142) conclusions about the uniqueness of the human nature of Christ (owing to the divine sign of the virgin birth) and the likeness of the human nature of Christ with our human nature. Leftow (2011:44) concludes that in the incarnation, God the Son was a unique “human being”, but he was also truly “human as the rest of us.” With regards to Christ's assumption of our human nature, Cole (213:142) expands that “Christ did not become incarnate in some unreal unfallen creation, but in this actual fallen one.” In agreement with Leftow and Cole, Sumner (2014:207, my emphasis) adds that the human nature of Christ is identical with our human nature “because it is *our* nature which was assumed”, and Christ's human nature is unique because his human nature “was elevated by virtue of its direct union with God” in the divine mystery of the incarnation. Here, the sanctification of the human nature of Christ was vital since it enables the inclusion of the sinful human nature of Christ in “the identity of God the Son”, so that his blood can cleanse the sins of all humankind, thereby, bringing them back into an eternal union and fellowship with God (Sumner, 2014:207).

In bringing Christology and soteriology to bear on this matter, Torrance (2008:63) coincides with Dunn's (1989:112) assertion that “Jesus the sinless one, became wholly one with the sinner/Adam, so that those who became one with the risen Christ... might share in the righteousness of God”. This is because “Jesus does not do in the flesh of sin what we do, namely, sin, but it also means that by remaining holy and sinless in our flesh, he condemned sin in the flesh he assumed and

judged it by his very sinlessness" (Torrance, 2008:63). In substantiating this, Torrance (2008:92-94) briefly discusses the treatment of Jesus Christ as the new or last Adam as an indication of the divine origin of Christ, which qualifies the sinlessness of Jesus' humanity (Romans 5:12-21 & 1 Corinthians 15:23). That is, Jesus Christ the God-man, who fully identifies with us in all aspects of our lives (except in our sin) could undo Adam's sin. He (Jesus Christ) lived an obedient life unto God the Father to the point of death on the cross, therefore, redeeming all humankind from their oppression of sin.

Once the aforementioned discussion is accepted, one can argue that Torrance's incarnational Christological model argues for the reality of the sinlessness of the assumed human nature of Christ from a broad framework of scripture. That is, with the doctrine of sin (Genesis 1-3) as the backdrop in his mind, Torrance (2008:63-73; cf. Macleod, 1991:221-230) is aware that Jesus fulfills the role of an unblemished or perfect lamb of God (John 1:29), which knows no sin to be offered before God as a once and for all sacrifice for the sins of all mankind (2 Corinthians 5:21, cf. Hebrews 10:1-8). One should agree with Torrance because the gospels present Christ as sinless (he did not commit sin) in the midst of various temptations (cf. Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13 & Mark 1:12-13). No one could accuse him of being guilty of sin (John 8:46) (Macleod, 1998:221). This corresponds well with the overarching notion that Jesus in his entire life never asked God the Father for the forgiveness of sins (Macleod, 1998:221). Instead, he taught his disciples to ask God the Father to forgive *their* sins whenever they pray to him (Luke 11:1-13 & Matthew 6:9-13) (Macleod, 1998:221). In light of this, the apostle Paul (in 2 Corinthians 5:21; cf. Galatians 3:13) can confidently affirm Jesus Christ as the sinless man, who bears our sins at the cross, so that "in him we might become the righteousness of God." That is, as a sinless God-man, Jesus Christ can act as a once and for all perfect sacrifice for the atonement of our sins, hence, leading us back into eternal communion and fellowship with the triune God (Torrance, 2008:73).

Nonetheless, the aspect of the sinlessness of Christ can mistakenly lead one to contend that in the incarnation, Jesus Christ did not fully identify himself with true humanity, since human nature is sinful. That is, Jesus Christ was to fully identify with us in our sinful human nature in order to save us from the depth of our human existence. In other words, one would be incorrect in advocating that Jesus Christ was to be utterly righteous and utterly sinful for the adequate salvation of sinful humanity to take place. In response to this misconception, it can be asked: Does Christ's full identification with humanity mean that he has to *participate* in our sinful or fallen human nature? The aforesaid misconception answers "yes" to this question. Now, if he was sinful, how could he save us from our sins, or how could God present him as a once and for all *perfect* sacrifice, that pays the price for the sins of humankind? With that in mind, the notion that Jesus Christ was

to fully identify with us in our sinful human nature by *participating* in sin (in order to save us from the depth of our human existence) tends to downplay the actuality that by nature, God is holy and righteous. Therefore, he stands in *opposition* to sin. Torrance (2008:63) summarizes it in this way:

... Thus we must say that while he, the holy Son of God, became what we are, he became what we are in a different way from us. We become what we are and continue to become what we are as sinners.... Christ the Word did not sin. He did not become flesh of our flesh in a sinful way, by sinning in the flesh. If God the Word became flesh, God the Word is the subject of the incarnation, and how could God sin? How could God deny God, divest himself of his holiness and purity? Thus his taking of our flesh of sin was a sinless action...

Barth (1956:155) supports Torrance's earlier observation as he affirms that:

In becoming the same as we are, the Son of God is the same in quite a different way from us; in other words, in our human being what we do is omitted, what we omit is done. The man would not be God's revelation to us, God's reconciliation with us, if he were not, as true man, the true unchangeable, perfect God himself. He is the true God because and so far as it has pleased the true God to adopt the true being of man. But this is the expression of a claim upon this being, a sanctification and blessing of this being, which excludes sin. In it God himself is the subject. How can God sin, deny himself to himself, be against himself as God...?

In agreement with the preceding point, Torrance (2008:73) and Macleod (1998:225) highlight that true humanity is not measured by one's participation in sin. In Torrance's (2008:73) observation, "the commission of sin is no attribute of true humanity but the attribute of inhumanity". Therefore, for our understanding of true humanity, we look up to Jesus Christ as the benchmark of true human existence. Jesus Christ does not need to conform to our fallen human living. True humanity was originally created by God without being participative in sin (Macleod, 1991:225). In this way, the discontinuity between the human nature of Jesus Christ and our sinful human nature is that Jesus Christ was a sinless human being (true human existence), who has a continuity with us as a human being in our likeness (except in sin) and lived in the depth of the sinful structures of our human existence without giving in to the temptations of this fallen world. Barth (1956:155) explains that Jesus Christ

...assumes our human existence, assumes flesh ie. He exists in the state and position, amid the conditions, under the curse and punishment of sinful man. He exists in the place where we are, in all remoteness not merely of the creature from the Creator, but of the sinful creature from the Holy Creator.

Nevertheless, in affirming the sinlessness of the human nature of Christ we are not inclining towards O'Collins (1995:271) and Macleod's (1998:229-230) conclusion that Jesus Christ was

incapable of sinning. Instead, we are supporting Crisp's (2009:122-136) argument that Jesus Christ's human nature was capable of sinning, especially by his philosophical examination of Jesus' temptation narratives in the gospels. This is because being sinful and capable of sinning are two different things. Crisp contends that Jesus had the capacity to commit sin, since in real nature, a temptation implies one's "capacity to be tempted and feel the 'pull' of temptation" (Crisp, 2009:136). In this way, if Jesus' temptations were true, it follows that he (Jesus) was capable of being sinful. Here, Crisp's understanding seems to have a biblical license since Christ in our likeness was tempted like all of us, yet he lived without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Thus, Jesus Christ can act as our high priest, who is able to sympathise with us in all our weakness because he was like us in all aspects, except in sin (Hebrews 4:15). Even if one argues that Christ assumed Adam's *pre-fallen* human nature, it does not result that Christ was therefore incapable of sin. An understanding of Jesus Christ as capable of sinning (though he did not sin) is in consistency with Adam's pre-fallen human nature, which was created by God in a sinless state yet was capable of committing sin. That is, like Adam's pre-fallen human nature, Christ's human nature was sinless but capable of committing sin. However, instead of sinning; Christ lived an obedient life unto the Father, so that in his saving work, he can both recreate and restore us from the bondage of corruption.

Having said this, however, one must conclude that the sinlessness of Jesus Christ in the incarnation is still a mystery to us. At this overlapping of ages, "sin limits our intelligence and its functioning further, hampering our understanding especially insight into spiritual matters" (Erickson, 1991:547). That is, due to the human pandemic of sin, our understanding of the incarnation is limited; we can only have a partial degree of knowledge concerning the incarnational mystery of God the Son. However, the prevailing truth is that:

within this human-inhuman existence of Adam, Jesus Christ comes as the Son of God, the Son of man as Jesus calls himself, to live out a truly obedient and filial, that is a truly human life, in perfect and unbroken union with God the Father . . . In all of that Jesus Christ is the last Adam, the one who...brings to an end the bondage of Adam's sin, breaks its power and opens up a new and living way to God (Torrance, 2008:73).

#### **4.2.2. Torrance's connection between the doctrine of creation and redemption in the vicarious humanity of Christ**

Molnar (2007:93) agrees that Torrance (1995:83) proposes a connection between the doctrine of creation and redemption in the incarnation. Torrance (1995:83) integrates the vicarious humanity of Christ within his understanding of the doctrine of creation, in which the eternal Word of God is the creator of all existing things (*cf.* John 1:3). In this endeavour, Torrance

retains the centrality of the Christian doctrine of the trinity, in which the incarnated Son of God should be understood as eternally one being with God the Father. In light of the supremacy of Christ in Colossians (1:15-17, *cf.* Hebrews 1:3), Torrance (1983:83) further understands that Jesus Christ is the eternal incarnated Son of God “by whom all creatures have been brought into being from nothing and in whom they all consist and hold together”. Once the sovereign role of the Son of God in creation is grounded in his eternal oneness in being with the Father, Torrance utilises Proverbs 8:22 to affirm the Biblical truth that in the vicarious humanity of Christ (in the incarnation), the very Son of God “... had been created (became man) by God as the Beginning and Archetype of all God’s providential and redemptive operations toward us”. In qualifying this statement, Torrance (1995:83) concurs with Athanasius in arguing that the author of Proverbs is not using the word “created” in reference to the eternal co- existence of the Son with the Father. Instead, it is used in reference to the vicarious humanity of Christ in the incarnation, in which the Son of God became man “... in order to carry out God’s saving and renewing work on our behalf” (Torrance, 1995:83).

The preceding understanding of Proverbs (8:22) contradicts the interpretation of Arianism, which declares that Jesus Christ was a prerogative creature created by God in order to act as an instrument of God in bringing forth all creation into existence (Torrance, 1995:83). Therefore, in Arianism’s understanding, the Son of God is not properly God. In objection to Arianism, one should coincide with Torrance (1995:83-84) that the author of Proverbs is pointing Christians to the mysterious act (of the incarnation) that in and through Jesus Christ, God himself stepped down (from his eternal transcendent and infinite existence) into the space and time of human existence in order to save us. Athanasius (1953:26), Barth (1966:58), Torrance (1995:83) and Hardy’s (1981:89) understanding of Christ as both the Creator and the Saviour of all humankind is vital, since it depicts the consistency between the doctrine of creation and redemption. Hardy (1981:89) explains the close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption in this way: “the agency operative in Jesus Christ and his redemption is not secondary to that in God’s creation and history with the world, but that the world and its history are formed by the same agency as is seen at work in Jesus Christ and the redemption accomplished through him.” In line with Hardy, Torrance (1981:134) proposes that:

... the incarnation means that God has made himself present within his creation in an entirely new way, in that the eternal Word of God, the personal mode and activity of his being, by whom the universe was created and from whom it received its order and in whom it consists, has himself become man in Jesus Christ, in whom he makes our creaturely existence his own.

In the vicarious humanity of Christ, Christians are confronted with the actuality that the eternal Son of God is their Creator and Saviour of all human beings. To put it differently, in the incarnation, the Son of God had a couplet vicarious function to fulfil for mankind, namely, “he is the actual way which God’s saving economy has taken among us in this world, and the one way which leads us back to the Father” (Torrance, 1995:84). Given this, Torrance (1995:110-111) upholds that

the Christian doctrine of creation and its radicalization of contingency rest on the doctrine of the incarnation. It is as we think out together the doctrines of the incarnation and the creation that we find the whole structure of our understanding of God, Christ and the world being transformed.

This suggests that Torrance (1981:134-135) integrates the doctrine of creation and redemption in the existence of the divine-human Son of God. In Torrance’s (1981:135) view, the aspect of the divine-human nature in the one person of the divine Logos brings forth the certainty that in the incarnation, the entire fallen structures of human existence are being re-ordered, renewed and preserved by the same Creator (the eternal Son of God), who brought all existing things into being. The creation was fashioned by God the Father, in and through his eternal Son (Jesus Christ), and both the continual existence and sustenance of the entire creation is dependent on the independent, self-existing and infinite God (Barth, 1966:56-58; Torrance, 1981:135). Therefore, in the redemptive incarnation of Christ, we are witnessing God’s union with contingent humankind for the sake of our re-creation, restoration and revitalisation into what God himself intends us to be. In other words, in and through Christ, God saved all mankind from its eternal corruption inherent in their Adamic sinful nature. Torrance (1981:135) helpfully encapsulates this point in his prolonged explanation:

[T]he incarnation is to be interpreted as the alliance of the Creator with his creation in actualization of his will to make himself responsible for its preservation and salvation. In and through the incarnation of his beloved Son, God has laid hold of man in his contingency and in his disorder in order to make good his support of man's fleeting, evanescent creatureliness and rectify its eternal disruptions.

Kettler (2010:136) elaborates that the union between the Creator and all mankind in the incarnation aids Torrance in his argument that “the vicarious humanity of Christ” is the point of “integration between the fallen world and the Creator.” Here, Torrance understands that the vicarious humanity of Christ is fundamental for the eternal redemption of humanity (Kettler, 2010:136). This implies that all human beings participate through their union with the humanity of Christ in the divinity of Christ for their salvation; hence, without their participation in the inner being of God himself, there is no salvation for human beings (Kettler, 2010:136). In Torrance’s view, the assumption of human nature by Jesus Christ (the Creator) is God’s demonstration to sinful humanity that eternal “reconciliation” between God and sinful humanity “will take place in

the context of God's own being", not outside of himself (Kettler, 2010:136). To quote Torrance's (1995:155-156) words:

The redemptive work of Christ was fully representative and truly universal in range. Its vicarious efficacy has its force through the union of his divine person as Creator and Lord with us in our creaturely being, where he lays hold of us in himself and acts for us from out of the inner depths of his existence with us and our existence in him, delivering us from the sentence of death upon us, and from the corruption and perdition that have overtaken us.

Here, Torrance is moving towards his establishment of the *recapitulation* concept, in which by the virtue of Jesus Christ being the Creator and the Saviour of all humanity, everything is now summed up in him as the head of all creation. Torrance puts it this way: Christ is "the Head of creation, in whom all things consist, he is the only one who really can act on behalf of all and save them. When he took our human nature upon himself, and in complete somatic solidarity with us offered himself up to death in an atoning sacrifice for man, he acted instead of all" (Torrance, 1995:155). Even though Ford (2013:26) agrees with Torrance's explanation of *recapitulation*, he amplifies Torrance, saying:

Recapitulation means that God's redemptive work found in Jesus Christ was not just a passing external shot into our time and space at only one point in history, but that He came into our existence and is at work within it, penetrating back to the beginning in the original creation retracing and re-affirming in it the divine Will, and reaching forward to the consummation in the new creation in which all things are gathered up, thus connecting the end with the beginning.

Therefore, one should recognize that Christ's redemption encompasses all aspects of life, including the dispelling of human beings' ignorance about God and his ways in the world, which extend to creation, and also to human perceptions about creation (Torrance, 1996:203-204 & 210). This is why Torrance (1995:84, cf. 1996:204) concludes that "as the *arche* in this creaturely economic form, Jesus Christ is the Head of all creation, the one source and controlling Principle with reference to whom we are to understand all the ways and works of God."

#### **4.2.3. Torrance's interpretation of Israel's redemptive history from an incarnational perspective**

Torrance (2008:41-44) is certain that the redemptive history of Israel is realised in the incarnation of Jesus Christ (hence the vicarious humanity of Christ). In saying this, Torrance differs from those who conceive of a divide between Old Testament and New Testament redemptive history by detaching Jesus Christ from his relationship with the ancient history of Israel. In other words, Torrance's enterprise of treating the redemptive history of Israel from an incarnational perspective arises from his discontent with those who hold to the Christological

doctrine of the divine and human nature “in the unity of one person” of the divine Logos (Torrance, 2008:37), yet disconnect Christ’s person from the history of ancient Israel (Torrance, 1992:1). Torrance (2008:37) argues that the person and soteriological work of Christ is inseparable. The Old Testament and the New Testament are essentially one, since the former anticipates the coming Messiah, and the latter looks back in fulfillment of the promises of the Messiah that came (Torrance, 2008:44-45). In affirming this, Torrance (2008:45) understands the doctrine of incarnation as central in God’s redemptive history for all mankind, as he contends that:

... the center of gravity is in the incarnation itself, to which the Old Testament is stretched out in expectation, and the New Testament looks back in engulfment. This one movement throughout the Old Testament and New Testament is the movement of God’s grace in which he renews the bond between himself to man in such a way as to assume human nature and existence into oneness with himself.

Since the incarnation is central in the interpretation of the redemptive history of Israel (hence, the Old Testament and New Testament redemptive history), Torrance (1992:3) proposes a two-fold approach to the doctrine of incarnation. Firstly, it interprets the history of Israel from an incarnational perspective, especially by considering the New Testament’s application of the Old Testament titles to Christ, such as the “Son of David” (Torrance, 1992:3). Torrance contends that the conferring of Israel’s sonship titles on Christ indicates Jesus Christ’s “intimate bond with Israel in its covenant relationship with God throughout history” (Torrance, 1992:3). In this way, Torrance (1992:3) explores and develops the theological meaning of the incarnation by assuming the main tenets of the developed Christian understanding of the Son, and exploring the theme of sonship in the context of biblical theology. Secondly, this approach interprets Christ “in light of what he is in himself in his internal relations with God, that is, in terms of his intrinsic significance disclosed through his self-revelation to us in word and deed” (Torrance, 1992:3). This two-fold approach keeps the person and salvific work of Christ in an inseparable union (Torrance, 2008:37). In asserting this, Torrance (2008:38) establishes that the treatment of the redemptive story of Israel under the doctrine of incarnation is a faithful representation of Scripture.

In his expansion of the interrelationship between the redemptive history of Israel and the doctrine of incarnation, Torrance (2008:45, 58) argues that Israel was unmeritoriously chosen (out of God’s grace and love) to venture into a covenantal relationship with God (Exodus 19:1ff - the Sinai covenant), in which Israel was to act as the mediator of God’s salvation to all humankind, i.e. God ordained Israel to be an instrument of his salvation to all mankind

(Torrance, 2008:58). However, since Israel was part of the predicament of sin, Torrance concurs with Kruger's (2007:2) understanding that "the covenant between God and Israel is a personal relationship of the deepest, most intimate order, in which the Lord is doing the impossible – overcome the contradiction between fallen humanity and Himself and establishing real communion, union and oneness". Nevertheless, the understanding of Israel as an instrument of God's salvation to all mankind is deeply rooted in the Abrahamic covenant (i.e. Isaac, Jacob and the nation of Israel were part of the Abrahamic promises, since they were Abraham's descendants), in which God promised to make Abraham a blessing to all the nations (Genesis 12:1-3; cf. 17:1ff) (Torrance, 2008:58). That is, even though God promised some specific blessings to Abraham and his physical descendants (Genesis 12:2), it is apparent that the Abrahamic covenant embraces all other nations, therefore, it was both "particular and universal" in nature (Torrance, 2008:51).

At this juncture, Torrance introduces us to the covenant sign of circumcision, which was established between God and Abraham (in which the covenant was to be cut into the flesh of Abraham and all his descendants as their symbol of covenant with God) as an anticipation of the incarnational event, in which the Word of God would enter into actual human existence for the sake of our redemption (Torrance, 2008:48). Here, the mystery of incarnation stands as the definitive fulfillment of the anticipation of the Abrahamic covenant; the anticipation in which the Word of God was to be "enacted so deeply into the existence of Israel" (Torrance, 2008:48). The incarnation of Christ does not only fulfill the anticipation of the Abrahamic covenant (hence, Israel), but also inaugurates the new covenant between God and humanity, in which a "new and living way was opened up in the humanity of the Son of God" (Torrance, 2008:48). Nevertheless, although Torrance emphasises the supremacy of the incarnation over the redemptive history of Israel, he still upholds the significance of Israel, as he argues that:

... the adumbration of God's way of redemption is worked out more fully with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is the way in which God comes in pure grace to gather frail humanity into covenant and communion with himself, and even provides for man a covenanted way of response to God's grace. Man approaches by faith, but in faith relies upon a divinely provided way of approach and response to God in the covenant (Torrance, 2008:40).

Significantly, in line with God's purpose for the election of Israel (namely, the role of bringing salvation to all humankind), Jesus Christ was the promised Savior/Messiah from the womb of

Israel<sup>58</sup>, who came to fulfill Israel's role (Torrance, 1992:5 & 45). In saying this, Torrance (2008:38) is moving towards his redefinition of the redemptive history of Israel under the vicarious humanity of Christ. Torrance argues that "theologically, we must say that when the Son of God breaks into that historical development, he throws it all into critical reorientation. The prehistory is critically and creatively reinterpreted by the incarnate Word" (Torrance, 2008:37-38). This is because, Jesus Christ (the ultimate fulfiller of the Abrahamic covenant and Israel's history) is the representative of all mankind, since he is God himself who stepped into human history and assumed human nature for the sake of our redemption. That is, even though Jesus Christ possessed a close association with ancient Israel, it is clear that he surpasses Israel's redemptive role, *once and for all*, because he is the very God himself who identifies with all humankind (in the incarnation) and saved them all. With this settled, Torrance (2008:44) is ready to see the reinterpretation of the redemptive history of Israel (owing to the incarnation of the Son of God) as certain because:

The supreme instrument of God for the salvation of the world is Israel, and out of the womb of Israel, Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth – yet he was no mere instrument in the hands of God, but very God himself, come in person in the form of a servant, to work out from within our limitations and recalcitrance, and to bring to its triumphant completion, the redemption of mankind, and our restoration to fellowship with the very life of God himself.

#### **4.2.4. Torrance's integration of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension with eschatology**

Having discussed the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* concepts in relation to the vicarious humanity of Christ (in section 4.2; 4.2.1), Torrance's understanding of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension is continuously maintained by the uninterrupted union between God and man in the incarnation (Torrance, 1981:135). Molnar (2007: 90-91 & 98) observes that Torrance anchors believers' salvation in their unceasing union and participation not only in Christ's incarnation, but also in his death, resurrection and ascension. Furthermore, in Torrance's view, the aforementioned sequential redemptive acts are to be understood in light of the *eschaton*, since Christ's salvation

<sup>58</sup> In Kruger's (2007:1) view, when Torrance says Israel was the womb of the incarnation, he means two specific things with which one should agree. Firstly, Israel is considered the womb of the incarnation owing to her unique task within the broken world or creation; the task in which God in his redemptive plan was seeking to restore his "personal relationship with the fallen creation" through Israel as his instrument of that endeavour (Kruger, 2007:2). Secondly, "the womb refers to the provisional way of communion that God established with fallen humanity within Israel" (Kruger, 2007:2).

“will be fully manifest when the ascended Christ returns to complete the redemption” (Molnar, 2007:98).

Concerning the significance of Christ's death and resurrection for Christians, Torrance (2009:209) argues that through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, “our human life is carried over across the chasm of death and judgment into our union with the divine life, so that through our sharing in his humanity in death and resurrection we participate in all the fruits of his atoning work.” Here, Torrance is proposing an inseparable understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ, since the two vindicate each other in the successive events of Christ's redemption of humanity. Torrance's (1981:137-138) inseparable understanding of Christ's death and resurrection is further apparent in his emphasis that it is in Christ's “...crucifixion and resurrection that God has given his ultimate answer to the question of evil in the creation, for therein he manifests in redemption the unique power by which he created the universe and by which he triumphs over all the forces of disintegration and disorder in the cosmos.” Torrance (2009:216) understands that “the resurrection is thus the resurrection of the union forged between man and God in Jesus out of the damned and lost condition of humanity into which Christ entered in order to share their lot and redeem them from doom.”

In making this statement, Torrance (1995:173) is moving towards his extensive notion of redemption as “the mighty and victorious intervention of God on our behalf, rescuing us from the tyranny of Satan and delivering us from the thrall of evil and death, but it took place through the blood of Christ in atoning expiation of guilt and in the reconciliation and justification of the sinner.” Here, one supposes that the unbreakable union of the divine and human nature of Christ forged in the incarnation attained its goal in the redemption of mankind from the powers of darkness and the power of death through Christ's resurrection from the dead (Torrance, 2009:216 & 1995:173). That is, Torrance (2009:235) incisively places the resurrection as the decisive redemptive act of Christ, in which he stripped off the powers of evil forces, as he repeatedly argues that:

Jesus is in himself the hypostatic union of the creator and the creature – it is as such that he deliberately allowed himself to be put to death in order to invade the last stronghold of evil, in the finality and ultimateness of its incarceration of us in death, and as such that he broke out of it, shattering the bands of death.

In outlining the significance of the death and resurrection of Christ (for our salvation) in relation to the defeat of the powers of darkness, Torrance (2009:137-200; 1995:173) still understands that the *hypostatic* union of the divine and human nature of Christ in the person of the eternal Son of

God was first and foremost primed to redeem human beings from their predicament of sin. In Molnar's (2007:98) view, Torrance understands that "by the virtue of the incarnation and resurrection", God "meets us within the sphere of space and time without ceasing to be God so that he can heal and overcome the effects of sin and bring about a new creation." Here, in line with Barth<sup>59</sup> (1966:71), Torrance realizes that even though Christ's salvation primarily deals with the problem of sin, he also understands that this salvation encompasses *all aspects of life*; that is, it includes the salvation of human beings from their pandemic of sin and all its consequences, including death and the negative impacts of the powers of darkness to humanity. Christ's engagement with the powers of darkness stretches from his incarnation to the resurrection. That is, the overthrowing of the evil forces by Christ is also evidenced from his engagement with the powers of darkness, which emerged from his venturing into the state of human existence (cf. the temptation narrative in Luke 4:1-13 & Matthew 4:1-11) (Torrance, 2009:209-210).

Christ battled against the evil forces in his earthly ministry. However, regardless of all the attempts from the powers of darkness to terminate the unbreakable union between his divine and human nature, Christ lived an obedient life to the Father (Torrance, 2009:247-256). In line with Christ's obedient life to the Father, the resurrection stands as the ultimate bridging of sinful humanity from death to life (cf. Hebrews 2:5-18) in the midst of the evil forces' endeavour to reverse the salvific role of the incarnated Son of God. That is, it is at the resurrection that the decisive victory of Christ over the spiritual forces of darkness is overwhelmingly claimed, once and for all, but this should be apprehended in view of the overlapping of ages (Torrance, 2009:247-256). In bringing to the forefront a deeper understanding of Christ's victory against the evil forces from the incarnation to the resurrection, Torrance (2009:209-210) argues that:

We must think of the Son of God as engaging with the forces of darkness immediately he became incarnate... He was made one of us in order to submit himself to those forces of evil, in order both to bear and vanquish them in his own existence and vicariously to provide for us a way of saving obedience and communion with the Father. The incarnation of the Son is the entry of the mediator into a situation where the communion between God and man is broken and distorted, where the divisiveness of sin and guilt has affected the very fabric of human existence.

Once the aforementioned is established, Torrance integrates the significance of the resurrection and ascension of Christ for believers. In doing this, Torrance seems to follow Barth's (1956:23) understanding, that the "resurrection and the ascension (of Christ)...is the main stay of everything"

<sup>59</sup> Barth (1966:71, my emphasis) understands that "Jesus Christ is man's salvation in *all circumstances*".

in the New Testament. Concerning the ascension of Christ, Torrance points believers to the reality that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, in which he is seated at the right hand of God the Father as the reigning king over all God's creation (Torrance, 2009:270-271). That is, through their incorporation in Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension, Christians are reminded that in Christ's redemption, "our world is already reconciled and redeemed, so that it is no longer the devil's world, but God's world, Christ's world" (Torrance, 2009:174). Like Calvin (1960:524), Torrance is of the opinion that the ascension of Christ inaugurates his majestic reign in this present epoch, since it is through his ascension that Christ is enthroned as the king over all creation.

However, the reigning of Christ over all creation is only partially realized at this present epoch of Christianity (Hebrews 2:8), since we are waiting for the complete acknowledgment of his reign over all creation at his second coming to consummate our redemption (Torrance, 2009:174). That is, even though Christ is seated in heaven (at the right hand of God the Father), it is apparent that "we do not yet see all things put under his feet" (Hebrews 2:8) (Torrance, 2009:174). To put it differently, believers "are already redeemed" and "sealed" for the "glorification" of the upcoming kingdom of God, however, the other side of the coin is that "the church (hence believers) still lives under the cross, as the church militant, and is not yet in the *regnum gloriae*, kingdom of glory" (Torrance, 2009:174). Horton (2011:559) concurs with Torrance in binding Christ's ascension and the *eschaton* together by his assertion that "because of the ascension, the church on earth is not triumphant and must wait for the bodily return of its head in the future for the renewal of all things."

Moreover, the ascension of Christ confronts us with the notion of the continuity and discontinuity between the present world and the world to come (Farrow, 1999:46). Farrow (1999:40 & 43) in his book *Ascension and Ecclesia* summarises this existing continuity and discontinuity. Here, Farrow (1999:40) argues for the existence of two histories in scripture, namely, world history and covenant history. In the wider argument of his book, Farrow contends that through Jesus' ascension, world history and covenant history are now separated to our view, although world history is still ultimately determined by the covenant history. Concerning the covenant history, Torrance (2009:294) shows himself to be in line with Farrow by his contention that the ascension of Christ "...is the ultimate end of creation and redemption revealed in the covenant of grace and fulfilled in Jesus Christ". In other words, covenant history has "already reached its goal" in Christ's ascension, and yet it is now out of our sight in heaven where Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father (Farrow, 1999:40). However, world history continues in this present era of Christianity, and believers are to continue to live in this world history without conforming to its observable sinful patterns (Farrow, 1999:43).

This brings us to the existential tension that even though believers are part of the covenant history in their *hypostatic* union with Christ (through faith); they continue to exist in the midst of the observable patterns of this ongoing history of the world. However, in their continual existence within this world history, Christians are supposed to “live in the power of the resurrection as those who are united to the risen Jesus Christ”, and they “must not be schematized to the form of the secular world but must be transformed through the renewal” of their “mind in Christ” (Torrance, 2009:247). In other words, in this ongoing history of the world, Christians are to live as already the renewed people of God, who wait for the second coming of Christ in order to bring his final restoration to all creation (Torrance, 2009: 256). Torrance (2009:256) summarizes the aforementioned existing tension in this way:

the ascension also means that this time of the new creation in Christ is hidden from us, and as it were, held back from us until in the mercy of God Jesus Christ comes again to judge and renew all creation. Nevertheless it remains valid that in the risen Christ our human nature in its creaturely and temporal existence is redeemed and renewed and established through being taken up in its affirmed reality into the life of God.

However, since Torrance (2009:293-294) is aware of the discontinuity and continuity of Christ's identification with believers (owing to the ascension of Christ) at this overlapping of ages, he resolves the discontinuity issue by arguing for Christ's sending of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:1-33). At this juncture, Torrance (1992:4) argues that in the New Testament, in the early Church, “when the crucified Jesus rose again from the dead and poured out his Spirit at Pentecost, the intrinsic significance of his person and all he had said and done broke forth in its self-evidencing power and seized hold of the church as the very Word or Logos of God.” Here, with the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit within Christians' lives, the ascension of Christ does not mean that Christ is distant from us. That is, even though Christ is currently residing in heaven, the presence of the Holy Spirit affirms that Jesus Christ is not distant from us. This understanding avoids a separation between what God has done for us in Christ's historical redemptive work and where Christians are now at the moment, namely, in *the now but not yet era* of Christianity (Horton, 2011:557). However, in arguing for the presence of the Holy Spirit within believers' lives, Torrance (2009:287-289) does not regard the ascension of Christ (cf. Acts 1:6-11 & Luke 24:50-53) as an artificial historical event in the history of Christianity. This is because he maintains that the ascension of Christ is the entering of the uninterrupted *hypostatic* union between God and man<sup>60</sup> into the eternal place of God in heaven (Torrance, 2009:287-289). Once the aforesaid point

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<sup>60</sup> Here, Torrance has foreshadowed Farrow's (1999:13) contention against people who misconceive the humanity of Christ when it comes to the doctrine of ascension. One of these misconceptions is to take

is clarified in his theology of Christ's ascension, Torrance (2009:294) unswervingly contends for Christ's continuous solidarity with Christians through the presence of the Holy Spirit (at this overlapping of ages) in his conclusion saying:

it is through the Spirit that things infinitely disconnected – disconnected by the 'distance' of the ascension – are nevertheless infinitely closely related. Through the Spirit, Christ is nearer to us than we are to ourselves, and we who live and dwell on earth are yet made to sit with Christ in heavenly places, partaking of the divine nature in him.

### **4.3. The implications of Torrance's incarnational Christological model on the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity**

This section is intended both to identify and explain Torrance's incarnational Christological concepts which will be applied to the approaching *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* in the forthcoming chapter 5, i.e. in this section, an explanation will be given of how the identified incarnational Christological concepts of Torrance will assist this thesis in deforeignising Christ in African Christianity without applying them to the prospective *Adamic incarnational Christological model* of chapter 5. Although Torrance does not engage with the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity, his construction of incarnational Christological concepts can open up avenues in Christ's person and work, which can be used to deepen African Christians' understanding of their complete identification with Christ. Therefore, it provides a platform upon which African believers' continual reliance on traditional African powers (in order to address their spiritual insecurity) can be challenged.

#### **4.3.1. The *anhypostatic* and *enhypostastic* concepts affirm Christ's real identification with African Christians**

Torrance's understanding of the vicarious humanity of Christ as determined by the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union is vital in deepening African believers' understanding of their real identification with Christ. Here, *anhypostatic* union states that the human nature of Christ is without an independent centre of personhood, since it finds its centre or expression in the person of the Son of God (*enhypostatic* union). Indeed, if the human nature of Christ does

away Christ's humanity, maybe through divinising the ascended humanity of Christ. This has huge negative implications for Christians, since believers may tend to think of themselves as divinised in Christ, therefore, whatever they (believers) do is right. Above all, the aspect of the divinisation of the humanity of Christ may be used to validate the worship of the saints in some Roman Catholic churches. Noticeably, the divinisation of the humanity of Christ seems to have some parallels with traditional African beliefs of ancestors – as the mediators between God and man, since they have acquired the supernatural power. Given these highlighted dangers, one should agree with Farrow (1999:33-34) that the upholding of Christ's true humanity in ascension is vital in our understanding of Christ as our priestly mediator who "sat down in the presence of God as our Melchizedekian priestly-king" and sympathises with us in all our weaknesses.

not have its own independent expression, and that this lies instead in the eternal Word, this makes room for the truth that the Word, the Creator, assumed a common human nature, not merely a discrete one (Graham, 2012:45). In other words, the couplet significance of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* brings to the forefront the reality that the human nature of Christ embraces all Christians, regardless of their tribal, national or genealogical categories. This is because in the incarnation, Jesus Christ is God the incarnate, who fully identifies himself with all mankind by assuming a common human nature (Torrance, 2009:lxxv & Graham, 2012:45). Therefore, Jesus Christ is not a foreigner or stranger to African Christians. In this regard, the ontological inclusivity of all humankind in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ is an important foundational element in challenging African believers' continual reliance on traditional African powers to address their spiritual insecurity.

Further, the concepts of *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union have a profound soteriological meaning (Graham, 2012:45). They bring to the fore the actuality that "God in Christ has acted for us in our place" (Torrance, 2009:lxxv). On one hand, *anhypostasia* means "that as man" Jesus Christ "has acted for all humanity" (Torrance, 2009: Ixxv). On the other hand, *enhypostasia* means "that as a man" Jesus Christ "has done so personally and individually for each and every human being" (Torrance, 2009: lxxv). This means that Christ lived, died, resurrected and ascended in solidarity with all humanity, since the union between God and man in the incarnation is a permanent indivisible union (Graham, 2012:45 & McGrath, 1999:156-157). In this way, the couplet significance of *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union confront

African believers with the actuality that in Christ's redemptive acts, God Himself acted from the depth of our existence and his (God's) existence to change our sinful human nature. To use Torrance's (1981:137) words, "the work of God in the incarnate life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ is not one that is forcibly imposed upon man from above and from outside, but a work of God incarnate issuing from below and from within man." That is:

... while it is irreducibly the work of God in His saving penetration into the ontological depths of a human being, it is nevertheless the work of God as man, translated into and rising out of the human being as genuinely the work of man (Torrance, 1981:137).

Through the Son of God's assumption of a common human nature, God Himself absorbed the penalty of sin and corruption for all humankind, and changed us from the depth of our human existence. This perspective arises from viewing the universal range of the doctrine of atonement as grounded in God. Once this is established, it follows that all true salvation and true human existence is now found in Jesus Christ, since it is in the incarnation that the human nature acquires real existence in the existence of God. Given this, Kettler (2010:121) contends that Torrance is:

[o]ne contemporary theologian who has repeatedly in his writings brought up the significance of the vicarious humanity of Christ for salvation. This is a humanity which becomes the basis for a renewed and restored humanity. Certainly such an approach holds promise to help us in our search for the reality of salvation.

However, Torrance is not a universalist in arguing for the ontological inclusivity of all mankind in the vicarious humanity of Christ. This is because Torrance maintains that all people become the beneficiaries of the redemptive acts of Christ as a result of their eternal union and participation in the vicarious humanity of Christ through faith (see section 4.1). Through faith in Christ, and thus in his vicarious humanity, Christians realise their eternal union and participation in the redemptive acts of Christ, stretching from Christ's incarnation to his second coming (*the parousia*). In this regard, Thimell (2008:30) reinforces that in Torrance's view, faith "does not create a new reality. It simply participates in an already completed event. And even that participation is a sharing in the faithfulness of Jesus." Here, the redemption of all humankind was completed *in and through* Christ's redemptive acts on our behalf, as Jesus declared at the cross that it was all finished in him (John 19:30) (Thimell, 2008:30). Thus, the eternal union and participation of African believers in the vicarious humanity of Christ warrants one to argue that Christ's redemption is sufficient for African Christians in all of their existence. That is, through faith in Jesus Christ, the redemption of Christ is sufficient for all Christians, since it is in the incarnation that God identifies with all mankind and then acts deep from

within Himself to save estranged mankind and restore us into our eternal communion with the Triune God.

#### **4.3.2. The connection between the doctrine of creation and redemption affirms Christ as both the Creator and Saviour of African Christians**

Torrance's close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption is helpful in establishing the complete identification of Christ with African Christians. The close association between the doctrine of redemption and creation shows that there is no disjunction between these two doctrines. That is, in the incarnation, the same Creator (God the Son) of all visible and invisible things is the one who vicariously acts for the redemption of all humankind. In redemption, as we have discussed, God in Christ acted from within the depths of Himself to save us, not only from sin but from the tyranny of the spiritual powers of darkness. In saying this, we are moving towards the declaration that Jesus Christ truly identifies with African Christians as both their Creator and Saviour in all aspects of life. He is not a stranger or foreigner to Africans; therefore, they can trust him fully for their spiritual security. In other words, in the incarnation, the Son of God, head of all creation, came into complete solidarity with all humankind so that he can truly save us from sin and evil.

By the virtue of Jesus Christ being the Creator, it follows that Jesus Christ is the only one who can save mankind from visible and invisible evils, which emerge as a result of Adam's sin (Genesis 3). In line with this understanding of Jesus Christ as both the Creator and Saviour of all humankind, it is important to reinforce that Christ's redemption for African Christians encompass all aspects of life, including the dispelling of their ignorance about God and their perceptions of creation and his ways in the world. That is, the redemption of Christ is vast and comprehensive in nature. In this way, if God's salvation in and through Jesus Christ as both the Creator and Saviour is all encompassing, spanning both material and spiritual reality, then the African Christians' use of traditional African powers for their well-being and spiritual security is offensive to God, since it depends on other powers rather than God's saving power revealed in Christ. This denies the notion of recapitulation (*apakephalaiosis*), which affirms the "fulfillment of God's purposes for man in and through the inclusive and vicarious humanity of Christ" (Torrance, 1981:140). Therefore, to challenge African Christians' continued reliance on traditional African powers, we ought to understand, like Torrance (1995:84, cf. 1996:204) that "as the *arche* in this creaturely economic form, Jesus Christ is the Head of all creation, the one source and controlling Principle with reference

to whom we are to understand all the ways and works of God”.

#### **4.3.3. Torrance's interpretation of Israel's redemptive history from an incarnational perspective warrants African believers' identification with the biblical redemptive narrative**

Torrance's treatment of Israel's redemptive history from an incarnational perspective is vital because it enables African Christians to embrace the Bible story as their own salvific history, which finds its fulfilment in Christ's incarnation. This does not mean that Torrance does not consider the unique place of Israel in God's redemptive plan. He acknowledges Israel as the instrument of God's salvation for all nations, but because Israel was also part of the pandemic of sin, she failed in fulfilling her universal role to the world. Here, Torrance dwells on the Abrahamic covenant in order to highlight the significance of the relationship between the Abrahamic covenant and the nation of Israel in its universal role of bringing salvation to all humankind. Torrance highlights that the Abrahamic covenant was particular and universal in nature. On one hand, the particularity of the Abrahamic covenant is that it has promises solely pertaining to Abraham and his biological descendants (Israel) (Genesis 12:1-2). On the other hand, the universal aspect of the Abrahamic covenant is that it has a universal promise, in which Abraham and his descendants were to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:3).

Torrance remains in touch with the notion of Jesus belonging to the Abrahamic/Davidic line, especially by exploring the theme of sonship in the context of biblical theology. Phrases like ‘the Son of David’ are used to contend that Jesus in the biological (human) sense belongs to the womb of Israel. However, although Torrance regards Christ in his intimate relationship with the nation of Israel, he is very aware that Jesus Christ was God incarnate (very God himself), who identifies with all humankind as both Creator and the Second Adam, so that he can work out redemption for all people, hence, fulfilling the universal aspect of the Abrahamic promise. In other words, even though Jesus is from the womb of Israel, Torrance is aware that Jesus did not fulfill the unique role of Israel as a mere instrument of God, instead, he fulfilled it as God, who voided himself of his honour and glory (Phillipians 2:5-11) in order to identify with all humanity, so that he can suffer for the sake of our redemption. Thus, through faith in Jesus Christ, the biblical redemptive history of Israel extends to African Christians, since the Old Testament and New Testament is a single redemptive story, which culminates in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the very God himself.

#### **4.3.4. The presence of the Holy Spirit within believers' lives affirms Christ's ongoing real identification with African Christians after his ascension**

In view of the nature and extent of Christ's salvation, Torrance maintains Christ's real and ongoing identification with African Christians (in this overlapping of ages) through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. By arguing for Christ's ongoing real identification with believers through the Spirit, Torrance closes a gap between what Christ has done for Christians in history and where believers are now since his ascension (see sections 4.2 and 4.2.4). The ascension of Christ does not connote God's 'withdrawnness' from Christians (Horton, 2011:557). Torrance (in sections 4.2 and 4.2.4) concurs with Calvin (1960:522-523) and Horton (2011:559) that Christ is absent in the sense of physical appearance. However, through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ continues to have real solidarity with believers. In this way, Torrance dispels the conception of a gap between the redemptive work of Christ in its historical, present and continuous effect, i.e. Christ's power was not only effective during his historical redemptive work; rather, he is currently exercising supreme power through the Holy Spirit over the spiritual powers of darkness.

Given this, African believers are to be assured that Christ is not distant from them, despite currently residing at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. The sovereign presence of Christ among believers through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit should be reinforced in African believers as a means of deepening the active involvement of Jesus Christ in the ongoing lives of believers at this now-but-not-yet epoch of Christianity. In this regard, the Triune God does not plant believers in eternal union and participation with Himself (in the Son and through the Holy Spirit) and abandon them. Instead, the Son of God came into our fallen world in order to have a direct victory over evil, and now resides in African Christians by the Spirit and secures them in his inaugurated kingdom of righteousness as they await the kingdom's consummation in which there will be no more spiritual insecurity, which causes them to continually revert to their former practices of consulting the traditional African powers.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Torrance's incarnational Christological model has been challenged by Cassidy, who is uncertain about how Torrance escapes the challenge of ending up with a sinful God in the incarnation. In answering Cassidy's challenge to Torrance's incarnational Christological

model, it is necessary to concur with Torrance that in the incarnation, the assumed human nature of Christ was sanctified. Here, the exclusion of the human agency in the conception of Jesus (owing to the divine sign of the virgin birth) affirms the exclusion of the Adamic or original sin in Jesus. However, this does not mean that the human nature which Christ assumed was not Adam's human nature after the fall. Instead, in the incarnation, Jesus Christ assumed Adam's human nature after the fall but the Son of God "brought his holiness to bear upon it so that it might be sanctified in him" (Torrance, 1995:184). This makes logical sense within the broader scope of Scripture, in which a sinless Lamb of God was to be offered on our behalf, once and for all, for the atonement of our sins. To further sustain the aspect of the sinlessness of the Son of God in the incarnation, we have argued that God by nature cannot sin; instead, he stands in opposition to sin.

Having expounded Torrance's incarnational Christological model, one is justified in concluding that Torrance is one of the outstanding Western theologians. Pertinently, his incarnational Christological model opens up avenues for African Christians to appreciate Christ's full identification with all believers. In arriving at this conclusion, it was established that Torrance's model criticised the Western misconception of the divine (God), namely, the Greek philosophical thinking which tends to drive a wedge between God and His creation. Greek philosophical thinking contends that God is not subject to change (immutability) and suffering (impassibility) and, therefore, denies the actuality of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation. In rebutting this dualistic framework between God and his creation, Torrance initially grounds his doctrine of the incarnation within his Trinitarian construct. Torrance's Trinitarian concept argues that Jesus Christ is of one being (*homoousios*) with the Father, and our knowledge of God within himself (ontological trinity) is via the economy of salvation. That is, it is in the economy of salvation where God in and through Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to all humankind as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Also, the oneness in the being of God the Father and Jesus Christ is integral to the doctrine of redemption, since it is *in and through* Jesus Christ that all humankind are being saved, and then restored to their eternal communion with the Triune God. Moreover, once the oneness in being and agency between the Father and the Son is established, Torrance is ready to oppose the Western misconception of the divine and our relation to it. Torrance argues that God cannot be caused to move (immutability) or to suffer (impassibility) by something external to himself as God but has done so out of His free mercy and love. In this respect, the incarnation is God's self-downward movement (out of his eternal love) from within Himself.

The chapter continued by identifying and explaining Torrance's incarnational Christological concepts which will be applied to the prospective Adamic incarnational Christological framework in Chapter 5. Various identified theological concepts of Torrance were found to be in line with the main argument of this thesis. In the incarnation, Jesus Christ fully identifies himself with African Christians. Torrance employs his two Greek patristic theological concepts, namely, *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union in order to explain the vicarious humanity of Christ. The *anhypostatic* concept means that the human nature of Christ is without an independent centre of personhood and the *enhypostatic* concept affirms that the human nature of Christ finds its centre or expression in the person of the eternal Son of God. That is, the human nature which was assumed by the person of the divine Logos, the Creator, was the common human nature, which embraces all humankind.

To further deepen our understanding of Christ's identification with all mankind, Torrance unpacks the close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption, that is, the actuality that Christ is both the Creator and Saviour of humankind. In substantiating this idea, Torrance recognises the redemptive history of Israel from an incarnational perspective as warranting all Christians' identification of themselves with the biblical redemptive history of the Old and New Testaments, i.e. both the Old and New Testaments are essentially one redemptive narrative, which finds its fulfillment in the incarnation of Christ. The implications of the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ in its interrelationship with eschatology were explored further. To align with the main argument of the research, Torrance closes a gap between Christ's ascension at the right hand of the Father and where Christians are now at this moment on earth: Jesus Christ continuously identifies himself with all believers through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit with them. In other words, Jesus Christ is not distant from African Christians in this now-but-not-yet era of Christianity; rather, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, he secures all believers in their Christian pilgrimage, as we await his return to consummate our redemption.

## Chapter V:

### **Towards a Biblical Adamic Incarnational Christological Framework: a response to the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity**

#### **5. Introduction**

In this chapter, it is important to provide a comprehensive summary in respect of the development of this thesis. The first chapter suggests that there is a form of Christian syncretism in African Christianity which has manifested in some African Christians' continual reliance on traditional African powers to address their spiritual insecurity. Chapter 2 revealed that this problem partly arises from a Christian model of the incarnation that presents a 'foreign Christ'. Here, Christ is perceived as a 'foreigner' in the traditional African world-view, which requires a mediatorial blood-related ancestor of the earthly community, family or clan as a means to address spiritual insecurity. The 'foreignness' of Christ was further advanced by the early missionaries, who presented Christ from a mainly Western perspective. This presents an incarnational Christological challenge which prevents some African Christians from finding security in Christ.

Chapter 3 critically analysed and evaluated Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological concept in its attempt to 'deforeignise' and Africanise Christ in African Christianity, seeking to have a real effect in reducing the spiritual insecurity of African Christians. Although it was possible to appreciate the positive aspects of Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological model, it was also argued that Bediako's concept of contextualisation, which tends to treat Christ under the category of ancestor, compromises the actuality that Christ transcends the ancestral category (within traditional African world-view), since he is God incarnate. With this challenge in mind, an alternative Adamic incarnational Christological model which responds to the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity was proposed for this chapter. This alternative model was formulated by drawing from both Bediako and Torrance's positive understanding of Christ's incarnation.

In order to seek assistance from Torrance in constructing an Adamic incarnational Christological framework, the fourth chapter critically analysed and evaluated Torrance's incarnational Christological model. It became clear that Torrance's incarnational Christological conceptualization opened up aspects of Christ's incarnation which fully identify Christ with African Christians, i.e. although Torrance does not engage with the problem of the

foreignness of Christ in African Christianity, his construction of incarnational Christological concepts opened up avenues in Christology, that can be used to deepen African Christians' understanding of Christ's identification with them. Firstly, he employed the Christ- 'deforeignising' concepts of the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* constructs, which affirm Christ's real identification with African Christians. Secondly, in studying Torrance, it was also possible to deduce the significance of the close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption in affirming Christ as both the Creator and Saviour of African Christians. Thirdly, Torrance's interpretation of Israel's redemptive history from an incarnational perspective warrants African believers' identification with the biblical redemptive narrative. Lastly, the presence of the Holy Spirit within believers' lives affirms Christ's real and ongoing identification with African Christians after his ascension.

Given the above-mentioned backdrop, this chapter proposes a framework which responds to the problem of the perceived foreignness of Christ in African Christianity by drawing concepts of Christ's incarnation from both Bediako (in Chapter 3) and Torrance (in Chapter 4). In order to accomplish this goal, this chapter will initially provide a brief biblical-theological foundation for advancing Adam as a suitable category in assisting African Christians' understanding of their complete identification with Christ. This will be done by testing the credibility of the theological construction of Adamic Christology by examining the continuities and discontinuities between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12- 21, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, Philippians 2:6-11, Luke 3:23-4:12 and Hebrews 2:5-18. Secondly, it will briefly justify the use of Adam as a mediating category in aiding African Christians' understanding of Christ's complete identification with them. This justification is important because the Adamic Christological category does not arise from traditional African culture or the African world-view but from Scripture itself.

Once this is complete, this chapter will proceed to interpret the incarnation of Christ according to the Adamic Christological category by suggesting that the theological concepts of *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis*<sup>61</sup> affirm that as our New Adam, Jesus Christ completely

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<sup>61</sup> This paragraph is not merely a repetition of what has been said above, but brings the interconnection between the Adamic Christological category and the identified theological concepts of Bediako and Torrance to bear on the deforeignisation of Christ in African Christianity.

identifies with African Christians<sup>62</sup>. Secondly, the New Adam (Jesus Christ) is both the Creator and Saviour of African Christians. Thirdly, we shall suggest that the interpretation of Israel's history from an incarnational perspective connects African Christians to the redemptive narrative of Scripture. Fourthly, the chapter will discuss the presence of the Holy Spirit within African believers' spiritual insecurity as a means of affirming the New Adam's ongoing and complete solidarity with them *after* his ascension. Here, the relationship of the death, resurrection and ascension of the New Adam with eschatology will be established as a means of grounding African believers' understanding of the salvation offered by Christ. Once the above-mentioned is completed, the chapter will conclude by summarising the main arguments together.

### **5.1. A concise biblical-theological basis for the Adamic Christological construction**

This section seeks to establish a biblical-theological foundation for advancing Adam as a mediating category in enhancing African Christians' understanding of their complete identification with Christ in his saving incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension. This is because salvation in Jesus Christ is the "reversal of Adam's fall" (Dunn, 1989:105; cf. Jewett, 2013:80-82 & Schreiner, 1998:275). It argues that Scripture frequently presents us with an Adamic Christology by drawing comparisons between Adam and Christ, either explicitly (cf. Romans 5:12-21 & 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 45-49) or implicitly (cf. Luke 3-4 & Hebrews 2:5-18). In the comparisons between Adam and Christ, there is an ontological inclusivity of all mankind in their vicarious humanity. Here, Adam stands as the head of the fallen humanity, whilst Christ stands as the head of the redeemed humanity. Also, Adam is a type of Christ; who is the real thing (the anti-type) which the type symbolizes (cf. Romans 5:14) (Barth, 1956:9-10 & Hultgren, 2011:226). That is, even though there are continuities between Adam and Christ on the basis of the corporate solidarity of humankind in their vicarious humanity; the God-man, Jesus Christ, however, exceeds Adam in all respects as the one who undoes Adam's sin and death for all humankind who believe in his saving person and work.

We will establish our biblical-theological foundation of Adamic Christology by testing its validity in Philippians 2:6-11, Luke 3:23-4:13, Hebrews 2:5-18, however, with Romans 5:12-

<sup>62</sup> However, we declare that the *Adamic incrnational Christological model* does not only pertain to African Christians but to Christian theology in general. That is, it has an ecumenical application because Christ identifies with all Christians as their New Adam.

21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 as our central scriptural basis. An examination of these texts is important for two reasons. Firstly, it indicates how pervasive Adamic Christology is across the New Testament not just in Paul's writings. Secondly, it identifies the many and different elements in the person and work of Christ that are anchored in Adamic Christology and will be applicable to the research problem.

### **5.1.1. The possibility of Adamic Christology in Philippians 2:6-11**

Dunn (1989:115; 113-121) is one of the few scholars who have proposed the possibility of Adamic Christology in Philippians 2:6-11. He finds some Adamic parallels in the exaltation hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 and this results in his failure to see this passage as primarily pertaining to Christ' pre-existence and incarnation (Dunn, 1989:113-121). Hence O'Collins' (1995:24-41) disagrees with Dunn's establishment of Adamic Christology in Philippians 2:6-11, arguing rather that Philippians 2:6-11 is a Christological hymn, which affirms the pre-existence and the incarnation of Christ (O'Collins, 1995:24-41). Hence, Philippians 2:6-11 can be summarised in this way: "Christ belonged to the eternal sphere of divine existence (Philippians 2:6), and joined the human (Adamic) sphere only when he assumed another mode of existence (Philippians 2:7) which concealed his proper (divine) being" (O'Collins, 1995:36). Thus Dunn's formulation of Adamic Christology from Philippians 2:6- 11 is problematic since the pre-existence of Christ and his assumption of our human mode of existence in the incarnation is not in the foreground. Given this, the possibility of Adamic Christology in Philippians 2:6-11 is unlikely. However, the presence of Adamic Christology in Luke 3:23-4:13, Hebrews 2:5-18, Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 is clear, as the discussion below will demonstrate.

### **5.1.2. Adamic Christology in Luke 3:23-4:13**

Importantly, Luke's genealogy which presents Jesus Christ as "the son of Adam, the son of God" (cf. Luke 3:23-38) is aimed at Jews and Gentiles to make them embrace Jesus Christ as their own true saviour<sup>63</sup> (Marshall, 1978:161). That is, "the carrying back of the genealogy to Adam is meant to stress the universal significance of Jesus for the whole of the human race and not merely for the seed of Abraham" (Marshall, 1978:161). For the purpose of this thesis, it does not matter whether Luke's gospel was written to assure those who had heard and believed the

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<sup>63</sup> Stein holds a different view to Marshall. He argues that even though Luke might have had some Jews in mind, his primary audience was Gentile (Stein, 1973:26-27).

gospel of Jesus Christ or to evangelise those who had never heard the gospel<sup>64</sup>. However, what matters is that Luke is deliberately linking Jesus' genealogy with Adam in order to show the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles in God's salvific plan, fulfilled by the true man Jesus Christ, who is the true biological offspring of Adam (Ryken, 2009:143-149).

In formulating Adam's Christology in Luke, Ryken (2009:145-148) points out some interesting dissimilarities between the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. On one hand, Matthew is interested in establishing that Jesus is the true Davidic heir of the throne of David. Matthew does this by mentioning "the rightful heirs to Israel's throne" in commencing his genealogy with a discussion of Abraham and David and then ending up with Jesus Christ as the true Messiah for Israel, who is the true offspring of both Abraham and David (Ryken, 2009:145). On the other hand, Luke is interested in establishing both the real divinity and humanity of Christ by tracing him as "the son of Adam, the son of God" (*cf.* Green, 1997:188-190). Here, Luke "traces Christ to David's son, Nathan, through his actual mother Mary, through whom he can rightfully claim to be fully human, the redeemer of humanity" (Ryken, 2009:147-148). In other words, by naming Jesus Christ as the son of Adam, Luke moves towards his affirmation that "Jesus Christ was unto our race as a human among men" (Ryken, 2009:143), i.e. Jesus Christ is the true descendant of Adam, who stands as the fulfillment of the first obscure gospel promise of Genesis 3:15, since he crushes the devil through his saving incarnation, life, death and resurrection, and therefore reconstitutes a new faithful covenant community comprised of both Jews and Gentiles (Bock, 2012:42).

Furthermore, this Adamic Christology<sup>65</sup> stems from Luke's deliberate comparison of the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of the God-man, Jesus Christ. Here, both Adam and Christ have a unique relationship with God as two different sons of God<sup>66</sup> (Ryken, 2009:148-149). On one hand, the first Adam was not of human generation, instead, he was "created in the image of God", which implies that "Adam bore the likeness of God" as the son of God

<sup>64</sup> This purpose is the one which Marshal (1978:35) holds as the evangelistic purpose of Luke, that is, "the presentation of the ministry of Jesus in its saving significance".

<sup>65</sup> Here, we are not saying that Luke was primarily concerned with establishing Adam's Christology. That is, we are of the same opinion of Culpepper (1995:95) who understands that Luke was not mainly concerned "...with a second Adam Christology but with the affirmation that Jesus Christ was the son of God".

<sup>66</sup> Seccombe (2002:123, *cf.* Torrance, 1992:36) is of the conviction that "the sonship of both Adam and Jesus is related to their appointment to rule the world, and their testing is an attempt to subvert this appointment".

(Ryken, 2009:148). This first son of God was tempted by the serpent in the Garden of Eden and fell into sin, which corrupted the whole human race. In this way, Dunn (1989:112) is right in using the Adamic fall of Genesis 3 to maintain that Luke (3:38) presents Adam “...as the son of God whose sonship was destroyed by the fall.” On the other hand, Luke is interested in Jesus Christ as both the “Son of Man”, (the son of Adam) (cf. Luke 19:10, 9:58 & 7:34) and the divine Son of God, in whom God the Father at his baptism was well pleased with his Son (cf. Luke, 3:22 & Luke 9:35, which echoes Isaiah 42:1). In this way, Luke confronts all humankind with Jesus Christ as the New Adam, who is both divine-human in nature (Ryken, 2009:143, 148-149). He is both the true Son of Adam and the true Son of God<sup>67</sup>, who knew no sin but chose to identify himself with sinful humankind in the incarnation, and proceeded to volitionally identify himself with the sinful nation of Israel in the act of John’s baptism of repentance<sup>68</sup> (Luke 3:22), and soon after that ventured into direct conflict with his enemy (the devil) in the wilderness, in which Jesus had an overwhelming victory over him (Luke 4:1-13, cf. Mark 1 & Matthew 4) (Seccombe, 2002:90, 132-133 & Ryken, 2009:133, 151-163). Therefore, in bringing Adam, the failed son of God<sup>69</sup> (cf. Luke 3:38) in the Garden of Eden (cf. Genesis 3) to bear in this comparison, Jesus Christ is portrayed as the true Son of Man and God, who succeeded where the first Adam had failed by living a life of active and passive obedience to God the Father unto the point of death at the cross for the salvation of all mankind.

Given this, “Luke sets the life of Jesus both in its historical context and a theological context. All that happens in the Gospel...is ultimately a part of God’s redemptive plan for the salvation of all humanity” (Culpepper, 1999:20; cf. Green, 1997:21). Therefore, we conclude by agreeing with Bock’s (2012:68) assertion that Luke 4:1-13 is a crucial passage which ends by showing that Jesus is worthy “of being the second Adam” through “enduring and surviving temptations from Satan.”

<sup>67</sup> Marshall (2005:123) argues that the question of the co-existence of the Son with the Father is not addressed explicitly; however, this does not mean that Luke does not implicitly uphold the pre-existence of Christ.

<sup>68</sup> For a detailed discussion of the purpose of Jesus’ baptism, see Seccombe’s (2002:90, cf. Ryken, 2009:133) discussion in his systematic approach to the Gospels, in which he concludes that Jesus’ baptism identifies him with sinners. He “...felt a bond of unity with his people which made him unwillingly to stand aside from their corporate guilt as a nation, and therefore made his standing with them in baptism appropriate.”

<sup>69</sup> At this juncture, Israel as the failed son of God in the wilderness is also contrasted with Jesus Christ, the successful son of God. Israel was God’s chosen son (cf. Hosea, 11:1) but she failed in her temptation in the wilderness (cf. Numbers, 10:11-14:45). That is, we have the two failed sons of God (Adam and Israel) in comparison to Jesus Christ, the faithful Son of God.

### 5.1.3. Adamic Christology in Hebrews 2:5-18

Hebrews 2:5-18 is a crucial passage in which Adam's Christology is implicitly stated (Hagner, 2005:247-253). In bringing the wider context of Hebrews to bear on the theological construction of Adamic Christology, Hagner (2005:247) rightly affirms that this epistle was written to a Christian community which was facing multifaceted challenges, causing them to consider abandoning their Christian faith. Hebrews 2:5-18 is a crucial passage in which Adam's Christology is implicitly stated (Hagner, 2005:247-253). Although these Christians had not suffered to the extent of shedding blood for their faith (Hebrews 12:4), the author indicates that “some members had been imprisoned, and others suffered the confiscation of their property” (Hebrews 10:34) (Craddock, 1998:9). These challenges are amplified by the author's use of words such as “persecution” (Hebrews 10:33), “hostility” (Hebrews 12:3) and “torture” (Hebrews 13:3) (Craddock, 1998:9). However, it is surprising that the author of Hebrews responds to his audience's challenges by providing a thorough discussion of the person<sup>70</sup> and work of Christ (Craddock, 1998:10 & Hagner, 2005:247-248). This seems to suggest that “...at the heart of their problem was inadequate Christology for their social context” (Craddock, 1998:10). That is, the audience of Hebrews might have had a high view of the divinity of Christ at the expense of his humanity or vice versa<sup>71</sup>. With this in mind, the author finds it necessary to bring his implicit Adamic Christology in Hebrews 2:5-18 as a means of deepening his audiences understanding of the saving significance of the incarnation, death and exaltation of Jesus Christ “into the larger scheme of God's redemption” (Craddock, 1998:10).

Hebrews 2:5-18 brings Adam's role in its quotation of Psalm 8:5-7. Even though commentators may disagree<sup>72</sup> about the author's usage of Psalm 8:5-7 in Hebrews 2:5-8, Dunn (1989:109) and Hagner (2005:248) offer a plausible interpretation in suggesting that in its original meaning,

<sup>70</sup> The epistle of Hebrews confronts us with the reality that “because of his deity and humanity, Jesus Christ is both the Son of God and high priest and therefore he is able to make a single offering for sin that is fully efficacious for all time” (Hagner, 2005:248). Even though the author of Hebrews set forth the pre-existence of Christ as the basis of his superiority over the Old Testament prophets and the angels (cf. Hebrews 1), he also understands that both the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ have salvific significance for “the finality of God's work” in him (Hagner, 2005:247-248).

<sup>71</sup> We agree with Craddock (1998:10) that the recipients of the letter of Hebrews possibly had an inadequate understanding of the salvific significance of the “...exaltation and enthronement of the Son”. That is, their understanding of the exaltation and enthronement of Jesus did not give them the knowledge of Jesus Christ's ongoing intercessory ministry for believers.

<sup>72</sup> For example, Craddock (1998:37) seems to dismiss the possibility of Adam's Christology in Hebrews 2:5-18 in his argument that: “it does not seem appropriate here to elaborate on possible second Adam or Son of man Christologies embedded in the text. Neither is developed in Hebrews and therefore, would require heavy borrowings from the gospels and Paul”.

Psalm 8:5-7 reveals God's intention for humankind, in that human beings are created lower than the angels yet crowned with glory and honour which they forfeited in the fall of Genesis<sup>73</sup>. That is, the Psalm is reminiscent of Genesis (chapters 1-3) narrative of creation and fall, in which we perceive Adam as the representative of all humankind crowned with honour and glory (Hagner, 2005:252-253). Here, God also subjected the whole creation under Adam as its ruler on his behalf (Craddock, 1998:42-43 & Jewett, 1981:42-43). Hence, Craddock (1998:37) argues that the Psalmist:

...offers praise to God and contrasts the power and majesty of God with the relative insignificance of human beings. It ponders why God would think of humans. The Psamist does not lament human frailty but reaffirms the unique place of humanity in relation to God and the rest of creation (cf. Genesis 1:26:28).

Now with reference to Jesus, the author of Hebrews is depicting Jesus Christ as the “archetypal human” (Hagner, 2005:253). That is, Hebrews 2:5-8 is quoting Psalm 8:5-7 as an affirmation of Jesus Christ's true identification with humanity in the incarnation, as the second Adam, who restores God's purposes for humankind, which were corrupted by the Adamic sin and its consequences for all humanity.

Even though in this interim Christian period believers do not yet see all things subjected under Christ's feet (Hebrews, 2:8) as the New Adam, it is clear that in the incarnation, God in and through Jesus Christ successfully embarked on a mission of saving mankind (Hebrews 2:9-15) (cf. Bruce, 1964:32-53 & Ellingworth, 1993:148-157). God accomplished the salvation of mankind in and through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, in which he was made “a little lower” than the angels (Hebrews 2:8b) by assuming our actual flesh and blood as the second Adam, destroying the devil who holds the power of death, and therefore liberating humankind who were in bondage to the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14) (cf. Ellingworth, 1993:153-179 & Bruce, 1964:42-52). Here, Jesus Christ was able to taste death for all humankind (Hebrews 2:9a) because he was made like us in every detail (Hebrews 2:17a) but with the exception of sin, and therefore suffered death for the propitiation of our sins (Hebrews 5:17b) (Ryken, 2009:149; cf. Ellingworth, 1993:170-179). That is, “any life short of suffering and death would have been less than identification with humankind, and therefore, less than a full understanding of the human condition” (Craddock, 1998:39). To bring the entire Christological argument of

<sup>73</sup> Even though we have questioned Dunn's construction of Adamic Christology in Philippians 2:6-11, we continue to use his establishment of Adamic Christology in Hebrews 2:5-18 and Romans 5:12-21 because it corresponds with the biblical data.

Hebrews to the fore, we argue that Jesus Christ is the true God-man, the author and perfecter (Hebrews 2:10) of the salvation of humankind, who vicariously suffered death for everyone and was crowned with glory and honour at his exaltation after death (Dunn, 1989:109). In this way, all Christians are exhorted to have their confidence in Jesus Christ as the sole merciful and faithful divine-human high priest, who is qualified to minister the things of God to man and the things of man to God. We are warranted to have the aforesaid understanding of Christ's salvation for humankind because:

...the divine programme which broke down with Adam has been run through again in Jesus – this time successfully. It was by playing out the role of Adam that Christ became the last Adam: Adam led man to death and not glory, but Jesus by his life, suffering and death became the pioneer, opening up the way through death for those who follow him (Dunn, 1989:110).

#### **5.1.4. Adamic Christology in Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22**

This research study uses Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 as its key passages in establishing a biblical-theological foundation for advancing Adam as a mediating category in enhancing African Christians' understanding of their complete identification with Christ. In interpreting Romans 5:12-21, many commentators (Fitzmyer, 1993:135-136; Schreiner, 1998:274-277; Jewett, 2007:281 & Moo, 1996:326-328) are of the opinion that Paul in this section is defining the identity of humankind as either found in Adam or in Christ. Schreiner (1998:275) argues that "the parallel between Adam and Christ suggests that people are constituted as sinners or righteous not by virtue of their own sin or righteousness but by the sin of Adam or by the righteousness of Christ, respectively." Here, the reality is that in Adam's disobedience all human beings have sinned (Romans 5:12). Even though Adam's descendants may not have sinned in the way which Adam sinned, the truth is that all human beings are the inheritors of Adam's sinful humanity, including Jews and Gentiles (Fitzmyer, 1993:135-136 & Jewett, 2007:376-377). This is because sin and death came into the world through Adam before the Mosaic Law (cf. Romans 5:12-14) (Fitzmyer, 1993:135-136 & Jewett, 2007:376-377). Given this, we agree with Moo (1996:329) in his assertion that: "whether we explain this solidarity in terms of sinning *in* and *with* Adam or because of a corrupt nature inherited from him (Adam) does not matter at this point"<sup>74</sup>. Likewise, Jewett (2007:373) argues that the sin of

<sup>74</sup> Here, Berkouwer (1971:425-451) argues that many theologians and commentators hold to the doctrine of original sin. Augustine (Berkouwer, 1971:430-433), Calvin (1947:200-201), Luther (1954:93, cf. 93-98), Cranfield (1975:281), Bavinck (see Berkouwer, 1971:450-451) and Kruse (2012:241-244) are few adherents' of the doctrine of original sin. In Berkouwer's view, many theologians agree on the doctrine of original sin, however, they differ on how the sin of Adam was propagated to all humankind. The two dominant positions are the realism and federal positions. On one hand, the realism position

Adam has “affected all” his descendants “without exception, placing all under the powers of sin and death.” The truth is that, in Adam, all humankind has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (cf. Romans 3:23). Hence, when Paul affirms the aforesaid universal sinfulness of *all* humankind, he has in mind that in Adam all humankind has died as the result of his sin (1 Corinthians 15:22a, cf. Romans 6:23).

At this juncture, we also agree with Wright's (1991:36) interpretation of Romans 5:12-21 from a covenantal perspective<sup>75</sup>. By virtue of their election by God into a covenant relationship with him, Wright (1991:36) perceives Israel as the true people of God, who were to serve as a means of salvation for all mankind. Israel was expected to fulfill her covenant role by fully submitting to God's revealed law and “cultic” worship (Torrance, 2009:7-8). However, because Israel was part of Adamic sin and death, she could not fulfill her mandate. Therefore, in the drama of redemption, we find Jesus Christ as the New Adam, who is both true God and true man in nature. He is the one who fulfills the covenant requirements (between God and Israel) from both the side of God and of man (cf. Torrance, 1992:82). “Jesus Christ stands in the place of Israel” as the one who fulfills the role of Israel in bringing salvation to all mankind (Wright, 1991:35-40). That is, the New Adam, Jesus Christ stands in the place of Israel in both a renewing and recreating manner by fulfilling the covenant between man and God from both the side of man and God, especially, as he ultimately offered himself, even unto death on the cross, for the atonement of the sins of all mankind. This is why Torrance (2009:9) says:

The realization of the covenant will and faithfulness of God in Christ is atonement – atonement in its fullest sense embracing the whole incarnate life and work of Christ. It involves the self-giving of God to man and the assuming of man into union with God, thus restoring the broken communion between man and God. It involves the fulfillment of the divine judgment on the sin of humanity, but that barrier is removed precisely by the complete fulfillment of the covenant, in which God kept faith and truth with humanity in its sin by its complete judgment.

argues that all humankind co-sinned with Adam in the garden of Eden, on the other hand, the federal position argues that “the sin of Adam is imputed to us because he merely represents us as our covenantal head” (Berkouwer, 1971:439). We agree that these aforementioned positions have their own strengths and weaknesses. For a detailed understanding of these positions, see Berkouwer's (1971:425-451).

<sup>75</sup> Wright (2005) in his book entitled “Paul: Fresh Perspectives” understands that Paul's use of justification is primarily ecclesiological rather than soteriological. That is, justification is primarily about how one becomes part of God's family rather than how one acquires right standing with God. According to Gaffin (2006:48), Wright's understanding of justification is problematic because believers are first made right with God in order to become part of God's family. This means that the soteriological nature of justification precedes its ecclesiological implications. Thus, we are using Wright selectively because we are aware of some debatable issues in his theology.

Thus, even though Wright (1991:40) interprets Romans 5:12-21 from his own particular covenantal perspective, in our view, he still pays attention to Paul's predominant argument (in 5:12-14) that sin and death came into the world *before* the Mosaic law. That is, through Adam. Both Israelites and Gentiles have their corporate identity in Adam if they are not united with Jesus Christ (the New Adam) through faith in his death and resurrection. This is because Jesus Christ is the one "who had revealed what God's saving plan for the world had really been – what Israel's vocation had really been – by enacting it, becoming obedient to death, even death at the cross" (Wight, 1991:40). However, once Adam's sin is established as the origin of death for all humankind, Pauline theology presents Christ as the one who reverses the Adamic sin and death (Romans 5:15-21). The eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, became the perfect man, who identifies with all humanity, so that through his obedience and righteousness, all humankind who believe<sup>76</sup> in him can be justified before God (Romans 5:18b) and inherit the greatest gift of eternal life (Romans 5:21). The *hypostatic* union between God and man *in* and *through* Jesus Christ in the incarnation is inseparable, immutable and indivisible since it stretches into eternity (Torrance, 2008:119-120). Therefore, Torrance (2008:119-120, *my emphasis*) argues that the great *palingenesia* is:

the great conversion of humanity to God, which receives its ultimate and eternal answer in the divine satisfaction and good pleasure when God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and forever affirmed the reconciliation and restored fellowship effected in the obedient life and death of his Son, thus placing it eternally beyond all the assaults of evil and all possibility of undoing.

*Thus the covenant will of God for fellowship with man was translated into eternal actuality.*

In other words, Adam identifies with all humanity as the head of the fallen humanity, whilst Christ identifies with all humanity as the head of the redeemed humanity (Dunn, 1989:106 & Fitzmyer, 1993:406). That is, "as through the one man Adam, sin and death came upon Adamic humanity, so through the one man Christ Jesus came eternal life upon Christic humanity"

<sup>76</sup> Even though Paul in Romans 5:12-21 does not mention faith as the means of appropriating the saving righteousness of Christ, it is important to highlight that in his previous discussion, the saving work of Christ is efficacious for everyone who *believes* in him (Romans 1:16). This should be emphasized because some commentators like Hultgren (2011:231-232 & 1987:54) and Barth (1968:182) seem to take Paul as implying universalism in Romans 5:18-19 by paralleling the universal application Adam's disobedience to all humankind with Christ's righteousness. However, Paul makes it clear that the disobedience of Adam has a universal application, whilst Romans 5:17 provides us with a clue that the surpassing gift of Christ's righteousness is for both Jews and Gentiles who will receive it by faith (cf. Kruse, 2012:251; Schreiner, 1998:291 & Moo, 1996:336-337). That is, God's gift in and through Christ is not for all humanity "without exception" (Schreiner, 1998:291). Given this, Wright (2002:529) is correct in arguing that Paul's focus in Romans 5:18-19 is not on the question of numerical universal salvation; instead, his universalism focuses on Christ as the way of salvation for all those who will receive God's gift of righteousness in and through Christ by faith.

(Fitzmyer, 1993:406). Paul is giving the discontinuity between Adam and Christ as a way of elaborating “the dominion of Christ over believers” (Jewett, 2007:379). The dominion of Christ over believers is clearly shown in Romans 5:15, in which Paul affirms that the obedience of Christ counters the trespass of Adam, as he states that: “for if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many?” Here, Paul is depicting Christ as the one who replaces and supersedes the dominion of Adam's sin and death to believers once and for all. Given this, Dunn (1989:101) argues that:

Adam is a key figure in Paul's attempt to express his understanding both of Christ and of man.

Since soteriology and Christology are closely connected in Paul's theology it is necessary to trace the context of the Adam motif in Paul if we are to appreciate the force of his Adam Christology.

The parallelism between Adam and Christ (in Romans 5:12-21) does not connote an equivalence between these two historical figures, since Christ is depicted as the one who *supersedes* Adam by undoing Adamic sin and death once and for all. The only equivalence between Adam and Christ rests in the fact that all humankind has its corporate identity in either Adam's or Christ's human nature. This is why Schreiner argues that “Adam and Christ are the two most influential individuals in human history, and believers can take confidence because they belong to one who has overturned all that Adam introduced into the world” (Schreiner, 1998:282). In line with Schreiner, Fee (2007:272) argues that Christ reverses the Adamic sin and death because he possessed a true humanity (human nature), which “he shared fully with Adam and thus with us, but without sin”. Torrance (2008:92) concurs with Fee in his assertion that:

Christ is the second man, the Last Adam. Adam owed his origin to a creative act of God, and he was a type of Christ. Christ as the new man comes likewise from God. His likeness to Adam was not in sin, but in coming into existence and in representative capacity.

Even though there are some crucial differences between Adam and Christ, the “...thing that is common to both relationships is that in two different contexts true human nature is being revealed, and that in two different ways it is shown to be subject to the ordering of God its creator” (Barth, 1956:9). Barth (1956:9 & 10) further expands that:

To discover the common factor that connects the two sides, we have to take into account the decisive difference between them. And this difference is that our relationship to Adam is merely the type, the likeness, the preliminary shadow of our relationship to Christ. The same human nature appears to both but the humanity of Adam is only real and genuine in so far as it reflects and corresponds to the humanity of Christ... Our relationship to Christ has an essential priority and

superiority over our relationship to Adam. He is the victor and we in him are those who are awaiting the victory. Our human nature is preserved by sharing in Adam's nature because Adam's humanity is a provisional copy of the real humanity that is in Christ.

Paul's predominant argument in Romans 1-5:1-11 is that all humankind finds new life through faith in the redeeming death and resurrection of Christ (Fitzmyer, 1993:406). Now in bringing this predominant argument to bear on Adam's Christology, Fitzmyer (1993:406) understands that in Romans 5:12-21, Paul is summing up all that he has been saying prior to this point in his argument. That is, in defining the differences between Adam and Christ, Paul is establishing "once more the basis for Christian hope (Romans 5:5): as Adam's sin introduced baleful consequences for all historical humanity, so the justification brought by Christ Jesus has affected those consequences for good and for salvation" (Fitzmyer, 1993:406). In other words, Paul's aim in Romans 5:12-21 is to "show the all-encompassing and surpassing glorious effect of Christ on those who belong to him, and the Adamic comparison merely serves that end" (cf Romans 5:15) (Jewett, 2007:380). That is to say:

The one person of Jesus Christ matches the one person of Adam by which the many died. By enhancing the parallelism and dissonance between Adam and Christ, Paul renders more powerful his argument that the lesser is superseded by the greater (Jewett, 2007:381).

In substantiation, Fee (2007:115) argues that Paul's analogy between Christ and Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 has couplet significance. Firstly, this analogy serves to explain that all humankind are the heirs of death due to Adam's sin (Fee, 2007:115). Secondly, it is "an interpretation of the first-fruits metaphor" (1 Corinthians 15:20 & 23) for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which assures the future resurrection of Christians (Fee, 2007:115). "The divine response to our death is the resurrection that all who are Christ's will equally share. Just as they shared equally in the death of Adam" (Fee, 2007:115). In this way, Paul can confidently speak of Christ's resurrection as the guarantee for the future resurrection of all believers (1 Corinthians 15:20-58). To put it differently, Paul's prevailing emphasis in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 is "on Christ's real humanity. Whatever is true of Christ, in his incarnation he was a true human being, who died as Adam died" (Fee, 2007:115). Therefore, Adam's Christology displays Jesus as the man who lived an obedient life in his entire earthly life, then giving life to all humankind as he reversed Adam's sin and death through his saving death and resurrection from the dead (Wright, 1991:26-40). That is, Jesus Christ is the Last Adam or New Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-49), who identifies with all humanity and destroys the broken relationship between God and man (Fee, 2007:272 & 115). He (Jesus Christ) vicariously lived a faithful life

fulfilling the requirements of the law and died on our behalf, so that all those who believe in him might become the righteousness of God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). That is to say:

within this human-inhuman existence of Adam, Jesus Christ comes as the Son of God, the Son of man as Jesus calls himself, to live out a truly obedient and filial life, that is a truly human life, in perfect and unbroken union with God the Father... In all of that Jesus Christ is the last Adam, the one who...brings to an end the bondage of Adam's sin, breaks its power and opens up a new and living way to God (Torrance, 2008:73).

### **5.1.5. A justification of the Adamic category in enhancing African Christians' understanding of Christ's identification with them**

Given the above discussion, it is clear that there are good biblical-theological grounds for using Adamic Christology as a mediating category in helping African Christians to understand Christ's full solidarity with them. However, at the same time it is important to also be aware of the possible objections we may encounter in using Adam as a mediating category in communicating Christ's complete solidarity with African Christians in their innermost spiritual insecurities. It is possible to argue against this view by saying that the Adamic category is a mediating concept which does not arise from traditional African culture or world-view, therefore, how can it be legitimately employed to aid African Christians to understand Christ's complete identification with them? In responding to this challenge, it is clear that an African traditional category has not been found which can be applied to Christ as a means of 'deforeignising' him in African Christianity without undermining the supremacy of Christ as God incarnate. Also, a mediating category in traditional African culture or world-view has not been found which can be used to best describe Christ's complete identification with African believers without encouraging syncretism.

The truth is that although the traditional African world-view does have to be taken seriously, it follows that traditional world-views or cultures must not be exalted at the expense of the gospel. That is, all cultures must be "treated with dignity and respect in the theological process", however, owing to the universal pandemic of sin (Romans 3:23), all cultures are "... fellow participants in the theological endeavor but not as an epistemological conclusion in which we assert the complete validity" of our hypothesis of contextualisation (Cortez, 2005:356). Hence, it is not necessary to compel the traditional African concept of Christ as an ancestor (as Bediako did), since it cannot retain the *being* of Christ as very God himself. The presentation of Jesus Christ under the ancestral category (in African Christianity) "might

only serve to further an existing practice by providing some sort of validation for an existing culturally relevant but non-Biblical practice” (Igba, 2013:124). Dualism and syncretism can only cease in African Christianity by the exaltation of Jesus Christ *over* the world of spiritual powers, as Salala (1998:138) puts it:

Unless Christ is elevated in the person’s cosmology as he is in heaven, dualism persists, syncretism is advanced, and Jesus is reduced to being simply an additional helpful source of power, perhaps equal in power with traditional spirits and personalities.

With regards to the above-mentioned reminder from Cortez, Igba and Salala, it is proposed that an Adamic Christological category be used which seeks to deepen African Christians’ understanding of their complete identification with Christ without diminishing the actuality of Christ as God incarnate or encouraging syncretism in African Christianity or reducing the validity of African contextual needs.

Many African theologians (such as Bediako, 2004:25; Nyamiti, 2006:12) mention Adam in their Biblical discussions without saying anything about the major difficulties of African Christians in understanding their real solidarity with Adam. This silence in African scholarship could imply that African Christians do not struggle to understand their corporate sinful solidarity with Adam, the forefather of all mankind, i.e. African Christians understand that “every member of the human race is descended from the biblical Adam”, which is a “standard doctrine in Islamic, Jewish and Christian thought” (Livingstone, 2008:5). However, although one can possibly argue that African Christians do not consider the importance of their complete identification with the biblical Adam because they are not preoccupied with sin as the root of their existential challenges (instead, they are much more concerned with the need for a saviour from a realm beyond, who fully identifies with them and saves them from their insecurities), it does not seem that there is any basis for that kind of reasoning.

Given this, if African Christians do not have difficulty in understanding Adam’s identification with them, then an Adamic incarnational Christological framework which views Christ as the New Adam is the next and necessary step in enhancing African Christians’ understanding of Christ’s complete solidarity with them to the extent that they can solely rely on him for their spiritual security. This would mean that instead of African Christians’ continual reliance on their traditional African familial mediums, they could be empowered through knowledge to fully rely on Christ’s ability to address their spiritual insecurity as their New Adam with whom they are united by faith. We assert, therefore, that Adam is a suitable

category in deepening African Christians' understanding of Christ's complete identification with them.

## 5.2. Towards an Adamic incarnational Christological framework

### 5.2.1. The *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* thereby affirms that our New Adam completely identifies with African Christians

In line with Bediako<sup>77</sup> and Torrance<sup>78</sup>, we are grounding our theology within the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God is one being in three distinctive persons, namely Father, Son and Holy Spirit<sup>79</sup>. In guarding against *tritheism*, we argue with Torrance that God is one incorporeal being (cf. John 4:24), comprised of three distinctive persons without being separated or divided. Given this, God, *in and through* Jesus Christ in the incarnation, has once and for all moved into the bounds of space and time in order to identify with all humankind for the sake of our redemption. In other words, as was contended in the council of Nicaea (of 325 AD), our New Adam is very much God himself (one in being with God the Father, cf. John 10:30), who identifies with all humankind (in the incarnation) without ceasing to be truly God<sup>80</sup>. In this respect, the incarnation "constitutes the one actual source and the one controlling centre of the Christian doctrine of God, for he who became man in Jesus Christ in order to be our Savior is identical in Being and Act with God the Father" (Torrance, 1996:18). God's identification with all humankind *in and through* the New Adam

<sup>77</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.2; 3.2.1.1.

<sup>78</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.1.2; 4.1.2.1.

<sup>79</sup> As discussed in chapter 4 (section 4.1; 4.1.2.1 & section 4.5; 4.2.1), the *homoousios* (affirms that Jesus Christ is of one substance with the Father, cf. Torrance, 1981:xiii-xxii) and *hypostatic* (asserts that the divine and human nature of Christ are united in the one unique {eternal} person of the Son of God, cf. Torrance, 2008:207) theological concepts are the key foundational elements in Torrance's theology, which he brings together in order to configure the authenticity of the doctrine of incarnation, revelation, atonement and reconciliation (Torrance, 2008:181-196). The *homoousios* and *hypostatic* concepts assert that in the incarnation, God in Christ had once and for all united himself with humanity without ceasing to be who he eternally is in himself (cf. Torrance, 1992:112 & 2008:181). In saying this, Torrance is avoiding the Western dualistic framework which tends to deny the one being of the Son with the Father in the doctrines of incarnation, revelation, atonement and reconciliation. For example, in stressing the oneness in being and agency of the Son with the Father in the incarnation, Torrance argues that in atonement and reconciliation, Jesus Christ "...continues the divine work of creation and in his forgiveness of sins he exercises a prerogative that belongs to God alone" (Torrance, 1981:xiii-xiv). That is, Jesus Christ and the Father "...are one in their work of healing and forgiving", in which they reconcile the alienated humanity with themselves, namely, the Trinitarian God in unity (Torrance, 1981:xiv, cf. xii-xxii). Therefore, the *homoousios* and *hypostatic* concepts assert that: "...God has wholly and unconditionally committed himself to us in the incarnation of his Son in Jesus Christ, so that all that he eternally is and will be as God Almighty is pledged in Jesus Christ for us and our salvation" (Torrance, 1981:xviii).

<sup>80</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.2; 3.2.1.1 & chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.1.

(in the incarnation) is both vertical and horizontal in nature. The vertical nature of the incarnation implies the downward movement of the eternal, infinite and transcendent God in time, space and into the condition of human beings<sup>81</sup>. The horizontal nature implies God's identification with all humanity *in* and *through* our New Adam in his incarnational mystery (John 1:1-18). In other words, in line with the council of Chalcedon (in 351 AD), the vertical and horizontal nature of the incarnation implies that our New Adam (Jesus Christ) was fully divine-human in nature<sup>82</sup>. That is, our New Adam is comprised of the uncompounded or unmixed divine-human nature, which implies that the fullness of both man and God (Colossians 2:10) reside in the one eternal person of our New Adam, the eternal Son of God.

However, although Bediako and Torrance agree in this aforementioned explanation of the incarnation, Torrance offers a deeper understanding of God's identification with all humanity in and through the New Adam in the incarnation, by using the theological constructs of *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* in expounding the human nature which the New Adam assumed in the incarnation as a common or general human nature which embraces all mankind. In other words, in addressing the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity, Torrance's *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* theological concepts are helpful to African Christians in grasping the incarnational mystery regarding the conception of the person of Jesus Christ. This is because, although the primary usage of these concepts in Torrance's theology is to expound the reality that the doctrine of atonement is grounded in the being of God Himself, these concepts also determine the reality that our New Adam (Jesus Christ) is the representative of all humanity. That is, there is an ontological inclusivity of all humanity (including African Christians) in the vicarious humanity of our New Adam, Jesus Christ.

The *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* concepts should be interpreted individually and cooperatively in order for African Christians to perceive the New Adam as truly God-man, who completely identifies with them in the incarnational mystery<sup>83</sup>. *Anhypostasis* as Torrance explains it confronts us with the actuality that the human nature of the New Adam does not have an independent centre of existence because his human nature finds its centre of existence

<sup>81</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.2; 3.2.1.1 & chapter 4, section 4.1.2; 4.1.2.2; section 4.2; 4.2.1 & 4.2.1.

<sup>82</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.2; 3.2.1.1 & chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.1.

<sup>83</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.1.

*enhypostatically* in the one person of the Divine Logos<sup>84</sup>. That is, *anhypostasis* “does not teach, as is sometimes alleged, the impersonality of Christ’s humanity, but the fact that his *hypostasis*, his person, does not have its basis in the way that ours do in the processes of the finite world alone” (Gunton, 1992:47, here Gunton is in line with Torrance {2008:207} and Barth). *Enhypostasis* indicates that the human nature of Christ found its personal expression or stability in the eternal person of the Son of God, the eternal Logos of the Father who has as the second Adam assumed our fallen human nature<sup>85</sup>. The bearing of the meaning of these theological concepts in the enterprise of deforeignising Christ in African Christianity is that the in-personal common or general human nature of our New Adam (Jesus Christ) does not have an alternative centre for grounding and expression, other than in its *enhypostastic* grounding in the eternal person of the Son of God. African Christians can, thus, now have confidence in their true human existence in the vicarious human existence of the God-man Jesus Christ, our New Adam. Once this is established, we conclude that Jesus Christ is the New Adam, who fully identifies with African Christians. He is not a foreigner to African Christians, since the human nature which he assumed was not for a particular group of people. Instead, Bediako (1994:100) rightly noted that the human nature of our New Adam transcends all racial, genealogical, national and tribal categories<sup>86</sup>. That is, “our true identity as men and women made in the image of God, is not to be understood primarily in terms of racial, cultural, national or lineage categories, but in terms of Jesus Christ himself” (Bediako, 1994:100). In line with Torrance, Bavinck (2006:306) is right in his affirmation that the human nature of our New Adam, Jesus Christ:

...had no personal existence in him alongside the Logos but was from the very beginning so prepared by the Holy Spirit for union with the Logos and for his work that in that Logos it could represent the entire human race and be the mediator of God for all humans of all the races and classes and age groups of all times and places.

In explaining this *Adamic incarnational Christological framework*, it is important to note that Bediako did not arrive at his ancestral incarnational christological model by using these aforesaid theological concepts but he is of the same opinion with Torrance that in the incarnation, our New Adam (Jesus Christ) is the representative of all humanity. Importantly, this understanding of Jesus Christ as our New Adam who stands for all humankind is profound because it claims Jesus Christ to be a unique figure, who cannot be compared with traditional

<sup>84</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.1.

<sup>85</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.1.1.

<sup>86</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.2; 3.2.1.3.

African ancestors. That is, whilst there are many ancestors<sup>87</sup> who represent African families, clans, nations and tribes, Jesus Christ is our New Adam, who *supersedes* the traditional African ancestors. This is because, unlike the African ancestors and in contrast to the first Adam, the New Adam is an individual man who inaugurated a new ontological inclusivity of all humankind in his true vicarious humanity and in whom Africans who become Christians find their true human identity.

The concepts of *anhypostatic* and *enhypostastic* union have a robust salvific meaning<sup>88</sup> (Graham, 2012:45, cf. Torrance, 2008:85). In other words, the couplet significance of *ahypostasis* and *ehypostasis* does not only assist African Christians to understand their full identification with our New Adam, Jesus Christ, instead, it also deepens African Christians' understanding of the reality of the salvation they have in our New Adam, Jesus Christ. These concepts confront African Christians with the actuality that in and through our New Adam, "God...has acted for us in our place" (Torrance, 2009:Ixxv). On one hand, *anhypostasia* means "that as man", our New Adam "has acted for all humanity" (Torrance, 2009: Ixxv). On the other hand, *enhypostasia* means "that as a man", our New Adam "has done so personally and individually for each and every human being" (Torrance, 2009: Ixxv). This means that our New Adam, Jesus Christ has lived, died, resurrected and ascended in solidarity with all humanity, since the union between God and man in the incarnation is an eternal-indivisible union (Graham, 2012:45 & McGrath, 1999:156-157). In this way, the couplet significance of *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union confronts African believers with the actuality that in our New Adam's redemptive acts, God himself acted from the depths of our existence and his (God's) existence to transform our sinful human nature. To use Torrance's (1981:137) words, "the work of God in the incarnate life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ is not one that is

<sup>87</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.2.1; 2.2.1.4.

<sup>88</sup> Even though this is not our primary focus, one can convey deeper insights in Torrance's theology by bringing his two variant theological concepts (namely, the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* union) in conceiving of the person of Christ to bear on the fact that Jesus Christ revealed God to us in the *Adamic flesh* (Torrance, 2008:192). In this regard, we are affirming that "the *hypostatic* union of God and man in one person is the heart of revelation, and its full substance" (Torrance, 2008:192). God's assumption of the *Adamic human nature* (in the incarnation) means that "...he is and can be free for us, so that it is possible for us to know him, not on the ground of any possibility or capacity that we have in ourselves or in our human nature, but solely on the ground that God is free and able to meet us within our human nature and to reveal himself there to us as very God. There, within human nature, God reveals himself as God in terms of what is not God, in terms of what is man" (Torrance, 2008:192).

forcibly imposed upon man from above and from outside, but a work of God incarnate issuing from below and from within man.” That is:

...while it is irreducibly the work of God in his saving penetration into the ontological depths of a human being, it is nevertheless the work of God as man, translated into and rising out of the human being as genuinely the work of man (Torrance, 1981:137).

Through our New Adam's (Jesus Christ) assumption of a common or general human nature, God himself absorbed the penalty of sin for African Christians (hence all Christians), and changed them from the ontological depth of their human existence.

However, in arguing for the ontological inclusivity of all mankind in the vicarious humanity of our New Adam, we are not being universalists. This qualification is important since we are aware that the notion of ontological inclusivity of all mankind in the vicarious humanity of Christ is capable of misunderstandings in a universalist direction. Recently, Molnar (2015:166, cf. Torrance, 2009:181-189) refers to Torrance's denial of universalism saying, universalism is a “heresy for faith and a menace to the gospel” because even though our New Adam identifies with all humankind, not all people will be saved<sup>89</sup>. This is consistent with God's eternal act of electing beforehand (before the foundation of the world) those who will be saved by our New Adam's (Jesus Christ's) redemptive work (cf. Ephesians 1:4, cf. Romans 8:29 & 2 Timothy 1:9). This presupposes that some are not saved by our New Adam's redemptive acts. This understanding is further supported by the prevalent New Testament texts (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10; Revelation 20:7-15; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, 4:3-4; Philippians 1:28, 3:18-19; Matthew 25:46 and Romans 2:12) which show the reality of “eternal punishment for those who do not embrace Christ by faith in this life” (Moo, 1996:342). That is, God in and

<sup>89</sup> Torrance (2009:183, cf. 181-189) can be suspected of holding to the possibility of universal salvation if not handled carefully. In his extensive discussion concerning the scope of Christ's redemption, he argues for the inseparability of the doctrine of “atonement and incarnation” because both flow “out of the nature of God”, which is to love all. That is, if in the incarnation, Christ fully identifies with all mankind, it follows that his death was also a death for all humankind (Mark 10:45 & Matthew 20:28) (Torrance, 2009:183). Here, the word “many” in Mark 10:45 and Matthew 20:28 is translated in some New Testament texts (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4-6; Titus 2:11-14, cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14) as “all” (Torrance, 2009:183). However, in saying this, Torrance (2009:189) is not a Universalist because he is aware that some will reject the grace and love of God in the face of his universal intentions for humanity, which he accomplished *in and through* his incarnated Son, Jesus Christ. That is, objectively, Torrance (2009:189) prefers to “think of atonement as a sufficient and efficacious reality for every human being – it is such sufficient and efficacious reality that it is the rock of offense, the rock of judgement upon which the sinner who refuses the divine love shatters himself or herself and is damned eternally.”

through our New Adam, identified with all people, even though it follows that not all will be saved.

Nevertheless, with this framework in mind, the good news for African *Christians* is that they are God's elect, saved by their New Adam. In agreement with Bediako and Torrance, the reality of African Christians' salvation in our New Adam commences as they become part of the beneficiaries of his redemptive work through faith. In other words, African Christians become part of the recipients of their New Adam's redemptive work as a result of their eternal union and participation in his vicarious humanity through faith. Hence, when Paul in Colossians 2:15 depicts an overwhelming victory of our New Adam over the powers of darkness by his death at the cross, he understands the reality of salvation which African Christians (hence, all Christians) have in their New Adam, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, owing to the immaculate sign of the Virgin Birth, in the incarnation, Jesus Christ assumed Adam's human nature after the fall but he "brought his holiness to bear upon it so that it might be sanctified in him"<sup>90</sup> (Torrance, 1995:184; cf. Bediako, 2004:29). Here, Jesus Christ is our *sinless* New Adam, who is able to protect African Christians from the spiritual powers of darkness. This poses a contrast between our New Adam and the traditional ancestors who are in harmony with the sinful regime of the first Adam. That is, given their cooperate identity in the sinful first Adam (cf. Genesis 3 & Romans 5:12-21), it can be argued that the traditional African ancestors cannot but have flawed unpredictable influence for good and bad on their descendants which keeps Africans in terror<sup>91</sup>. This is why Ashforth (2005:209) argues that the ancestors "are still human in origin and take with them their human characteristics into the other-world". Therefore, "if the ancestors carry into the afterlife the same limitations and negative human qualities they had as living members of families – absent, abusive, jealous, unreliable, tyrannical or even just plain evil – then their descendants are sorely in need of other spiritual powers to guard their security and prosperity" (Ashforth, 2005:209). With this granted, the good news for African Christians is that our sinless New Adam, the God-man, protects African Christians from the invisible powers without any possibility of unpredictable negative influence to those united to him, namely, Christians.

<sup>90</sup> For a detailed discussion about the sinlessness of Christ, see the explanation of Christ as the sinless representative of humanity in chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.1.1.

<sup>91</sup> For a detailed discussion of Africans' spiritual insecurity due to the ancestors, see chapter 2, section 2.2.1; 2.2.1.4.

Therefore, the *Adamic incarnational christological framework* is able to deepen African Christians' understanding of their true identification with Jesus Christ to the extent that he can be found trustworthy as the one who is able to secure them from their terrors and fears from these spiritual powers.

### **5.2.1.2. Our New Adam is both the Creator and Saviour of African Christians**

Here, it is possible to draw from Bediako<sup>92</sup> and Torrance's<sup>93</sup> understanding of the close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption. In view of the traditional African worldview of God as the originator of everything<sup>94</sup>, the close connection between the doctrine of creation and redemption gives African Christians a "...more biblical basis for discovering more about God within the framework of the high doctrine of God as Creator and Sustainer" of their lives (Bediako, 2004:25), i.e. the interconnection between the doctrine of creation and redemption can deepen African Christians' understanding of the reality of their salvation in the New Adam, Jesus Christ. In light of John's Gospel (1:1-14) and Pauline theology (cf. Colossians 1:15ff), we reinforce Bediako<sup>95</sup> and Torrance's<sup>96</sup> assertion that Scripture presents our New Adam as the eternal Word of God, who is the creator of all existing things. In saying this, we are retaining the centrality of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, in which the incarnated Son of God (the New Adam) should be understood as eternally one being with God the Father. In other words, Colossians 1:15 presents our New Adam, Jesus Christ as the eternal incarnated Son of God "by whom all creatures have been brought into being from nothing and in whom they all consist and hold together" (Torrance, 1983:83).

Having established the sovereign role of the Son of God as rooted in his eternal unity in being with the Father in creation, we can now argue that our New Adam (Jesus Christ) has an ontological inclusivity of all mankind in his vicarious humanity in redemption (Proverbs 8:22-23). Although the original context of Proverbs 8:22-23 is not primarily concerning the incarnation of the New Adam (Kidner, 1964:78-80)<sup>97</sup>, we concur with Torrance's (1995:83)

<sup>92</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.2; 3.2.1.2.

<sup>93</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.2.

<sup>94</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.2.1; 2.2.1.1.

<sup>95</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.2; 3.2.1.2.

<sup>96</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.2.

<sup>97</sup> That is, we are aware that some recent works on Proverbs might question the assumption that Proverbs 8:22-23 is referring to the incarnation of Christ (Kidner, 1964:78). In Kidner's (1964:78) view, "the important and keenly debated question" which arises in Proverbs 8:22-23 is: "Is wisdom here conceived as a *hypostasis* (ie. an actual heavenly being) or as a *personification* (ie. an abstraction, made personal for the sake of poetic vividness?". In Longmann III's (2006:203) perception, Proverbs 8:22-23 can be classified as one of the most debatable verses of the book because "...of the description

biblical-theological interpretation that it *is* about Jesus Christ, the New Adam, the very Son of God who was “created (became man) by God as the Beginning and Archetype of all God's providential and redemptive operations towards us.” In qualifying this statement, agreement is found with Torrance that the author of Proverbs is not utilizing the word “created” in denial of the co-eternal existence of the New Adam with the Father. Instead, it is utilized in reference to the humanity of Christ, which was conceived in the mind of God before the foundation of the world, as the first-born-representative of all humanity in the incarnation, in which the Son of God became man (John 1:14) in order to carry out God's saving activity for all mankind. God's creation is inextricably linked to God's redemption. Thus concurrence is found with Bediako (2004:25) that the close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption has an immense implication for transforming the traditional African world-view. This is because it fortifies the biblical foundations upon which African Christians can enhance their understanding of the New Adam's complete solidarity with them and the depth of the comprehensive level of salvation offered.

In light of Bediako's (2004:25) assertion that “the experience of ambiguity that comes from regarding the lesser deities and ancestral spirits as both beneficent and malevolent can only be resolved in a genuine incarnation of the Saviour from the realm beyond”, we can affirm that the biblical witness (*cf.* John 1:1-14, Colossians 1:15ff & Proverbs 8:22-23) that has been surveyed shows that the saviour from the realm beyond is Jesus Christ of Nazareth, i.e. African Christians are confronted with the fact that both the doctrine of creation and redemption are accomplished *in* and *through* Jesus Christ, their New Adam who has a total solidarity with them. In other words, in the incarnation, the same creator of all visible and invisible things (Colossians 1:15ff) is the one who vicariously acted for the redemption of all humankind, including African Christians who are terrorised by fear of ancestors and other spiritual powers. In redemption, God *in* and *through* our New Adam acted from within the depth of himself to save us, not only from sin but from the tyranny of the spiritual powers of darkness, i.e. God's salvation *in* and *through* our New Adam as both the creator and saviour of all mankind is vast and comprehensive in nature since it is all encompassing and all inclusive; spanning both material and spiritual reality. This implies that African Christians' continual dependence on

of Wisdom's relationship with Yahweh in the joint work of creation and because of the use of this material in NT in connection with Jesus Christ”. For a detailed discussion, see Longmann III (2006:203-213) and Fox (2000:279-281) commentaries on Proverbs.

traditional African powers in addressing their spiritual insecurity is offensive to God, since it depends on *other* powers rather than *God's* saving power revealed in our New Adam, Jesus Christ. This denies the notion of recapitulation (*apakephalaiosis*), which affirms the "fulfillment of God's purposes for man in and through the inclusive and vicarious humanity" of our New Adam, Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1981:140).

### **5.2.1.3. The interpretation of Israel's history from an incarnational perspective identifies African Christians with the Biblical redemptive narrative**

In this study, the interpretation of Israel's history from an incarnational perspective in order to identify African Christians with the Biblical redemptive narrative is embedded in the biblical theology of salvation. In this respect, our New Adam, Jesus Christ is the biological descendant of Israel, who stands in the place of Israel and fulfills the role of Israel in bringing salvation to all humankind in her stead. In saying this, it is possible to concur with Torrance<sup>98</sup> and Bediako's<sup>99</sup> understanding of the centrality of the Abrahamic covenant in its relationship to both Israel and the entire world. That is, agreement can be reached with Bediako (2004:24) and Torrance (1992:3 & 2008:45, 50-52, 58) that the Abrahamic covenant was both particular and universal in nature<sup>100</sup>. In particular, the Abrahamic covenant relates to both Abraham and his biological descendants such as Isaac, Jacob, and the ancient nation of Israel (Genesis 12:1-2). In line with Torrance, it is possible to see that the New Testament itself remains connected with the notion of our New Adam (Jesus Christ) as belonging to the Abrahamic/Davidic line, especially by exploring the theme of sonship in the context of biblical theology. For example, Matthew (1:1) commences his gospel by mentioning our New Adam (Jesus Christ) as both the root and offspring of both David and Abraham. Likewise, Luke (1:32-33) posits the close relationship between our New Adam and Israel in his delineation of God giving the New Adam a throne of his forefather David, on which he will reign forever. In this way, the New Testament

<sup>98</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.1.2; 4.2.3.

<sup>99</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.2; 3.2.1.3

<sup>100</sup> In view of the new covenant, we concur with Torrance's (2008:105-106 & 50-52) understanding that in the incarnation, God in Jesus Christ fulfills the universal aspect of the Abrahamic covenant (from both the side of God and man) by both establishing and fulfilling the eternal new covenant which consists of both Jews and Gentiles. That is, "the activity of grace which selected one people (Israel), and one particular course of history in its human and historic particularity, enacted a covenantal relation of union and communion with God that was essentially universalistic from the beginning (cf. Genesis 12:1-3)" (Torrance, 2008:50). In this way, "...what happens in the incarnation is the union of God and man. At least in the midst of our fallen humanity, within and in spite of our estrangement from him, God comes in his love and binds us to himself forever. God and man meet in Jesus Christ and a new covenant is eternally established and fulfilled" (Torrance, 2008:105-106).

uses phrases like the Son of David or Abraham in order to retain that the New Adam in the biological (human) sense belongs to the womb of Israel (cf. Romans 1:2-3 & 9:5).

However, the universality of the Abrahamic covenant confronts African Christians with the reality that the covenant promises between God and Abraham had a universal relevance for Abraham and his descendants to be a blessing to all mankind (Genesis 12:3, cf. Berkhof, 1962:135), i.e. the aspect of the universality of the promise of Abraham (in its close relationship with the nation of Israel) confronts African Christians with the fact that God's plan for Israel had always been universal in nature, since it was always inclusive of all humankind. That is, the universal aspect of the Abrahamic covenant helps African Christians to see that God had always been working out their salvation in and through Israel in the Old Testament. In other words, the universal aspect of the Abrahamic covenant should help African Christians to see the Old Testament and New Testament redemptive narrative as essentially one salvific story in which God had been working progressively for them (African Christians) until it culminated in the incarnational mystery of our New Adam, Jesus Christ. Torrance (2008:44-45) is right in affirming that the Old Testament anticipates the coming of the Messiah (who would fulfill Israel's role of bringing salvation to all mankind) and that the New Testament looks back in fulfillment of the promises of the coming Messiah (from the womb of Israel) to fulfill the universal aspect of the Abrahamic covenant<sup>101</sup>.

In treating the New Adam under his covenant relationship with the nation of Israel, it has become evident that the New Adam, Jesus Christ was God incarnate, who identifies with all humankind, so that he can work out redemption for all people, hence fulfilling the universal aspect of the Abrahamic promise. Although our New Adam is from the womb of Israel, he did not fulfill the unique role of Israel as a mere instrument of God, instead, he executed it as God: the God who voided himself of his honour and glory (Philippians 2:5-11) in order to identify with all humanity so that he could suffer for the sake of human redemption. With this in mind, African Christians ought to understand that it is in and through the incarnation of the New Adam that the whole world, including African Christians, is ingrafted into the biblical redemptive narrative of Israel into fellowship with God particularly because:

...the Old Testament is stretched out in expectation, and the New Testament looks back in engulfment. This one movement throughout the Old Testament and New Testament is the

<sup>101</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.3.

movement of God's grace in which he renews himself to man in such a way as to assume human nature and existence into oneness with himself (Torrance, 2008:45).

### **5.2.1.3.1. African believers' appropriation of the Abrahamic promises through faith in our New Adam**

Since many African Christians may struggle to grasp the close relationship between Jesus Christ and the ancient nation of Israel and how that relates to Africans, it is important to explain that African believers appropriate the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel through faith in the New Adam, Jesus Christ, i.e. African Christians have to recognise the particularity of the New Adam as a Jew; however, in doing this, they also need to hold to the universal promises of the Abrahamic covenant through faith in the New Adam. Through faith in their New Adam (Jesus Christ), the biblical redemptive narrative of Israel extends to African Christians, since both the Old Testament and New Testament present one redemptive narrative which culminates in the incarnational mystery of the New Adam, Jesus Christ, the very God Himself. Here, the Old and New Testament redemptive narrative are integrated in the establishing of the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel (and Israel as a nation) as inclusive of Jews and Gentiles based on their faith in the New Adam who is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises (*cf.* Romans 3:21-30). Hence, all the promises which God made with the ancient nation of Israel are answered in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20), including the fulfillment of Israel's role as a means of salvation for all humankind.

In other words, through faith in the incarnated New Adam, African Christians "share in the divine promises given to the patriarchs and through the history of ancient Israel" (Bediako, 1994:99). Now does Israel share in the divine promises by the virtue of being biological descendants of the patriarchs? No, for even the Scripture says that not all Israelites are true Israel (*cf.* Romans 9:6; Bediako, 1994:99). The promises of God are received by faith (Romans 10). In line with Bediako, Jesus himself validates this actuality in John's Gospel (8:43-44) as he refers to the Israelites who did not receive his words with faith as being the children of the devil, not Abraham's children. Romans 4:11-12 is also fundamental in establishing that both Israel and the Gentiles, including Africans, partake in the Abrahamic promises through faith in our New Adam. Therefore, we concur with Bediako's (1994:100) understanding of Romans 4:11-12 that "the true children of Abraham are those who put their trust or faith in Jesus Christ in the same way that Abraham trusted in God<sup>102</sup>." Because God's salvific promises are not

<sup>102</sup> In support of Bediako's interpretation of Romans 4:11-12, see Hultgren (2011:183-182), Kruse

genealogically appropriated, African Christians' should cease to view Jesus Christ as a Jewish Saviour (or a Western saviour) who is too far removed to be interested in addressing their spiritual insecurities.

In substantiation, it is important to stress that even though our *Adamic incarnational christological framework* argues for African believers' appropriation of the Abrahamic promises through faith in our New Adam, this does not mean that African Christians become Israelites. Instead, owing to their faith in the New Adam, African Christians are to understand that God has embraced them through the history of Israel. That is, since God's redemptive narrative, particularised in Israel, was also designed by God to extend to us (Genesis 12:3b), it embraces all nations not by way of colonisation but as *brothers* in and of the New Adam through faith. Given this, Jesus Christ is not foreign to African Christians because through faith in him, they appropriate the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel and Israel as a nation.

#### **5.2.1.4. The presence of the Holy Spirit affirms our New Adam's ongoing identification with African Christians after his ascension**

##### **5.2.1.4.1. The relation of the death, resurrection and ascension of our New Adam with eschatology**

Our Adamic incarnational Christological framework expounds the unified understanding of the death, resurrection and ascension of our New Adam in view of eschatology. In line with Torrance's *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic*<sup>103</sup> theological concepts in its relationship to the vicarious (representative) humanity of our New Adam, African Christians' salvation in Christ is an eternal act which took place within the inner being of God himself. In saying this, our *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* calls African Christians to understand that their salvation in our New Adam (the very God himself) is not something external to God; instead, it is permanent salvation which took place within the innermost being of God (Torrance, 1981:xv). That is, in the irreversible union between God and man in the incarnation, African Christians are eternally saved by our New Adam's death, resurrection and ascension from all their experiential challenges (Torrance, 1981:xv). This, however, should be understood in view of eschatology.

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(2012:208-211) and Cranfield's (1975:234-238) commentaries on Romans.

<sup>103</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.1 & 4.2.4.

The Adamic incarnational Christological framework confronts African Christians with the actuality that in the New Testament the unique foundation of eschatology is the death and resurrection of Christ. Through faith in the death and resurrection of our New Adam, African Christians have crossed from death to life, since they are eternally united with and participate in Christ's redemptive acts (Torrance, 2009:209). Our New Adam, Jesus Christ is the very God himself, who completely identifies with all mankind as our brother in every regard, except in sin (Hebrews 2:17-18) and gathered all Christians (hence, all African Christians) in his vicarious and victorious redemption. This is the vicarious and victorious redemption over sin, death and the spiritual powers of darkness which the New Adam overwhelmingly claimed by his saving death (at the cross) and resurrection (cf. Colossians 2:15 & Hebrews 2:14-18) (Bediako, 1994:100 & 2004:24).

However, even though African believers' salvation (and security) from the invisible forces is eternally secured by their eternal union and participation in their New Adam's redemptive acts, the truth is that the ascension of our New Adam poses some challenges within African believers' understanding of Christ's salvation at this *now but not yet era* of Christianity. By the ascension, this Adamic incarnational Christological framework agrees with Torrance's understanding that our fully God-man, the New Adam had died and resurrected in his permanent union with man and ascended to heaven in which he is seated at the right hand of God the Father and is directing all history from the "mercy seat of God" (2009:271). To quote Torrance's (2009:271) words, the ascension of our New Adam confronts African Christians with the reality that at this *interim* period of Christianity:

...all things are directed from the mercy seat of God, by the enthroned and exalted lamb, who reigns not only over the Church but over all creation...in his ascension, Christ is installed as head of new humanity, the prince of the new creation, the king of the kingdom which he has won and established through his incarnate life and passion.

Here, the ascension of our New Adam at the right hand of God the Father inaugurates him as king over all creation, including the world of spiritual powers (Torrance, 1981:xviii). In line with Torrance (2009:174 & 271), the reign of our New Adam as king over all creation does not apply only to the church, instead, his reign is effective over all creation at this epoch of Christianity (Hebrews 2:8), but partially realised, since we are waiting for the complete acknowledgment of his reign by all creation at his second coming to make all things entirely new. Even though our New Adam is seated at the right hand of God the Father, the truth is that African Christians do not yet see all things submitting to the sovereign reign of Christ. However,

in the midst of this partial realisation of the reign of our New Adam, African Christians should realise that they are already ruling with Christ. This is because the universal promise of the Abrahamic covenant has reached its goal in the ascension of our God-man New Adam. That is to say, the eternal fellowship and communion between God and man, which God had historically attempted to accomplish with all humankind through his *covenantally* treasonous nation Israel has now reached its goal in the ascension of our God-man New Adam, who takes man into the eternal place (heaven) of God. Heaven is the eternal dwelling place of God, which our God-man-New Adam is presently residing as he exercises his power over all creation. In agreement with Torrance, Berkhof (1985:316) encapsulates the doctrine of ascension in a way which can assist African Christians in enhancing their security and confidence in their identification with our God-man-New Adam. The ascension confronts African Christians with the reality that:

...from now on God is essentially united with man and his divine existence is forever inseparable from man. And because God's right hand expresses his exercise of power, Jesus' glorification guarantees that God will rule in the spirit of and after the will of this man. God and Jesus in one place, on one throne... The covenant between God and man which had failed for so long has now in one man eternally succeeded (Berkhof, 1985:316, cf. Torrance, 1981:xviii)).

Berkhof's earlier observation supports Bediako's (2004:29) understanding concerning the ascended, fully God-man New Adam as the only priestly-mediator between God and man. That is, the divine-human nature of our New Adam:

Enabled him to share the human predicament and so qualified him to act for humanity. His divine origin ensures that he is able to mediate between human community and the divine realm in a way no human priest can. As himself God-man, Jesus bridges the gulf between the Holy God and sinful humanity, achieving for humanity the harmonious fellowship with God that all human priestly mediations only approximate (Bediako, 2004:29).

Thus, this *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* calls African Christians to understand that through faith in the ascended New Adam, they have entrusted themselves to the only mediator between man and God who desires all mankind to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4-5) as he demonstrated by the ontological inclusivity of all humankind in his true vicarious humanity in the incarnation. To put it differently, African Christians have to understand that our New Adam, Jesus Christ is the only way (the truth and the life) back to the Father (John 14:6), since it is in and through him that God had reconciled the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19a). Therefore, together with Bediako, it is important to exhort and encourage African

Christians to cease to hold on to their former traditional ancestors as mediators between themselves and God by continuing to offer oblations and sacrifices to them (natural ancestors)<sup>104</sup>. This denies the *mediatorial* role of our incarnated New Adam, who truly identifies with African Christians as a real solution to their real need of a mediator between themselves and God.

#### **5.2.1.4.1.1. A denial of the spirits of deceased humans as part of the active spiritual forces that impinge on physical reality**

At this overlapping of the ages, African believers are not exempted from battling metaphysical forces. Ephesians 6:12 indicates that the battles of African believers (and all Christians) are not with flesh and blood, instead, they are against spiritual powers of darkness (cf. Adewuya, 2012:251-258). However, concerning the traditional African ancestors, this thesis establishes that the question is not whether the natural ancestors exist or not, instead, the question is whether the spirits of the deceased people are part of the spiritual powers which have a positive or negative influence on the lives of the living. In answering this question, Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 is clear that the spirits of deceased people have no part to play in anything that happens in this world.

In substantiating the above point, Igba (2013:121) recently undertook an exegetical study of Hebrews 12:1-2. His findings refuted some African theologians' usage of this passage as their basis for warranting African Christians' ongoing communication with their natural ancestors (cf. Nurnberger, 2007:88). Even though we are only summarising Igba's interpretation, it is important to highlight that his explanation of the phrase "the cloud of witness" in Hebrews 12:1 is worth quoting. Here, Igba (2013:121, cf. Nurnberger, 2007:88) concludes that the cloud of witness in Hebrews 12:1 is not "referring to departed ancestors that are involved in the life of the living, but as presentation of the ancestors as exemplars of faith; yet pointing the hearers to Jesus in 12:2 as the more excelling exemplar<sup>105</sup>."

<sup>104</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.3

<sup>105</sup> At this juncture, some African theologians like Kalengyo (2009:59) disagree with Igba's interpretation of Hebrews 12:1-2. In Kalengyo's (2009:59, cf. 60-66) reading, the cloud of witness in Hebrews 12:1 indicates the participation of the ancestors in the lives of the living people. However, Ellingworth (1993:639) and Jewett (1981:217) are in agreement with Igba's interpretation of Hebrews 12:1-2. In interpreting the cloud of witness of Hebrews 12:1, Ellingworth (1993:639) argues that in light of Hebrews 11, "the author is moving to a powerful exhortation to his readers to hold fast to their faith of which Jesus is both the object and the supreme example." The image of "the cloud of witness" (in 12:1) and Jesus Christ (the author and perfecter of their faith) is aiming at "enabling the pilgrims simply to drop the burden and go on, to shed one weight after another because the grace of Jesus Christ has made it superfluous" (Jewett, 1981:217). Here, "the permanent triumph of Christ" after his endurance of

Furthermore, in the Old Testament the neighbours of Israel that practiced the consultation of spiritual mediums, the offering of sacrifices to gods, divination and engagement in acts of witchcraft were condemned by God as evident in Deuteronomy 18:9-12. Here, it is important to note that Scripture is *not* acknowledging that human spirits exist as part of spiritual powers which exert influence on living people. Instead, these aforementioned evil acts are condemned by God because they are offensive to him (Deuteronomy 18:9-12, 14; 1 Samuel 28:3, 9ff & Exodus 22:18) (cf. Turaki, 1999:254). Therefore, Israel (as a covenantal and priestly nation of God) was commanded not to engage in these God-offending practices. That is, Israel was supposed to be a blameless nation before God. Any engagement in these evil acts incurred serious consequences. For example, these consequences are evidenced in Chronicles 10:13-14, in which we encounter Saul's death as a result of consulting the spirit of Samuel through the mediation of a witch-doctor.

Concerning the origin and nature of the spiritual powers which exert negative influence on African Christians, Kunhiyop (2012:55-59) gives a plausible outline of the similarities and the inconsistencies between the traditional African world-view and the biblical world-view in spiritual forces. He argues that the evil forces of African spirituality have real existence in Scripture; however the Bible classifies them as demons. These demons are fallen angels or spiritual beings, which were originally created as good yet capable of sin (Genesis 1:9, 18, 21, 25 & 31) (Kunhiyop, 2012:55-59, cf. Ferdinando, 1999:403). Some of these angels “fell into sin and rebelled against God” (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6) (Kunhiyop, 2012:55-59). Given this, many African theologians are of the opinion that the appearance of the ancestors in traditional African cultures is the various manifestations of Satan and his demons (Nyirongo, 1997:87, Igba, 2013:123 & Gehman, 1989:139-142). This implies that those who engage in such practices as the consultation of ancestral spirits are dabbling in the demonic. In saying this, we are not dismissing the traditional African beliefs in the negative influence of the spiritual powers in their lives as a myth of imagination, superstition, unscientific or irrational. That is, we are not following the route of some early Western missionaries who dismissed the existence of spiritual forces which have the power to exert negative influence in the lives of African people<sup>106</sup>.

suffering at the cross has a huge significance for believers (Ellingworth, 1993:640-642). It gives Christians a “Christocentric orientation” which assists them to conserve their faith as they associate themselves with their successful ultimate example, Jesus Christ (Jewett, 1981:217, cf. Ellingworth, 1993:640-642).

<sup>106</sup> For more information about the missionaries' negative perception of the traditional African world-

Instead, at this critical point in our thesis, we are arguing that the spiritual powers which impinge on physical reality exist as demons but not as human spirits who have influence over the living.

However, irrespective of what these spiritual powers are in Scripture or African thought, this *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* releases African believers from their fears and insecurities emanating from these spiritual forces. This is because our New Adam, Jesus Christ has disarmed the spiritual powers of darkness through his death and resurrection. In other words, African believers are not to find their spiritual security from the placation of spiritual powers; rather, they are to be rooted and anchored in the knowledge that owing to their eternal union and participation in the New Adam's redemptive person and work through faith, their security is in their salvation. Even though African Christians can feel physically, mentally and emotionally defeated in their battle against spiritual forces of darkness; in view of the effective nature and extent of Christ's salvation, this does not mean that they have lost the battle and need another means apart from Christ's salvation to secure them. In chapter 3, section 3.3; 3.3.1, agreement was found with Bediako (1994:111, cf. Letham, 1993:152) that:

The message is quite clear: the heart of the encounter of the good news with our context is our understanding of Jesus Christ, how our faith in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, relates to our existence and destiny in the world. With such faith comes a firm conviction that in and through Christ, we have found and been found by, ultimate truth, which is utterly dependable for interpreting our human experience. We also are bound to discover that we are involved in a struggle to the death. It is not with flesh and blood, but with more subtle powers and intelligences who would hinder men and women from perceiving the nearness of Christ as one who has opened for us a new way, a living way, into the presence of God, through his own body and as one of us (cf. Hebrews 10:20).

Nevertheless, as African Christians' continue to battle with the spiritual powers of darkness, this *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* reminds them that they are foreigners or sojourners in this world (cf. John 17:16, 1 Peter 2:11 & Philippians 3:20). They should live lives which do not conform to the sinful desires and patterns of this world corrupted through the first Adam (Romans 5:12, 12:2 & 1 Peter 2:11b). The perfect life which African Christians expect to have (at this overlapping age of Christianity) in our New Adam (Jesus Christ) is not yet fully realized, since we are all waiting for his second coming to make everything new.

Given this, this thesis argues that at this *now but not yet era* of Christianity, African Christians should be practically exhorted to be confident in their security in the New Adam irrespective of their multifaceted spiritual insecurities bound up with their existence in the first Adam<sup>107</sup>. That is, as they struggle with their spiritual insecurity, African Christians are to stand firm by faith (Ephesians 6:16) in their accomplished salvation by our New Adam, Jesus Christ. This is none other than calling African Christians to develop a functional character of patience, hope and perseverance in the midst of the myriad of spiritual insecurity challenges they face by placing their central focus on their now-but-not-yet fully realized victory in the incarnated Christ, our New Adam. The truth is that African believers' slight momentary troubles are achieving for them an eternal glory that is far beyond comparison with their present situations (2 Corinthians, 4:17).

#### **5.2.1.4.2. Our New Adam continues to identify with African believers through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit after his ascension**

This study highlights that in the midst of African Christians' struggle with spiritual insecurity at this interim period of Christianity, our *Adamic incarnational christological framework* assures them that the New Adam is not distant from them because he has ascended into heaven where he is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Instead, as African believers continue to live in this *interim* period of Christianity, we agree with Bediako<sup>108</sup> and Torrance<sup>109</sup> that our New Adam is continuing to have a complete identification with all Christians, including African Christians, through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. In arguing for our New Adam's real and ongoing identification with African believers through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit<sup>110</sup>, it is possible to close a gap between what our New Adam has done for African Christians in history and where they are now at the moment, namely, in the overlapping of ages. This is the paradoxical nearness of Christ in the ascension, i.e.

<sup>107</sup> Here we are merely acknowledging that we live in a world that still bears the corruption that came through the first Adam. We are, however, new creations in Christ, our New Adam, even though we exist in such a world until Christ returns.

<sup>108</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.3; 3.3.1.

<sup>109</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2; 4.2.4 & section 4.3; 4.3.4.

<sup>110</sup> Both Luke and John emphasize that the man Jesus Christ is the one who gives the Spirit to those who are so deeply related to him as brothers (cf. Hebrew 2) and friends given to him by the Father. In Luke's writings, it is the ascended Jesus of Nazareth who sends the Spirit (Luke 24:36-49, Acts 1:2-4 & 2:4). In John, it is the resurrected man Jesus who breathes into his disciples his Spirit (John 20:22). The truth is that when we have Jesus by faith, we have full assurance and full security that we have the Holy Spirit. This is against certain neo-Pentecostal claims that the gift and possession of the Holy Spirit is to be doubted without a further experience(s).

although the New Adam, Jesus Christ, is absent from them in the sense of his physical presence, nonetheless, through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit, he continues to have real solidarity with them<sup>111</sup>. That is, it is possible to have the same conviction as Torrance (2009:294) that:

It is through the Spirit that things infinitely disconnected – disconnected by the 'distance' of the ascension – are nevertheless infinitely closely related. Through the Spirit, Christ is nearer to us than we are to ourselves, and we who live and dwell on earth are yet made to sit with Christ in heavenly places, partaking of the divine nature in him.

In stressing the above-mentioned, a connection is established between the sufficiency of Christ's salvation and the function of the Holy Spirit in the believers' life in this overlapping of ages. Here, Bediako posits the roles of the Holy Spirit, which are pertinent to African Christians' spiritual insecurity, as follows; (i) "to give them understanding of the realities in the realm of the spirits" (2004:27); (ii) an assurance of "the close association of the defeat and overthrow of the devil with the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (cf. John 12:31) (Bediako, 2004:27); and (iii) the "thought of the 'keeping' and protection of the followers from the evil one", which "forms an important part of Jesus' prayer" in John 17 (Bediako, 2004:27). Thus, the Adamic incarnational Christological framework exhorts African Christians to be rooted in the knowledge that the New Adam was not victorious over the spiritual powers only during his historical redemptive work but also currently exercises supreme power over the spiritual powers of darkness through the Holy Spirit. Agreement can be found with Torrance (1992:4) that in the New Testament, in the early Church:

... when the crucified Jesus rose again from the dead and poured out his Spirit at Pentecost, the intrinsic significance of his person and all he had said and done broke forth in its self-evidencing power and seized hold of the church as the very Word or Logos of God.

The sovereign presence of our New Adam among African believers through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit should be reinforced as a means of strengthening African Christians' understanding of the active involvement of our New Adam in their ongoing lives at this interim period of Christianity.

<sup>111</sup> This is the immanence and transcendence of God in *Adamic incarnational Christological framework*.

Given this, the Adamic incarnational Christological model concludes by asserting that the triune God does not plant African believers in eternal union and participation with Himself (in the Son and through the Holy Spirit) and abandon them (Murray, 1998:141; Fee, 1994:8). Instead, the eternal Son of God came into our fallen world and adorned flesh as the New Adam in order to vicariously overcome the corruption that came through the first Adam and have a direct victory over evil (*cf.* Torrance, 2008:236). Victorious, he now dwells in African Christians by the Spirit and secures them in his inaugurated kingdom of righteousness as they await the kingdom's consummation in which there will be no threat of the spiritual powers of darkness, which cause them to continually revert to their former practices of consulting traditional African powers.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

This chapter provided a comprehensive summary of the development of this thesis in order to bring to the forefront some findings of Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4. Drawing from these findings, it was possible to establish an Adamic incarnational Christological framework which responds to the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity so as to critique spiritual insecurity among African Christians. In order to formulate the Adamic incarnational Christological model, an investigation into Adam's Christology in Romans 5:12-21, Luke 3:23-4:13, Hebrews 2:5-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:21- 22 was conducted. It examined the parallels and dissimilarities between Christ and Adam, stemming from the fact that the entire human race is summed up in these two historical figures in different ways. On the one hand, Adam is the head of the fallen humanity, whilst on the other, Christ is the head of the redeemed humanity.

Given these parallels and dissimilarities between Christ and Adam, Adam was proposed as a mediating category in order to enhance African Christians' understanding of Christ's complete identification with them. Although the Adamic category does not arise from the traditional African world-view or culture, it is clear that Adam is not a controversial figure in African Christianity. Many African theologians mention Adam in their biblical discussions without mentioning any major difficulties that African Christians have in understanding a real solidarity with Adam. This silence in African scholarship implies that African Christians would not necessarily have difficulty in understanding their corporate sinful solidarity with Adam, the forefather of all mankind. Also, in using Adam as a mediating category in assisting African Christians to understand their complete identification with Christ, it was possible to break with the tendency to treat Christ in the traditional African concept of

ancestor. The application of the ancestral category to Christ is non-Biblical (it does not arise from a recognition of what Scripture itself teaches about Christ) and can have the effect of diminishing the actuality of Jesus Christ as God himself in the flesh. In placing Christ in the Adamic category, it becomes possible to firmly and biblically ground African Christians in the truth that the man Jesus Christ, the New Adam, is the pre-existent God incarnate who transcends the first Adam in all respects. Furthermore, the Adamic category is able to do this without encouraging syncretism in African Christianity.

The Adamic incarnational Christological framework drew from both Bediako's and Torrance's positive concepts of Christ's incarnation. Because of the nature of the incarnation, it was found that Jesus Christ is not a foreigner or stranger to African Christians since his human nature is a common or general human nature which embraces all humankind. It was argued that the fact of the ontological inclusivity of all humankind in the sinless vicarious humanity of our New Adam poses a contrast between Christ and the traditional African ancestors. Here, African Christians should perceive the sinless New Adam as a unique figure, who stands for all humankind, and, therefore, he cannot be compared with traditional African ancestors. In other words, whilst there are many ancestors who represent African families, clans, nations and tribes, Jesus Christ is the New Adam, who supersedes them all and who is qualitatively different. In other words, the New Adam is the head of true humanity in whom African Christians find their true human identity. Since African Christians' identity is in Christ the New Adam and not in their ancestry descending from the first Adam, they have grounds for spiritual security in their union with and participation in him rather than their blood union with the descendants of the first Adam.

Moreover, the Adamic incarnational Christological framework is constructed on the premise of the New Adam as both the Creator and Saviour of all humankind. This enhances African Christians' understanding of their comprehensive salvation in Jesus Christ, since there is no inconsistency between the doctrines of creation and redemption. The eternal Word of God, the New Adam, to whom everything owes its existence, is the one who broke into the space and time of humanity in order to assume the human mode of existence for the sake of the complete redemption of humankind. In the incarnation, the entire fallen structures of human existence were re-ordered and renewed by the same Creator, the New Adam, in whom African Christians have their salvation. Given this, African Christians ought to understand that the New Adam, Jesus Christ "... is the Head of all creation, the one source and controlling

Principle with reference to whom we are to understand all the ways and works of God" (Torrance, 1995:84, *cf.* 1996:204). African Christians thus do not need to trust any other power for spiritual security, because all powers, of all natures, are far beneath the supreme New Adam who created and saved the world. Thus, in the efficacy of his salvation, African Christians should solely trust in Jesus Christ, their New Adam.

Additionally, since African Christians might perceive Jesus Christ to be a foreigner owing to his close association with the ancient nation of Israel, the redemptive history of Israel has been reinterpreted from an incarnational perspective so as to ground African Christians in their identification with the redemptive narrative of the ancient nation of Israel. This was made possible by paying attention to the Abrahamic covenant, which is both particular and universal in nature. The universality aspect of the Abrahamic covenant was that Abraham and his descendants were God's ordained instrument in bringing salvation to the entire world. However, because Israel is part of Adamic sin and death, she could not fulfill her mandate. Therefore, in the drama of redemption, we find that Jesus Christ, the New Adam, is the true Israel. He is the one who fulfills the covenant requirements from both the side of God and the side of man. That is, the New Adam, Jesus Christ stands in the place of Israel in both a renewing and recreating way by fulfilling the covenant between man and God, especially its universal aspect as he identifies with all humankind. He vicariously offered himself, even unto death on the cross, for the atonement of the sins of all mankind. Because of his vicarious redemptive person and work, African Christians appropriate the divine promises given to the patriarchs of the ancient nation of Israel through faith in him, i.e. through the incarnate Christ, the fulfillment of Israel, Israel's redemptive story becomes part of African Christians' redemptive narrative.

To deepen African believers' understanding of the nature and extent of our New Adam's salvation, the relation of his death, resurrection and ascension to eschatology has also been shown, i.e. the Adamic incarnational Christological framework confronts African Christians with the reality that the redemptive work of the New Adam is over all creation, including the invisible powers which pose spiritual insecurity to some African believers, and is embedded within the idea of the second return of Christ to consummate his kingdom. In order to maintain the New Adam's identification with African believers after his ascension and before his return, the Adamic incarnational Christological framework presented the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit within believers' lives as the New Adam's real and ongoing

solidarity with African Christians. In other words, the ascension of Christ does not create a gap between Christ and African Christians. Instead, as African believers continue to live in this now-but-not-yet era of Christianity (in which they continue to battle with spiritual powers), they are assured that their New Adam has complete solidarity with them through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit.

## **Chapter VI:**

### **Summary, conclusion and preliminary suggestions for further study**

The aim of this study was to formulate a relevant African incarnational Christological framework which responds to the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity. This has been achieved by partly drawing from both Bediako's and Torrance's positive concepts of Christ's incarnation. Chapter 1 established that many African Christians continually use traditional African powers in addressing the problem of spiritual insecurity because they perceive Christ as foreign to them. That is, many African Christians struggle to see how Jesus Christ relates to their fears which emanate from their traditional beliefs in spiritual powers. In other words, there is a form of Christian syncretism in African Christianity which is evident in some African Christians' continual reliance on traditional African powers to address their spiritual insecurity.

There are two schools of thought as to whether or not African Christians should continue to use traditional African powers. The first position (in Chapter 1, sections 1.2.1; 1.2.1.1) argues that African Christians should cease to employ traditional African powers in addressing their spiritual insecurity, since traditional African religion and Christianity are incompatible. However, most of these scholars have not considered a Christocentric redemptive response to the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity. The second position (in Chapter 1, sections 1.2.1; 1.2.1.2) advocates for African Christians' continual reliance on traditional African powers in addressing their insecurity. In objecting to this latter position, it has been argued that African Christians' continual use of traditional African powers for spiritual security constitutes an erroneous solution to their real problem, since it is offensive to God because it denies God's saving power which is exclusively revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is from this background that the thesis proposed to critically analyse and evaluate the relevance of Bediako's and Torrance's concepts of Christ's incarnation as a means of engaging the problem of African Christians' spiritual insecurity, thereby considering how they might contribute to the construction of a forceful relevant African incarnational Christological model that would be a meaningful response to these challenges.

Chapter 2 discussed the basis on which some African Christians perceive Christ to be a foreigner, unable to address their spiritual insecurity. Here it was argued that the fact that African Christians rely on traditional African powers in addressing their insecurity confirms their fear of African spiritual powers. The governing belief in African world-view is that of

spiritual causation for every existential challenge experienced by African people, since the physical and spiritual worlds (the universe of multiple spiritual powers) intermingle. Inherent in the African traditional world-view is ancestral veneration, which occupies a central place in traditional African religion. The ancestors are viewed as being closer to living people than any other spiritual power, and they can either harm or bless their living descendants, depending on the relationship between them. The ancestors function as both guardians and protectors of their living descendants. It was also established that the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity arises partly from the Christian model of the incarnation that presents a ‘foreign’ Christ to Africans. The foreignness of Christ arises from the perceived novelty of Christ in traditional African religious thought, further intensified by the early Christian missionary era in Africa, which presented Christ mainly from a Western perspective.

The third chapter examined the work of Bediako as an example of one of the African theologians who had attempted to address the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity by treating Christ under the category of ancestor. We critically analysed and evaluated Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological concept in its attempt to *deforeignise* and *Africanise* Christ in African Christianity with the view to address the issue of spiritual insecurity. Here, we expressed appreciation for Bediako's ancestral incarnational Christological model in that it sought to take the traditional African world-view seriously. However, we also argued that Bediako's contextualisation hypothesis, in its treatment of Christ under the category of ancestor, actually compromises the cosmic dimension of Christ's deity. Christ, since he is God incarnate, transcends the African ancestor category which makes the concept unsuitable for a biblically based Christology. Also, we suggested that it is unhelpful to force the preconceived African ancestral category on Christ, since it encourages African Christians to continue to think of Christ in the categories of their natural ancestors. That is, the conceptualisation of Christ in the ancestral concept encourages African Christians to perceive their natural ancestors as intermediaries between themselves and God.

Therefore, in applying the ancestral category to Christ, Bediako's hypothesis of contextualisation replaces one problem with another, exchanging a Christ of Western trappings – for a Christ of African cultural trappings. Moreover, the Bible, ultimately, does not present Christ as an ancestor. With these difficulties and with respect to Bediako in mind, an alternative prospective *Adamic incarnational Christological model* which draws from both Bediako and

Torrance's positive understanding of Christ's incarnation was proposed as a superior African model to be further discussed in chapter five. This proposed model drew from Bediako's Christ-deforeignising concepts, namely, the uncompounded divine-human nature of Christ, the interconnection between the doctrine of creation and redemption and the African believers' appropriation of the divine promises given to the patriarchs of Israel through faith in Jesus Christ. This *Adamic incarnational Christological model* proposed to better enable African Christians' identification with Christ without encouraging syncretism or compromising the gospel.

In order to draw from Torrance's theology in constructing an Adamic incarnational Christological framework in Chapter 5, the fourth chapter evaluated Torrance's incarnational Christological model. Although Torrance does not directly engage with the problem of the foreignness of Christ in African Christianity, his incarnational Christology opened up avenues which can be used to deepen African Christians' understanding of Christ's solidarity with them. Torrance's theological concepts were shown to be drawn from Greek patristic thought, namely, the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* concepts of union can be employed to expound the vicarious humanity of Christ as the representative of all humankind. The *anhypostatic* concept refers to the fact that the human nature of Christ is without an independent centre of personhood and the *enhypostatic* concept affirms that the human nature of Christ finds its centre or expression in the person of the eternal Son of God. This means that the human nature which was assumed by the person of the divine Logos, the Creator, is the common Adamic human nature, which embraces all humankind.

To further deepen African Christians' comprehension of Christ's identification with all mankind an attempt was made to draw from Torrance's model the close association between the doctrine of creation and redemption, which affirms the actuality of Christ as both the creator and saviour of humankind. Torrance's interpretation of the redemptive history of Israel from an incarnational perspective warrants all Christians' identification of themselves with the biblical redemptive history of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Both the Old and New Testaments are essentially one redemptive narrative, which finds its fulfillment in the incarnation of Christ. Torrance illustrates that there is no separation between Christ's ascension to the right hand of the Father and Christians on earth because Jesus Christ continuously identifies himself with all believers through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit.

The fifth chapter formulated the proposed *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* by drawing from both Bediako and Torrance's positive concepts of Christ's incarnation. In considering but moving beyond Bediako's treatment of Christ under the category of ancestor in chapter three; this chapter constructed an *Adamic incarnational christological framework* which views Christ as our New Adam. This *Adamic incarnational Christological model* was advanced after the biblical-theological foundational status of Adamic Christology was examined and found credible from the witness of Scripture (cf. Hebrews 2:5-18, Luke 3:23-4:13, Romans 5:12-21 & 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). This reinforced the suitability of applying Adam as an alternative mediating category in enhancing African Christians' understanding of their full identification with Christ. The legitimacy of the Adamic Christological category was underscored mainly by examining the theological aspects of the Adam-Christ relationship (type and anti-type), which are inherent in the fact that the entire human race is summed up in these two historical figures in two different ways. On one hand, Adam is the head of the fallen humanity; on the other hand, Christ is the head of the redeemed humanity. In this continuity and discontinuity, Jesus Christ stands as the New Adam, who truly identifies with all humanity in his incarnation and reverses the Adamic sin together with its consequences (Romans 5:12-21 & 1 Corinthians 15: 20-23, 45-49) for all people who believe (Romans 1:16 & John 3:16) in his redemptive work.

Even though the Adamic Christological category does not originate with the traditional African world-view or culture, the credibility of using Adam as a mediating category in deepening African Christians' understanding of their complete identification with Christ was further underscored by the fact that many African Christians seem not to experience significant difficulties in understanding Adam's identification with them. This is evident with African theologians who discuss Adam in their biblical discussions without saying anything about any major difficulties African Christians' have in understanding their real solidarity with Adam. This silence in African scholarship was taken to imply that African Christians do not struggle to understand their corporate sinful solidarity with Adam, the forefather of all mankind. Hence, an *Adamic incarnational christological framework* which views Christ as our New Adam was advanced as essential in enhancing African Christians' understanding of their complete identification with Christ. This framework does not diminish the actuality of Christ as God incarnate, encourage syncretism in African Christianity or reduce the validity of African contextual needs.

Once the above justification of the Adamic Christological category was established, the *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* sought to deforeignise Christ in African Christianity by bringing the couplet significance of the *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* theological concepts in arguing that in the incarnation, our New Adam, Jesus Christ assumed a common human nature which embraces all humankind. This means that in the incarnation, God, in and through Jesus Christ, completely identifies with African Christians as their New Adam. He has therefore acted from the ontological depth of his existence as God in order to save them from sin and all its consequences, including death and the spiritual forces of darkness. In other words, in the *hypostatic* union of the Son of God and man in the incarnation, all human beings are confronted with the meaning of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. In saying this, the *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* advanced the presence of the Holy Spirit within African believers' lives as a means of affirming Jesus Christ's ongoing and complete solidarity with them *after* his ascension.

Given this, we commend the *Adamic incarnational christological framework* for African Christians' understanding of their true identification with Jesus Christ. Through this framework, African Christians will discover that Christ is reliable and trustworthy in rescuing them from the threat of spiritual powers which terrify and strike fear into them. In other words, this *Adamic incarnational Christological model* serves as an authentic Reformed<sup>112</sup> incarnational Christology which responds to the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity. It combines the doctrines of God and Christology, enabling African Christians to respond to their African contextual needs without compromising the actuality of Christ as God incarnate, i.e. it enables African Christians to live responsive lives to the gospel within their various cultural contexts without diminishing the biblical witness of Christ.

In conclusion, and in order to further consolidate and establish the *Adamic incarnational Christological framework*, we suggest that future research continues to discuss the implications of the *anhypostastic* and *enhypostastic* theological concepts, bringing them to bear on the Adam-Christ relationship. This will deepen the relevancy of our proposed model to the problem of spiritual insecurity in African Christianity by identifying facets of the person and work of Christ which are anchored in Adamic Christology. Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that this research in accomplishing its primary task of formulating a theological incarnational

<sup>112</sup> By authentic Reformed incarnational Christology, we are denoting that our own model subscribe to the Reformed tradition, which holds to the authority of Scripture and the sovereignty of God.

Christological framework did not provide an empirical basis for its conclusions. Given this, there is a necessity for further field research which would evaluate the effectiveness of the *Adamic incarnational Christological framework* at a grass roots level. This can be done through the application of this model to specific African Churches comprised of members who experience the foreignness of Christ.

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