



Reincarnation Christology in African Christian Theology

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ABSTRACT

The subject of reincarnation has been considered a reserve of primal (esoteric) religions or cultures. Therefore, it has not been thoroughly studied to decipher the philosophical and theological issues thereof. Notwithstanding, what seems to be the total neglect and lack of interest, the significance of christological parallelism that exists between reincarnation and resurrection as Christological parallels in both African Traditional Religion and African Christianity cannot be disregarded. Reincarnation Christology provides a paradigmatic christological framework that conceptualises Africa's notion of life as a cycle of death, birth, and rebirth (reincarnation) similar to incarnation, death, and resurrection Christologies of the missionary (Western) Christianity and provides a competitive context that defines the identity, and significance of Jesus in African Christianity and Theology. Even though reincarnation provides a good context for the Christology of Jesus in African traditional religion, Christianity, and Biblical Theology, theologians and biblical scholars such as Mbiti, Bediako, Nyamiti, Wiredu, and Gyekye failed to give it any attention. Nevertheless, the article argued that, like incarnation, death, and resurrection Christologies, reincarnation Christology provides very powerful and strong philosophical constructs for the inculturation of the Christology of Jesus in African Traditional Religion, African Christianity and African Christian Biblical scholarship. The article further argued that, there also exists a strong parallelism between resurrection and reincarnation Christologies which can provide complementing philosophical paradigmatic framework for the christological nomenclatures in Christianity and African traditional religions.

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity since its arrival in Africa has undergone several vicissitudes. It has changed in emphasis of its theological nomenclatures and paradigmatic framework, religeographic dynamics and trajectories and interaction with and approach to the socioreligioculture and traditions of Africa. Most importantly, in the 21st century where its centre of gravity and hegemony has shifted from the global West (Europe and America) to the global South (Africa, Latin America and Asia), Christianity in Africa has been forced to decipher a pragmatic nomenclature and legitimate ways it can continue to remain significant in Africa and beyond. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, emergence of distinctive ontologies and praxis has informed and influenced African centred paradigms for Christian Theology and biblical scholarship such as ancestor, eschatological and reincarnation Christologies. Inculturation of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus and reincarnation as a framework within which Africa's concept of life as a cycle of birth, death and rebirth is conceived provides key parallelism for a wholistic discussion on the Christology of Jesus Christ in African traditional religion, Christianity, and Theology.

Jesus's incarnation, death and resurrection which is similar to the concept of life as a cycle of birth, death and reincarnation in Africa remains a significant theological debate not only in Western Christian

theological discourse but also in African Traditional Religion, Christian Theology and Biblical scholarship because of how it contextualises the identity, role and significance of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus within the African Traditional religion and Christianity. The availability of adequate study of the christological parallelism between the two concepts however does not comprehensively provide the answers needed since reincarnation and resurrection both leave much to be studied to fully comprehend the trajectories of christological dynamics and frameworks they provide. Therefore, it is only within inculturation that any possible provision is made for a comprehensive discussion of the two.

Christianity in Africa; Religeographic Dynamics, Trajectories and Development of Distinct Ontologies

Christianity in Africa is a historiographic trajectory that traces its arrival in Africa and the trajectories of religeographic dynamics presented. Anthropologists and historians such as Isichei, Meyer and Hastings have outlined its main dialectics. Depending on which biases informed a historian's account, the hypothesis consists of the Pentecost hypothesis, based on Acts 2,¹ the Ethiopian Eunuch and Philips encounter, based on Act 8 and an attempt by Europe through the Crusades to reclaim its territories which had been taken by Muslim Empires in Northern Africa. Finally is the attempt by the Portuguese to find a root to India through the Atlantic Sea at the base of the African continent for trade purposes.

In the first hypothesis, which is the Pentecost hypothesis based on Acts Chapter 2, the biblical account of the occasion coincided with the Jewish festival of “*Shavuot*” (Exod 34:22; Deut 16:9-10;12) seven weeks after “*Pesach*” (Passover) which was one of the major religious festivals of the Jews. As a result, in the biblical narrative, over 15 nations gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the occasion and engage in other activities. According to Cyrus, not everybody who went for the “*Shavuot*” went there for religious purposes, since the occasion served as a huge trade and economic opportunity.² All kinds of people travelled far and wide for religious rites and to trade in various kinds of goods. The crust of the hypothesis is that among the 3000 conversions made by Peter, were Africans who later returned to their towns and villages and continued with their newfound faith and shared the same with their families.

In the second hypothesis, the Ethiopian Eunuch (*chamberlain*), described as a high court official of the Candace of Ethiopia had his encounter with Philip based on Acts 8. It is argued that he was not the only person who converted and sought baptism by Philip. Others who were in his caravan also converted since it was a tradition for people to follow the religion of their masters or fathers, they together returned and continued in their newfound faith. It is juxtaposed that this religious revolution led to the Aksumite Empire (eastern Ethiopia), one of the most ancient cities in Africa around the 4th century which made Christianity its official religion. In the same hypothesis, Dube and Scott argue that the Ethiopian Eunuch’s possession of a copy of scripture from the scroll of Isaiah which at the time was uncommon and expensive to possess, is an indication that he was not a “novice” and must have spent fortune to own the text.³ He was probably a dedicated and committed Christian who had the parchment with him for years.

In the third hypothesis, Muslim Empires conquered territories that belonged to Europe, and their attempt to recapture them through the Crusades brought Christianity to Africa. The event that sparked the Crusades itself was struck not in Europe but in the East, when the Byzantines first confronted the Seljuk Turks, originally an Asian Army which, like the Huns of earlier times, penetrated far into the West, and captured much of the Near East, including the Holy Lands.

The fourth hypothesis is that Portuguese maritime activities attempted to find a route to India through the Atlantic Sea at the base of the African continent for trade, which sparked other expeditions that culminated in one of the most barbaric and heinous practices ever perpetuated by one race against the other “trade in humans” (slave trade). Once Africa was opened, British, French, German, Belgian, Spanish, and Italian traders came around. In Africa, one of the major activities was missionary services. It became a strong tool in the hands of the colonisers and was used for various religious and political benefits and reasons, including education, skill development, social transformation, and economic empowerment. The mission schools, hospitals, and agricultural engineering centres provided invaluable services to the indigenous people; however, they created a

¹ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995); Birgit Meyer, “Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches,” *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 33 (2004): 447–74; Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975* (Cambridge University Press, 1979).

² Cyrus H. Gordon, “The Biblical Sabbath: Its Origin and Observance in the Ancient near East,” *Judaism* 31, no. 1 (1982): 12-16.

³ Zorodzai Dube, “The Ethiopian Eunuch in Transit: A Migrant Theoretical Perspective,” *HTS: Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 1–7; F Scott Spencer, “The Ethiopian Eunuch and His Bible: A Social-Science Analysis,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 22, no. 4 (1992): 155–65.

big hole in the intellectual abilities of the indigenous Africans and the technological advancement of African nations.

Inculturation, (contextualisation) of Christianity and Theology in Africa (African Christianity and Theology)

Christianity in Africa began to be “inculturated” (contextualised) to make sense of the socioeconomic and religiocultural cosmology of the African people. In the literature, four hypotheses have been discussed. Sakupapa outlines the following as the reasons; the first is the decolonization, which emerged as African nations got independence from their colonial masters and wanted to get rid of every reminiscence of colonial hegemony in education, religion, politics, and economics.⁴ The second is the failure of Missionary Christianity to recognise and accept Africa’s religiocultural and socioeconomic cosmology as a competitive and legitimate paradigmatic framework for Christian theology and nomenclature. The third was an attempt to find suitable and appropriate nomenclatures in Christianity that provided the right answers to the many questions that African Christians were asking about the relationship between the Christian gospel and their African traditional religions. The fourth demands a change in the centre of gravity and hegemony of Western (missionary) Christianity from the global West (Europe and America) to the global South (Africa, Asia and Latin America)

The first reason is the decolonisation of religion, education, politics, and economics. Higgs argued that, as African nations got independence from their colonial masters, they wanted to get rid of every reminiscence of colonial hegemony.⁵ Therefore, they began to reconstruct the legacies of colonialism and reconceptualised its hegemony to recognise Africa’s competency to contribute to its own development and growth. For Varas-Díaz and Serrano-García, colonialism had created an impression of inferiority in the intellectual capabilities of people and African traditions and cultures.⁶ Mungwini further opined that everything African was regarded with scorn, and prejudice, maligned and condemned without examining their veracity or ineptness. Anything that did not conform to the context of Western hegemonic heritage was considered incredible and worthy of recognition.⁷ The inculturation of Western (missionary) Christianity and theology in Africa, therefore, emerged as a revolution to put Africa in its rightful place in the socioeconomic and religiocultural cosmology of the world. Courtesy of the African Initiated (instituted) or Independent Churches (AICs), the theology, and nomenclatures of Christianity in Africa have undergone several inculturations.

Christianity and theology in Africa have since been reconstructed to the extent that they manifest in a way that is completely different from Western (missionary) Christianity or theology. For instance, while Western (missionary) Christianity still focuses on hegemonic Eurocentric nomenclature, African Christianity focuses on the context of its religioculture, spirituality, and traditional cosmological milieus. According to Daneel, AICs represented a cultural renaissance and indigenizing movement that protested the hegemony of missionary Christianity.⁸ While African indigenous religions and spirituality were considered confrontational, plagued with a constant struggle between good and bad (evil) spirits trying to control and manipulate the physical world of Africa, missionary Christian spirituality remained abstract and intangible. What the AICs set out to achieve therefore was to reconstruct the theology and nomenclatures of Christianity to accommodate Africa’s religious, traditional, and cultural cosmological realities. By this, the AICs were able not only to integrate important features of Africa’s traditional values, culture, religion, and Christianity but were also able to use them to provide answers to the questions that African Christians in the missionary churches struggled to answer.

They proved that African culture, tradition, and religion provided Christianity with enormous content and context to address the challenges of Africa’s socioeconomic, traditional, and religious cosmology. According to Oosthuizen, by these actions of the AICs, African Christians came to realize that, their traditions and culture possessed important values that could be used to teach good Christian living.⁹ From this perspective,

⁴ Teddy Chalwe Sakupapa, “The Decolonising Content of African Theology and the Decolonisation of African Theology Reflections on a Decolonial Future for African Theology,” *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 46, no. 3 (2018): 406–24.

⁵ Phillip Higgs, “The African Renaissance and the Decolonisation of Theological Education,” *Contested Issues in Training Ministers in South Africa*, 2015, 43–56.

⁶ Nelson Varas-Díaz and Irma Serrano-García, “The Challenge of a Positive Self-Image in a Colonial Context: A Psychology of Liberation for the Puerto Rican Experience,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 31 (2003): 103–15.

⁷ Pascah Mungwini, “‘Philosophy and Tradition in Africa’: Critical Reflections on the Power and Vestiges of Colonial Nomenclature.” *Thought and Practice* 3, no. 1 (2011): 1-19.

⁸ Marthinus L. Daneel, *African Initiated Churches in Southern Africa: Protest Movements or Mission Churches?* (African Studies Center, Boston University, 2000).

⁹ Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen, “The AIC (African Independent Churches) and the Modernisation Process. Part One,” *Africana Marburgensia* 20, no. 1 (1987): 59–81.

theology in Africa followed a particular trend. Ka Mana observed there were the missionary theologies of “*tabula rasa*”; Africans were considered to have no knowledge, and it was the responsibility of missionaries (or Whiteman) to educate them.¹⁰ These were theologies of “inculturation.” Missionary theologies were challenged by the desire to develop an African Christian theology. This was followed by theologies of “liberation” which laid the foundations for Africa to respond to issues of socioeconomic, religiocultural and political challenges within the continent. The last face was the theologies of “reconstruction” which challenged the realities of problems faced by Africans and emphasised the need for theological reflection that addressed the problems. Three theologies have emerged: reconstruction, inculturation, and decolonisation. In inculturation three Christologies emerged; Incarnational, Ancestor and Eschatological Christologies.

African Christian Theology of Reconstruction (ACTOR)

The theology of reconstruction is a framework developed in response to the challenges and problems faced by Africans and the quest to address issues of poverty, political instability, social injustice, and cultural alienation by combining African cultural values, spirituality, and social dynamics with Christian faith. Maluleke has outlined the historical trajectories of the development of the theology of reconstruction.¹¹ He recounted two ecclesial events: the 1974 Synod of Bishops and the 1994 African Synod¹² which were significant events in the history of the Church in Africa aimed at addressing the challenges of spreading the Christian faith in Africa. It linked “Liberation” to “Evangelization” and emphasised contextual theological perspectives that coincided with the emergence and popularisation of the independence movements in the 1960s and 1970s. According to DaSilva, the AICs movements quickly assumed the responsibility of reconstructing theology in Africa.¹³ Pauw observed that it was within this context and desperate search for a suitable framework amid challenges of redefinition of the evangelization agenda in Africa that in the 1980s and 1990s African Reconstruction Theology emerged popularised by the Ka Mana and Jesse Mugambi.¹⁴

Mugambi also proposes the theology of reconstruction. It focused on addressing various challenges and painful experiences that Africa went through, including social injustice, liberation, decolonisation, and alienation of African traditions and values in Christianity, theology, and biblical scholarship.¹⁵ Overall, the theology of reconstruction sought to reclaim Africa’s identity, restore its dignity, and promote the holistic transformation of all aspects of African life, including spiritual, social, economic, and political. Reconstruction theology offered various benefits. First, it provides a critical examination of traditional religious doctrines and practices to identify aspects that need to be reinterpreted considering current issues. Second, it emphasises the importance of contextualising religious beliefs and rituals to make them relevant and meaningful within specific cultural and social contexts. In a portrait of Mugambi’s theologies of Liberation and Reconstruction, Magesa highlights the strategic contribution of his theologies of “liberation” and “reconstruction” with his Post-Exilic Motif.¹⁶ According to Magesa, Mugambi’s understanding of the post-Cold War and the need for a shift from a “dominant” paradigm of liberation was used to articulate his “reconstruction theology.”

Mugambi has also noted that the Cold War had divided Africa (in fact, the rest of the world) into the East nations (WARSAW) and the West (NATO). Thus, with the destruction of the Berlin Wall (1989), the end of colonial rule in Africa (1945- 960), and apartheid in South Africa (1990), he argued for a shift in theological emphasis from an “exodus (liberation) motif” to a “reconstructive motif”.¹⁷ In a review of the contribution of Mugambi, Vähäkangas observed that Mugambi’s main argument was that, after, the Cold War, Colonisation, and Apartheid in South Africa there was the need to reconstruct theology to address the destructions and

¹⁰ Kä Mana, *Christians and Churches of Africa Envisioning the Future: Salvation in Jesus Christ and the Building of a New African Society* (Ocms, 2002).

¹¹ Tinyiko S. Maluleke, “The Proposal for Theology of Reconstruction: A Critical Approach,” *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 22, no. 3 (1994): 245–58.

¹² Synod of Bishop was established by Pope Paul VI in 1965 as a result of Vatican II to promote unity and collaboration between Bishops through the common study of the conditions of the Church and in agreement on the questions pertaining to her mission.

¹³ José Antunes Da Silva, “African Independent Churches Origin and Development,” *Anthropos*, 1993, 393–402.

¹⁴ Christoff M. Pauw, “African Independent Churches as a ‘People’s Response’ to the Christian Message,” *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 1995, 3–25.

¹⁵ Jesse N. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War* (East African Educational Publ., 1995).

¹⁶ Laurenti Magesa, “A Portrait of Professor JNK Mugambi’s Theological Project of Reconstruction: A Review Article of Theologies of Liberation and Reconstruction: Essays in Honour of Professor JNK Mugambi, Ph. D., Edited by Isaac MT Mwase and Eunice K. Kamaara,” *Studies in World Christianity* 19, no. 2 (2013): 187–97.

¹⁷ Jesse Mugambi and Ndwiya Kanyua. "The church and reconstruction of Africa: Theological considerations." All Africa Conference of Churches, 1997.

dehumanization that had taken place to remotivate and encourage Africans to take their rightful place in the global world.¹⁸

African Christian Theologies of Inculturation

The theology of inculturation emerged around the 1950s and the 1960s as a theological response to the alienation of African traditional religion and cultural values in theological discourses and biblical scholarship in Christianity in Africa, and a search for a context that correctly answered the questions African Christians were asking. Missionary perceptions in Africa were persistently negative, i.e. savages, backward, uncivilised, etc., and all that remained was savage chaos. According to Ayittey even when Darwin speculated that it was Africa, (not the Garden of Eden in the Near or Far East) that the evolution of humanity should be traced, intellectual prejudices precipitated rejection that anything good could come from Africa because its people had no history, no culture, no civilization, and nothing of value to contribute to human evolution.¹⁹ As observed by Viera, missionaries condemned its religion, and culture as Satanic, from which they had come to save them, any possibility of integrating them into Christianity was considered unacceptable.²⁰ For Antonio, inculturation like liberation was part of post-colonial discourse that provided appropriate, comprehensive, and suitable intercultural paradigms for making missionary Christianity and its theological nomenclatures meaningful in the African Christian context.²¹

Centuries in Africa, the dominance of the colonial hermeneutical framework prevented a holistic approach to Christian theologies and biblical studies in African traditional and cultural contexts. No opportunity was given to the possibility of African traditions and culture to provide a perspective on the many Christian theological and biblical hermeneutical frameworks found in the bible and traditions of the early Church. Bediako has proven how Jesus and the gospel are significant in other cultural contexts. Bediako argued that it was unreasonable to insist that the significance of Jesus and the Bible could only be perceived in Western or Euro-American contexts.²² Inculturation theology according to Magesa was developed as a framework that explored the dynamics of cultural diversity and inter-cultural encounters within the context of religious belief and practice (especially in Africa). It sought to comprehend and address the theological implications of cultural diversity, globalisation, and the interactions that exist between different religious and cultural traditions.²³ Intercultural relationships recognise that culture or religion does not exist in isolation, and societies are increasingly interconnected and diverse. It, therefore, acknowledged the inherent value and significance of cultural diversity and sought to promote dialogue, mutual respect, and understanding among different cultures and religious traditions.

Its theological approach according to Stanley emphasized the need to engage in meaningful inter-cultural engagements that went beyond superficial tolerance and mere coexistence.²⁴ The African Christian theological paradigm also explored the ways in which theological concepts, practices, and expressions could be enriched and reimagined through various intercultural engagements. It acknowledged that different cultures provided unique insights into the understanding and experience of the divine, and by engaging in the intercultural exchange of ideas, new theological perspectives and understandings could emerge.

African Christian Christologies (ACC)

The role and significance of Christ in Christianity in Africa and its interplay with African religions and cultures was dynamic and occupied the majority of post-colonial Christianity and theology. For Ezigbo it was important for Christ to identify with the traditions and cultures of African Christians.²⁵ Not only was this important religiously but politically. According to Banda and Orobator, such rhetorics reclaimed the dignity of African

¹⁸ Mika Vähäkangas, "Postcolonial Positions: Jesse NK Mugambi and the Christian Responsibility in the Socio-Political Sphere," in *Religion and Social Reconstruction in Africa* (Routledge, 2018), 98–107.

¹⁹ George B. N. Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed* (Springer, 1992).

²⁰ P. A. Viera, "Christian Missions in Africa and Their Role in the Transformation of African Societies," *Asian and African Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 249–60.

²¹ Edward P. Antonio, *Inculturation and Postcolonial Discourse in African Theology*, vol. 14 (Peter Lang, 2006).

²² Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (OCMS, 2000).

²³ Laurenti Magesa, "Inculturation Theology in Africa," in *A New History of African Christian Thought* (Routledge, 2016), 121–33.

²⁴ Brian Stanley, "Inculturation: Historical Background, Theological Foundations and Contemporary Questions," *Transformation* 24, no. 1 (2007): 21–27.

²⁵ Victor I. Ezigbo, *Re-Imagining African Christologies: Conversing with the Interpretations and Appropriations of Jesus in Contemporary African Christianity*, vol. 132 (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010).

traditions and cultures and brought them to a status comparable to that of Western or Euro-Americans.²⁶ It also made what Jesus stood for significant in African cosmology. Bediako provides insights into some key aspects of the complexities and politicization of African Christian identity including the incorporation of traditional African religious elements into Christian worship, the role of African theologians in shaping this identity, and ongoing dialogue between Christianity and indigenous African belief systems.²⁷ Keith also highlighted the importance of Christ to identify with the African “condition” since according to him it had become extensively prejudiced.²⁸ Apart from reclaiming the dignity of African identity, it elevated Christianity to a global (intercultural) status, making it a religion for every tradition and culture, especially because it made Christ identify and share in the suffering of the African people.

Incarnational Christology

One of the major Christologies that emerged in African Christian theology was the attempt to conceptualise the significance and role of Christ’s “incarnational” christology, that, the pre-existent divine person (Christ); God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, and the eternally begotten “Logos” (word) took upon human nature and “was made flesh”, conceived in the womb of a woman, (Mary). The incarnational theology which according to Coffey was originally formulated by the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) by the Byzantine Emperor Marcian (392-457) presented three facts for Christian theology: the divinity of Christ; the humanity of Christ and the “hypostatic union” (humanity and divinity) of Christ without “diminishing” the other.

According to Dunn, this meant Christ was at the same time fully God and fully human.²⁹ His body was therefore capable of being subjected or was subjected to all the bodily weaknesses to which the human nature (body) is subjected i.e., hunger (Matt 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), fatigue (John 4:6), pain, and death (Luke 23:46). Consequently, Torrance developed an incarnational Christology that underscored the centrality of the “incarnation” of Christ.³⁰ He saw this as a key event in history and was crucial for understanding God’s relationship with humanity. Torrance posits that in incarnation, Christ accomplished “redemption” and “reconciliation” between God and humanity.³¹ Magezi and Magezi in “*Christ also ours in Africa*” employ Torrance’s Christological model as a nexus for Christ to identify with African Christians. They assert, that there were enough reasons for Africa to develop this Christological model to see Christ in the identity, experience, and context of African Christians since he represented a connection between Christianity and African culture that enabled African Christians to relate to Him in a way that resonated with their struggles and special context.³² The concept of Christ’s sufficiency in Africa is however explored by Banda who posits that it was necessary for Christ to be found in the traditions and cultures of Africa in order to explain the significance of what He (Christ) represented and the possibility of his salvific work in the African social and cultural context.³³ African Christian inculturation Christology, therefore, provided a suitable framework to contextualise the incarnation of Christ in the African religio-cultural and socioeconomic context, allowing African Christians to see themselves reflected in the person and message of Jesus as it attempts to reclaim and reinterpret biblical teachings and traditions through an African lens.

Akper further divides Christological discourse in Africa into Inculturation and Liberation. According to him, Inculturation Christology employed traditional African religious concepts to imagine and explain Jesus Christ and the salvific significance of his cross.³⁴ Liberation Christologies also attempted to fit Jesus and the salvific significance of his cross into Africans’ socioeconomic and religiocultural challenges and problems. According to Akper, African Christian Christology sought to identify and develop a suitable and relevant

²⁶ Collum Banda, “The Sufficiency of Christ in Africa: A Christological Challenge from African Traditional Religions” (2005); Agbonkhanmeghe E Orobator, “The Quest for an African Christ: An Essay on Contemporary African Christology,” *Hekima Review*, 1994..

²⁷ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (OCMS, 1992).

²⁸ Ferdinando Keith, “Christian Identity in the African Context: Reflections on Kwame Bediako’s Theology and Identity,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 1 (2007): 121.

²⁹ David Coffey, “The ‘Incarnation’ of the Holy Spirit in Christ,” *Theological Studies* 45, no. 3 (1984): 466–80; James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996).

³⁰ Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (InterVarsity Press, 2015).

³¹ Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*.

³² Vhumani Magezi and Christopher Magezi. “Christ also ours in Africa: A consideration of Torrance’s incarnational, Christological model as nexus for Christ’s identification with African Christians.” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 38, no. 1 (2017): 1-12.

³³ Banda, “The Sufficiency of Christ in Africa: A Christological Challenge from African Traditional Religions.”

³⁴ Godwin Akper, “The Person of Jesus Christ in Contemporary African Christological Discourse,” *Religion & Theology* 14, no. 3/4 (2007): 224–43.

methodological framework to integrate the concept and significance of Christ's nature and identity within the context of African Christianity and theology. It covered many theological perspectives and interpretations of the role of Christ and its significance in African Christianity by integrating elements of African socio-economic and religioculture with Christianity, providing unique perspectives on Christology.

Ancestor Christology

Ancestor Christology brought Christ closer to the African Christians. It provided a framework that enabled African Christians to see Christ as a relative, a person who is very much a part of the African family. According to Oheneba-Sakyi, the African family provides an elaborate socioeconomic and religiocultural foundation for the African to find his/her identity, and develop their personhood and function.³⁵ As an institution, it ensures the survival, protection, and support of members. The significance of the nexus of the African family according to Chirozva, Mubaya, and Mukamuri is how it connects both the living and the dead (ancestors) and the role each plays in the survival, protection, and progress of the family.³⁶ For example, ancestors, even though no more in their physical bodies, are not separated from their families, they get vested with mystical powers and authority and retain a functional role in the world of the living. They serve as guardians (protectors), sources of guidance, bestowers of good fortune, and spiritual connections between the living and the dead. As observed by Ubah death in the African traditions does not alter or end the life of an individual, it only causes a change in their conditions.³⁷

It is important to add that, within the literature, such as that of Isidienu and Onyekelu, Ushe Kanu and Mekoa just to mention a few, it is not everybody who gets to become an ancestor.³⁸ There are strict criteria for a dead relative to become venerated and considered an ancestor. For instance, among many other things, such an individual must have lived an exemplary (virtuous) life and demonstrated by all standards a high level of moral uprightness, and hard work whose legacies can be used to advise other members of the family, especially the younger generation. Their lives never brought shame and disgrace to the family and anytime they were remembered it brought dignity and honour. It is within this context that, the ancestor christology within African Christian theology is developed. According to Lies, this is developed as a consequence of the "incarnational" christology in both Western and African Christian contexts of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ and its significance in the context of what he represented and achieved.³⁹ Theologians who dedicated much of their scholarship to exploring, explaining, and proving the relevance of Ancestor Christology in African Christian theology such as Palmer, Luka, Nyamiti and Bediako provided justification for the concept not only for African Christianity but beyond.⁴⁰

In Ancestor Christology, Christ is recognized first as a member of the family, not just any member but a highly revered member. His role as an ancestor is a result of his interest, love, and sacrifice for the good of the family and continuous protection and guidance to members. Seeing Jesus Christ as a member of the family, first, eliminated the barrier that Missionary and Western theological nomenclatures had established which alienated the Africans from any possibility to identify and relate with him in their traditions and culture. Secondly, it created an appropriate context for the African Christian to relate to him as a father, brother, kin, etc which created a strong bond between the African Christian and Jesus Christ in a relationship of respect and honour since the family in the African tradition and culture meant more than just being a member of the nucleus.

³⁵ Yaw Oheneba-Sakyi and B. Takyi, "Introduction to the Study of African Families: A Framework for Analysis," *African Families at the Turn of the 21st Century*, 2006, 1–24.

³⁶ Chaka Chirozva, Chipso Plaxedes Mubaya, and Billy Mukamuri, "The Traditional African Family in the Age of Globalization," *Journal of African Studies* 14, no. 2 (2007): 1–16.

³⁷ Chinedu Nwafor Ubah, "The Supreme Being, Divinities and Ancestors in Igbo Traditional Religion: Evidence from Otanchara and Otanzu," *Africa* 52, no. 2 (1982): 90–105.

³⁸ Ifeyinwa Cordelia Isidienu and Ann Chinazo Onyekelu, "Ancestral Cults In African Traditional Religion: Their Relevance In The Contemporary African Society," *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, 2021; Ushe Mike Ushe, "God, Divinities and Ancestors in African Traditional Religious Thought," *African Traditional Religion and Philosophy:: Essays on an Ancestral Religious Heritage*, 2022; Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, *African Traditional Religion and Philosophy:: Essays on an Ancestral Religious Heritage*. (Author House, 2022); Itumeleng Mekoa, "Ancestors as Guardians of Morality in African Traditional Religious Thought," *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2020): 31–47.

³⁹ Lothar Lies, "Jesus Christ The Ancestor. An African Contextual Christology in the Light of the Major Dogmatic Christological Definitions of the Church from the Council of Nicea (325) to Chalcedon (451)" (JSTOR, 2004).

⁴⁰ Timothy Palmer, "Jesus Christ: Our Ancestor?," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 27, no. 1 (2008): 65–76; Reuben Turbi Luka, *Jesus Christ as Ancestor: A Theological Study of Major African Ancestor Christologies in Conversation with the Patristic Christologies of Tertullian and Athanasius* (Langham Publishing, 2019); Charles Nyamiti, "Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective," *Mambo Occasional Papers/Missio-Pastoral Series* 11 (1984); Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*.

Christ being seen as father, brother, or kin established a dynamic relationship that went beyond simple theological juxtaposition or nomenclature to a deeper intimacy and closeness which informed a trajectory of prayer culture and spirituality that did not relent in the face of challenges or impending danger. Third, it elicited a responsibility towards the protection, survival, and upkeep of the family. Being a member of the African family came with individual and collective responsibilities some of which were gender based.

Eschatological Christology

Africa's cosmology and spirituality provide complex and somewhat sophisticated dynamics of dimensions of the physical and spiritual universe. According to Kanu this cosmology which comprises the physical and spiritual universe is regarded as "a continuum"; the Spiritual universe is but an extension of the physical universe.⁴¹ There is therefore such closeness between the physical and spiritual universe that, they both are virtually indistinct. This is because existence in African cosmology is regarded as a "dimension" which means, one can exist in one dimension (say physical) today, and another (say spiritual) tomorrow and vice versa, a nexus that explains the concept of life as a "cycle" which according to Mbiti as observed by Mbaya and Cezula comprises birth, death, and rebirth, until a person reaches the level of perfection where he/she can be admitted into the world of the Ancestors.⁴² A belief that explains the concept of "reincarnation" (second birth) as observed by Unuigwomen.⁴³ This belief explains the concept of "time" in the African cosmology. The belief in life as a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth with death as not the inevitable end of life, but rather, a journey or a link into another dimension, a glorified and deified world of the Ancestors is what defines the concept of "time" in the African cosmology.

Murungi has explained that time in African cosmology is not conceptualised in the same way as it is in Western or Euro-American cultures ("*kronos*" [time] and "*Kairos*" [season]) with an "end" in mind.⁴⁴ As explained by Mbiti, in African cosmological philosophy, time is conceptualised in a "cyclical" way. Time is not linear; it does have an end in focus. The concept of an eschatological christology in African Christianity like the African cosmology is not with the expectation of a future "end" of things "*escha teloe*" (end of time or the world) where the deeds of men shall be brought into accountability. It is rather with the belief in the present perfection of humanity as they are rewarded for their good or bad deeds in order to attain the level of uprightness that they can be accepted into the deified world of the Ancestors.⁴⁵ Eschatology as Mayemba put it, 'is not only about the future (the not-yet-there), it is also about the present (the already-there) and encompasses at each point in time -from birth, death and the hereafter.'⁴⁶ This idea is what provides a suitable framework for the religious, social, and economic life of African societies. Since Africans view the universe religiously, it forms in people a sense of awareness that whatever a person does, there is a reward that will not wait for a distant future.

Mbiti draws a parallel between Western or missionary Christianity's concept of eschatology and the African

Christian concept to illustrate the comprehensiveness of the African Christian concept of eschatology on nomenclatures of the global Christian doctrine of eschatology.⁴⁷ For Mayemba, Kaunda and Kaunda, the eschatological christology of African Christianity brings a fresh philosophical perspective to the Christian theology of eschatology and its relevance for the present life of the people.⁴⁸ And since it is not necessarily futuristic but inherent in the philosophy of life as a cycle, people pay attention to what they do and the consequences that follow in the here and now. They would not have to die to receive the reward for their bad or good deeds. While Christian eschatology contains, as Sobrino put it, the belief that "present reality is not capable of revealing God fully", and that "the authentic reality of God will only be revealed at the end of history" making "re-ligion" (looking to the past) "pro-ligion" (looking to the future), it reminds Christians that human history is not a "history continuing on into infinity", and that the world and its history do not simply continue

⁴¹ Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "The Dimensions of African Cosmology," *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 2, no. 2 (2013): 533–55.

⁴² Henri Mbaya and Ntozakhe Cezula, "Contribution of John S Mbiti to the Study of African Religions and African Theology and Philosophy," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 5, no. 3 (2019): 421–42.

⁴³ Andrew F. Unuigwomen, "Reincarnation as a Metaphysical Principle of Explanation in African Traditional Thought: A Critique," *Global Journal of Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2004): 15–19.

⁴⁴ John Murungi, "Toward an African Conception of Time," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1980): 407–16.

⁴⁵ John S. Mbiti, "The Concept of Time." (1996).

⁴⁶ Bienvenu Mayemba, "The Notion of Eschatology in African Ancestral Religions: A Category of Deliverance, Promise and Remembrance" (Boston College, 2009).

⁴⁷ Mbiti, "The Concept of Time."

⁴⁸ Mayemba, "The Notion of Eschatology in African Ancestral Religions: A Category of Deliverance, Promise and Remembrance"; Chammah J Kaunda and Mutale M Kaunda, "In Search of Decolonial Eschatology: Engaging Christian Eschatology with Bemba Futurism," *Theology Today* 75, no. 4 (2019): 469–81.

indefinitely.⁴⁹ The African Christian eschatology insists that since the very cosmology of the universe is spiritual, it can reveal the authentic reality of God since that is the reason why He has placed with it certain moral laws to help people attain a nature that can be like him.

Resurrection and Reincarnation Christologies

One of the basic pillars of Christianity is the belief in Jesus as “Christ”; the only-begotten of God, the very God of God, being of one substance with the Father, incarnate by the Holy Spirit, crucified, died, was buried, and resurrected. The significance of the belief in the “resurrection” (*anastasis*) is the “recognition” or “unequaled” status it accords Jesus, as one who had “conquered” one of the most dreaded and unfathomable experiences of humanity; “death”. According to Cranfield the “resurrection”; the ability of Jesus to lay down his own life and take it back (John 10:18) is one of the most important events that prove the “christology” of Jesus and therefore His “Deity” and “immortality”.⁵⁰ The concept of “Christ” (*Christos*) meaning the “anointed” derived from the Hebrew “*Mashiach*” (or messiah) elucidates not just a “deliverer” to emancipate the Jewish people and restore Israel to its golden age. But one who had “divinity” and “humanity” dwelling in him at the same time and can represent God amongst humanity and humanity before God. Torrey posits that what makes the “resurrection” such a critical “Christological” issue is that, to refuse the “resurrection” is to refuse the “death” of Jesus and to collapse one of the most fundamental grounds upon which his “divinity” and therefore “christology” is dependent on.⁵¹

The historicity of the “resurrection” of Jesus does not raise very serious scientific issues as the “nature” of the resurrection. Scholars are divided on the “nature of resurrection” as a product of “religious myth” or “classical antiquity”. Did Jesus “resurrect” with his “physical body” or “spiritual body”? It seemed the contention was that resurrecting with his “physical body” put the truth of his “death” in “doubt”, and resurrecting with his “spiritual body” also put the truth of his resurrection in doubt. Notwithstanding, to doubt the “death” of Jesus, is to doubt the “crucifixion” narrative on two grounds, first, as a product of religious myth created to place Jesus and Christianity on a higher pedestal than earlier religions and that it never happened but a religious product. Second, as a historical event that took place but did not end with Jesus dying on the cross which also puts a slur on the whole Christ event. Whichever, way, both are never a strong argument since, apart from the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) accounts, historians like Josephus, Dunn, Ludemann, Tzapheris, etc attest to the fact of its historicity.⁵² There is, however, no doubt that the idea of resurrection is not peculiar to Christianity alone. The main difficulty with the resurrection is the dynamics of the “soul” and “body” in the concept of the “death” and “resurrection” of Jesus.

At “death” and at “resurrection”, what is the state of the soul? Did Jesus die with the “soul” and the “body” or he died with the “body alone. The two main problem here is understanding the dynamics of the “body” and “soul” in “death” and “resurrection”. Obviously, the soul has appeared to be one of the most difficult aspects to defined. Various disciplines have approached it differently. In religion and philosophy, the soul is defined as the “immaterial” (spiritual) aspect or “essence” of a human being; that which confers humanity. In theology, it is further defined as that part of the “individual” which “partakes of divinity” and often is considered to survive the death (demise) of the body. In Aristotle’s view, the soul is the “form,” and the body is the “matter.”⁵³ According to Plato cited by Olshewsky, the soul existed before birth and continued to exist after death.⁵⁴ The body was seen as a temporary vessel for the soul. What is common with the opinions of Aristotle and Plato is that the body is the “physical” or “material” substance of the “body” while the soul is the “spiritual” or “immaterial” substance of the body. In anatomy (science) the human body (the material form) is a biological structure composed of cells, tissues, organs, and systems such as Skeletal, Muscular, Nervous, Cardiovascular, Lymphatic, Respiratory, Digestive, Endocrine, Urinary, and Reproductive.

If one can follow the argument with the conclusion that, the human body as defined by Aristotle, Plato, Religion, and Science consists of the “Soul”; the immaterial or spiritual form that does not die but lives on even in “death”, while the “Body”; the material or physical form consisting of cells, tissues, organs, systems and does

⁴⁹ Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002).

⁵⁰ Charles E. B. Cranfield, “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ,” *The Expository Times* 101, no. 6 (1990): 167–72.

⁵¹ Reuben Archer Torrey, “The Certainty and Importance of the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead,” 1940.

⁵² James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making Volume 1*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939); Gerd Ludemann, *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry* (Prometheus Books, 2010); Vasileios Tzapherēs, “Crucifixion-the Archaeological Evidence,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11, no. 1 (1985): 44–53..

⁵³ Hallie Altwies, “Imagination and Inseparability of Soul and Body in Aristotle,” *Ephemeris, the Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (2021): 5.

⁵⁴ Thomas M. Olshewsky, “On the Relations of Soul to Body in Plato and Aristotle,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14, no. 4 (1976): 391–404.

not live on in “death” then it can be concluded that, the “death” of Jesus and his “resurrection” does not mean the “death” of the “body” and “Soul”; the material and immaterial essence of his “being”. If this premise is established, then the “death” of Jesus can be explained that, “He” Jesus, “stepped out of his body for a while and later came to take it on” just as the biblical narrative has claimed. John 10:17-18 *“The reason the Father loves Me is that I lay down My life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father.”* This is the statement that renders “reincarnation” in African Traditional Religion and philosophy a legitimate concept to consider in the context of its christology.

The Concept of Reincarnation in African Traditions, Religions, and Cultures

African traditions and cultures provide comprehensive philosophical and scientific explanations of important aspects and the essence of human life and existence. “Reincarnation” is one of the many of such. In African traditions, and cultures it is one of the major themes and is the belief in “rebirth” of the “spirit or material essence” or “aspect” of it of a person after bodily death.” It is part of the “death” and “dying” tradition which is itself a part of a complex concept of life as a cycle of birth, death and rebirth conceived with “awe” and “veneration”. In African traditions and cultures, each of these cycles is celebrated with specific rites and rituals because it is believed that, each of the stages is a complete journey. Nwadiokwu has outlined the various rites for each stage and the rationale for the rites and rituals associated with them.⁵⁵ The main idea is that life in the African tradition and culture is a system of different dimensions and experiences. There is a specific right and ritual for childbirth, adolescence/puberty, marriage, death, etc. and each of these stages are “complete” stages in themselves.

Each of these stages is protected with such intentionality to make sure every child moves from one stage to the other without any failures because the worthiness and integrity of the entire family are dependent on each child being able to move from one stage to the other without mistakes or waywardness. Most importantly, in African traditions, cultures, religion and philosophy, the “human being” (male or female) is conceived not as “duality” but as “tripartite” and/or “pentachotomistic”. Gyekye intimates that man in the Akan conceptual scheme consists of Soul (*Okra*) Spirit (*Sunsum*) and Body (*Honam*).⁵⁶ Wiredu also states that in addition to the Soul (*Okra*), Spirit (*Sunsum*) and Body (*Nipadua*) there is the *Mogya* (blood) and *Ntoro* (spiritual-genetic aspect of the father) responsible for the caste of the person.⁵⁷ In addition to these three broad perspectives, in between cultures, there are other perspectives that are distinct. That notwithstanding, the above is the general concept within which all the others can be perceived. Because “death” in African traditions and culture is not conceived as the “end” of life but as a “cycle” and a “transition” the beginning of another set of journeys. “Reincarnation” is the “explanation” for the process of “transiting” from one “cycle” to the “other”.

In African traditions and culture, it is believed that every child that is born has a special assignment “*hyebre*” or “*nkrabea*” and until they accomplish those assignments, they will not find “rest” or be allowed into the world of “ancestors, and therefore will be “reincarnated.” This belief is one of the main ideas behind “names” of people. Because it is believed that, people are born for specific tasks, they come with “destinies” (*hyebre* or *nkrabea*) which inform the kind of name they are to be given, what kind of things they may be prohibited from or allowed to engage in. Before a child is born, elders, will go and inquire from the “oracle” (*deity*) and “*nananom*” (ancestors) about the “*hyebre*” or “*nkrabea*” of the child. This guides the nurturing and upbringing of the said child. It is expected that each person walks in the path of their “*hyebre*” or “*nkrabea*” and fulfils the demand of it before they can finally stop their cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In the event where a person “dies” without having completed their “*hyebre*” or “*nkrabea*” they are “reborn” (reincarnated) to continue their journey of fulfilling their “*hyebre*” or “*nkrabea*.” So, in this context, life, death, and rebirth (reincarnation) is a kind of “punishment” to make people repeatedly reborn until they have fulfilled their destiny “*hyebre*” or “*nkrabea*”

The two words “*hyebre*” or “*nkrabea*” even though they mean destiny, have slight differences in nuances. Just as the two imply “*hyebre*” or “*nkrabea*,” linguistically “*Nkrabea*,” is translated “*wo kra bia*” (literally, the place of/for your soul) or “the path for your soul”. This is the meaning of the term “*nkrabea*” as it relates to “destiny”. “It is what a person comes to the earth with as his/her life.” In the African traditions and culture, this destiny “*nkrabea*” (“*wo kra bia*”) is protected and preserved with serious rituals. It is believed that this “*nkrabea*” can be stolen, destroyed, or twisted. When this happens, the child or individual loses his/her

⁵⁵ C. N. Nwadiokwu et al., “Rites of Passage African Traditional Region,” *International Journal of Education and Research* 4, no. 9 (2016): 41–50.

⁵⁶ Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Temple University Press, 1995).

⁵⁷ Kwasi Wiredu, “The Akan Concept of Mind,” *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* 3, no. 15 (1983): 7.

sense of purpose in life. On the other hand, “*hyebre*” literally translates into “*ɔhye bre*” meaning “*ebre a wahye*” thus “appointed time” or “season” and “period” determined within which certain things are supposed to happen or be done. The nuance is that “*nkrabea*” is the destiny (the whole life determined for a person) while “*hyebre*” is the appointed times and seasons within which certain things predetermined in the life of a person are supposed to happen. Therefore, there are elaborate rites and rituals to celebrate the success of each stage of life in the nurture or growth of a child in the African traditional family.

Implications for the Christology of African Christianity, Theology and Biblical Scholarship

African Christianity and Theology have always attempted to derive important lessons from the concepts and frameworks in the African Traditional Religion to communicate the gospel message to Africans in their own indigenous religious traditional and cultural contexts. One such concept is the “reincarnation” of the Soul. “Reincarnation” like “resurrection” presents important theological lessons for Christology in African Christianity and Theology. It provides a framework for understanding Jesus’ identity. It affirmed one of the most controversial claims of Jesus about himself “Before Abraham Was Born, I Am”. In John 8:53-56 Jesus made a controversial statement when he had a confrontation with the Jews. They asked Him, “Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets who are dead? Who do You make Yourself out to be?” Jesus answered, “If I honour Myself, my honour is nothing. It is My Father who honours Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” Jesus claimed to have been alive during the time of Abraham and that Abraham saw him and rejoiced.

This claim revealed a lot about Jesus, not only did he poignantly identify himself as “eternal,” LORD referred to in Genesis 22 and Exodus 3:14. He also existed long before and long after Abraham, the greatest patriarch of the Jewish people but he puts himself in the identity of the Angel who had appeared to him in Genesis 18:1-35. What was the point that Jesus was trying to demonstrate? He was in a form that was different from the one he was in at the time of his second appearance. His “form” during the time of Abraham could not be the same as the “form” he had at this time. Obviously, He could not exist for that long. The Jews could give evidence of the accounts of his birth etc. In claiming to have existed past Abraham and that the sight of him was a gratification by God for the faithfulness of Abraham, Jesus claimed a “status” and “identity” that was above Abraham; “immortality”. But Jesus was talking about what has been a “cycle of his life” (birth, death, and rebirth), “reincarnation” more than what the Jews were concerned about. By alluding to this nature of existence, Jesus attempted to confirm his “special relationship” (Christology) with God and claim that, He knew God, and that it was God who had sent him. This is the reason the Jews picked up stones to kill Jesus; in their eyes, Jesus claimed to be God, which He was, but this statement was blasphemy to them.

The concept of “reincarnation” itself is not new to both the OT and NT. In Malachi 4:5-6 the Bible said, “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.*” This prophecy was confirmed by the Angel Gabriel when he visited Elizabeth and Zachariah to inform them of the Birth of John the Baptist. In Luke 1:13-17, “*But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zachariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He shall never take wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb. Many of the sons of Israel he will turn back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*”

In John 1:22-23 John described himself with the exact reference that only Elijah is referred to in the biblical literature, “I am a voice of one calling in the wilderness, make straight the way for the Lord” when the Jews had sent people to find out who he was.

These scripture references together, confirm the strong belief in “reincarnation” in both the OT and NT. Also, both Jesus and John identify themselves within the concept which not only brings critical implications to African Christianity and Theology but, it makes “reincarnation” one of the critical Christological concepts that can be developed in the quest to decipher the right and appropriate ways of communicating the gospel message within the African traditional, religious and cultural context.

CONCLUSION

The article which is written from the African Christian theological and biblical scholarship perspective has attempted to analyse the comparative relevance, trajectories, and implication of the inculturation of resurrection and reincarnation Christologies in African Christianity, Theology, and Biblical scholarship. It has been identified that the African socioeconomic and religiocultural cosmology occasioned several distinct ontologies and praxis that informed and influenced Christian theologies and nomenclatures. One of such, the inculturation of resurrection and reincarnation Christologies provided a framework for the discourse of Jesus pre-existence, incarnation, death, and resurrection in African Christianity, theology, and Traditional Religions. Both resurrection and reincarnation presented critical frameworks that individually or collectively could be employed to communicate the gospel message in Africa and beyond. Reincarnation as a Christological framework, provides sufficient explanations and answers to many of the claims of Jesus, especially his incarnation, resurrection and pre-existence. The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, find relevance in reincarnation which provides a comprehensive and meaningful answer to its significance. This notwithstanding, inculturation of the incarnation, resurrection, and reincarnation of Jesus, has its own conceptual and theoretical limitations, however, this article was limited in its scope to discuss some of the critical challenges of the use of the concept of reincarnation to explain the Christology of the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus in African Christianity, theology and biblical scholarship.

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