

The Christology of Kwame Bediako*

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Jesus, Saviour of the poor,
who brighten up our faces!
Damfo-Adu: the clever one,
we rely on you as the tongue relies on the mouth.
Afua Kuma

Introduction

Kwame Bediako is at the present one of the leading African theologians. This article attempts a systematic presentation of the various aspects of Bediako's Christology, the major key to interpreting his theology.

Bediako writes as an African scholar and a Christian theologian. For him, that implies a non-negotiable belief in the truth of Jesus Christ. He therefore never joins the debate over the historical Jesus versus the Christ of faith. He states that Jesus Christ is a historical reality and that the testimony of the Church to Jesus Christ as true God and true man is a testimony to a given reality.

Christology as interpretative key

Who Christ is, what Christ accomplished, and what Christ means for African reality are important questions for Bediako. He sees himself as a part in the ongoing process of developing an African theology. Bediako is appreciative of what has been done by his predecessors, but sees a need for going deeper, by moving towards a more particular theology. For him, Christology is one of those areas that must be developed.

Bediako discerns a change in approach within African theology around the 1980s. Prior to that, African theologians were mostly concerned with the relationship between African traditional religions and African Christian theology, and to establish African theology as legitimate in its own right. By the 1980s, the foundation for doing African theology had been laid, and the next generation of theologians could concentrate on other issues, such as Christology.¹ According to Bediako, one of the benefits that African theologians of his generation draw from the exploration of the “African pre-Christian heritage”² is that they can use religious categories from the indigenous languages in their further development of African theology and Christology.

The one pioneer modern theologian whom Bediako finds most relevant, is John Mbiti. Mbiti’s viewpoint that “[w]hat the Gospel brought was Jesus Christ”³ sums up, for Bediako, the great difference between African traditional religions and Christianity. Another important concern for Bediako, also inspired by Mbiti, is to distinguish between Christianity and Christ. Christ is something other and something more than Christianity and all its agents. It seems obvious to Bediako that the African people received Jesus Christ for his own sake and for the qualities they saw in him, and not for other benefits that missionaries could offer.⁴

The interpretation of Christ and the expression of his accomplishments must, Bediako believes, grow out of a real encounter between local Christians, with their culture, and the Bible. To my understanding, he is here saying that the relevance of Christ is first appreciated after a time of living in relationship with him, and that it is only the people themselves, as they relate to Christ and explore his relevance, who are able to give an adequate answer to the question about the relevance of Christ for them. For Bediako, Christ is found not only in the Bible but also in local contexts.

Bediako is not static in his theology. In the same way as he sees the need for a process of engagement between the Biblical testimony and the local culture in order to discern the relevance of Christ at the popular level, he sees a need for a similar process also in the field of Christian scholarship. He has his own starting-point, but he listens to others and is open to being convinced by others. In this way, he uses images from different sources as he elaborates his Christology. But his constant aim is to express a coherent Christology that is adequate for Africans. Here is a summary of what I have found.

Christological titles

For Bediako, it is important to express the greatness of Jesus in a way that is understood by Africans. His focus is primarily on the Akan people, whose world-view he shares,⁵ and he uses a variety of sources. The Bible is an obvious source for African Christological titles, but Bediako feels it necessary to emphasise images that can express the African experience in a particular way. He therefore draws on resources found in different aspects of African reality.

The theological approach of the early Greek Church Fathers in adding to the Biblical Christology from their own cultural context is a model for Bediako. He claims that they were doing Christian theology even though they were not “reproducing Biblical idioms”⁶ and that a Christology may be defined as scriptural if it is “speaking the language of the scriptural message.”⁷ Further, Bediako states that the “content of Christian communication is Christ himself”⁸ In this way, the tradition of the Church provides the precedent for adding to the Biblical Christological titles, so long as they are in accordance with the biblical message.

After establishing the analogy with the Christological methodology of the ancient tradition of the church, Bediako uses freely, but not uncritically, many titles taken from African traditional religions. This implies that he avoids using those he thinks will distort the Biblical message. Not all the images he uses and quotes are elaborated. Also some titles are more prominent and communicate the Christological content better than others. His guidelines have been the need to express who Jesus is and what he has done, and the significance of his achievements for people in Africa today.

A List

The list below contains many of the Christological titles Bediako makes use of or refers to. I have assigned the titles to one of three categories: African titles, biblical titles and other titles. There might be some uncertainty or overlap regarding the categorisation of the various titles, so the list is merely a suggestion.

African epithets	Biblical epithets	Other epithets
Healer ⁹	Jesus Christ ²⁶	Protector ⁴⁷
Master of Initiation ¹⁰	Jesus of Nazareth ²⁷	Provider ⁴⁸
Elder Brother ¹¹	Son ²⁸	Enabler ⁴⁹
Ancestor ¹²	Christ ²⁹	Christus Victor ⁵⁰
Great Ancestor ¹³	Son of God ³⁰	Friend of the poor ⁵¹
Great and Greatest Ancestor ¹⁴	Lord ³¹	Field Marshal ⁵²
Supreme Ancestor ¹⁵	Saviour ³²	The Valiant One ⁵³
Chief ¹⁶	Second Adam ³³	Sword Carrier ⁵⁴
Hunter ¹⁷	Son ³⁴	Hero Incompatible ⁵⁵
Great Doctor ¹⁸	Logos ³⁵	Universal Saviour ⁵⁶
Chief of all chiefs ¹⁹	Mediator ³⁶	Saviour of the World ⁵⁷
The Big Tree ²⁰	High Priest ³⁷	God the Son ⁵⁸
Powerful Chief ²¹	Man ³⁸	God-man ⁵⁹
Nana Yesu ²²	Lord and Saviour ³⁹	Son of the Father ⁶⁰
Odwira ²³	King ⁴⁰	Source of life ⁶¹
The Lion of the grasslands ²⁴	Christ as God ⁴¹	Incarnate and Risen Saviour ⁶²
Diviner ²⁵	Lamb of God ⁴²	The Great Doctor ⁶³
	Messiah ⁴³	Supreme Priest ⁶⁴
	Holy One ⁴⁴	
	Redeemer ⁴⁵	
	Word of God ⁴⁶	

Ancestor

For Bediako, 'ancestor' is the most significant African title to be used for Jesus Christ because the ancestors are the most visible and prominent aspect of the transcendent realm, particularly in the Akan religious world. God, the Supreme Being, is of course at top of the hierarchy, but in consonance with other Akan scholars Bediako notes that "the ancestors form the most prominent element in the Akan religious outlook and provide the essential focus of piety".⁶⁵ So by naming Jesus as an ancestor, Bediako places Jesus among the outstanding persons of the community.

The use of the title 'ancestor' occasions a certain tension within the African context. Some argue that the ancestors do not play an equal important role among all African people. Other African scholars think that for most Africans the term 'ancestor' is so closely connected to African traditional religions, and has such fixed

associations, that it is impossible to use that title for Christ.⁶⁶ Finally, there is a tension in the way Bediako uses the title. He uses it for Christ, for traditional African ancestors, for desacralised human ancestors, and for Christians from the past that he admires.

Why, in Bediako's view, is there a need for Africans to relate to Jesus as ancestor? One reason is that in order to be a true African, one has to be connected to the reality of the ancestors. If one can relate Jesus to the reality of the ancestors, one can be a fully integrated African Christian. Another reason is that the role of the ancestors is to protect and care for the totality of life. If Africans are to experience Jesus as a protector and one who really cares for their daily life, Jesus also has to be understood as an ancestor.⁶⁷ A third reason is that ancestors lie at the heart of African spirituality. If Jesus is to be more than a guest and a stranger from the outside world, he has to be among those whom one can relate at the level of the heart.⁶⁸ For Bediako, with his missiological perspective it is important that Africans should relate to Jesus in this way.

Naming Jesus as Ancestor

In order to make Jesus Christ relevant to people in Africa, it is crucial to come to terms with the "way in which Jesus relates to the importance and function of the "spirit fathers" or the ancestors."⁶⁹ For Bediako the solution is to identify Jesus as *Nana Yesu*. How is Bediako able to include Jesus Christ, the Jew, among the African ancestors?

His approach is to start with the universality of Jesus Christ. Jesus came as God incarnate to be the Saviour "of all people, of all nations and of all times."⁷⁰ Therefore Christ is present and at home in all human cultures, including African cultures. This universality makes it possible for Jesus to belong to the totality of humanity, including Akan society and spiritual reality. It is important to note that Bediako affirms the universality of Jesus on religious grounds.

From the universality of Jesus, Bediako points to his particularity. Jesus was born a Jew, but as a universal saviour, so that Jesus is not exclusively for Jews. For Bediako, the Jewishness of Jesus is a universal gift because those who believe in him will also inherit all the "divine promises given to the patriarchs and through the

history of ancient Israel".⁷¹ Through faith in Jesus, therefore, these promises also belong to the Akan people.

According to Bediako, the ancestors within traditional Akan religion are essentially bound to the clan or the lineage and thus function within a closed system.⁷² With Christ – for those who believe in him – this closed system has been opened up, and Akan Christians acknowledge themselves as part of a universal system that freely introduces Christ and his story to the realm of the spirits and the ancestors. For those who relate to Christ, Akan society is thus no longer closed, but becomes integrated into the universal human family.

To name Jesus as ancestor and give him the most prominent position among them, has wider implications for both Jesus and the ancestors. Jesus is suddenly incorporated into the African sphere, and is connected to a religious language and an understanding that previously belonged only to the ancestors. On the other hand, the ancestors also have to adjust to a new reality. They do not receive as much reverence as formerly, their way of relating to the living comes under fresh scrutiny, and they are decralised as they are increasingly viewed as mere human beings. Jesus slowly but steadfastly takes over their position both in relation to individuals and to society.

Taking over the mediatorial function of the ancestors

In the Akan understanding, it is the "spirit fathers" who mediate between God and human beings, acting on "delegated authority from God".⁷³ That includes mediating various aspects of what can be called salvation:⁷⁴ rescuing in times of trouble, securing the continuation of the society,⁷⁵ helping when sin destroys the social order,⁷⁶ and receiving prayers for help.

Looking at the Akan from a traditional Akan perspective, Bediako acknowledges the positive intention of the relationship between the people and their ancestors, but as a Christian he sees two obstacles. One is the ambivalence of the ancestors. For the ancestors are also a source of fear and uncertainty⁷⁷ and take revenge if necessary.⁷⁸ Another obstacle is the human origin of the ancestors: "The ancestors were mere men."⁷⁹ By contrast, Jesus is from above,⁸⁰ Jesus is "the Son of God; the Christ from heaven who became incarnate".⁸¹ In this way, Jesus is more than the

ancestors. As one with God he is automatically above them, and as Lord and Saviour, he replaces them and “becomes for us then the only mediator between God and ourselves.”⁸² By becoming a human being and sharing our condition, Jesus can also be defined as an Elder Brother who lives in the presence of God. As such he “displaces the mediatorial function of our natural ‘spirit fathers’”.⁸³

Jesus is able to take over the role of the ancestors because he is their Lord. Bediako claims that Jesus became the Lord of the ancestors by his resurrection and ascension when he went “to the realm of the ancestor spirits and the gods”.⁸⁴ So he says that Jesus is Lord over them “in much the same way that he is Lord over us.”⁸⁵

Yet another theological element is brought in as a “guarantee” of his Lordship over the spirits, namely, the sending of the Holy Spirit. The sending of the Spirit upon his followers secures the continuous presence of Jesus among them, in order to take over the role of the ancestors to protect and guide.⁸⁶ He does that by summing up in himself all the power of the ancestors.⁸⁷ Bediako says about Jesus, “he has sent us his own Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to dwell with us and be our protector”.⁸⁸ The significance of Bediako’s approach in dealing with the question of ancestors is its strongly theological focus.

Taking Away the Terror of the Ancestors

Bediako considers the ancestors as deserving respect, but he also notes their ambivalent nature,⁸⁹ for ancestors may also terrorise people, and some ancestral spirits are “malevolent”.⁹⁰ Bediako desires to see an end this negative influence of ancestors on society, and he sees Jesus as the one to achieve this. When Jesus takes his place as the sole divine, the terror of the ancestors is eliminated. By becoming Lord of the ancestors, Jesus empties them of their power, and claims that power for himself.⁹¹ In this way, according to Bediako, Jesus neutralises the ancestors. Being replaced by Jesus, they have no power to save and no power to harm.

One of Bediako’s theological sources is “grassroots theology”, particularly the poetess, Afua Kuma, whose spontaneous prayers confirm his own theology. She shows that faith in Jesus as superior to the ancestors, gives a new kind of security. When Afua

Kuma describes the power and terror of the spirits, she contrasts them with Jesus who is the “Sword Carrier”, “Hero Incompatible”, “Lamb of God” and “Holy One”. She thus expresses the strength of Jesus as compared to the powers of the spirits that can cause trouble, and emphasizes the ability of Jesus to rescue and to save from the spirits.⁹²

Desacralise the Ancestors

The traditional ancestors continue to live as spirits. “They continue to show interest and to intervene in the affairs of the state”⁹³ and “they give children to the living; they give good harvest, they provide the sanctions for the moral life of the nation and accordingly punish”.⁹⁴ In this way, the ancestors are a source of blessing and perceived as transcendent. Bediako believes it is important to desacralise ancestors and see as ordinary members of the community.⁹⁵ For the coming of Christ inaugurates “a new humanity”,⁹⁶ “creates a new history”,⁹⁷ and for Christians this means that there is a new way of laying the “power lines”.⁹⁸ In this way, Christ is seen the only Lord and the ancestors are reduced to participants in the community.

Desacralising the ancestors occurs, for Bediako, at two levels. The first level is to take divinity away from the ancestors and restore their humanity.⁹⁹ The second is to desacralise the king who rules on their behalf, so that he becomes a human being among other human beings. By desacralising the traditional ancestors, Christ will, in the end, stand alone as divine ancestor.

Bediako acknowledges the debate about “whether ancestors are worshipped or simply venerated”.¹⁰⁰ However, with Christ as sole Lord, the “ancestor cult”¹⁰¹, will, in his view, disappear. With regard to other spirits, he states that in the traditional world, the spirits derived from the Supreme Being are owed “worship and reverence”¹⁰² because they are perceived to have the ability to act independently in a universe of distributed power. Once their capacity for independent action is denied, through the Christian reorientation of the spiritual realm, that capacity too disappears. As for Christians who continue to depend on the ancestors “as a source for power and blessing”¹⁰³ Bediako considers that they risk opening themselves to “the realm of the occult.”¹⁰⁴ For him, Christian worship “has to do with Jesus Christ”¹⁰⁵ and he does not

favour a continuous relationship at a transcendent level with the ancestors.

At least at an early stage in his writing, Bediako was open to some kind of contact between a son and his ancestor father, saying the ancestors, addressed through Christ, may even be included “in our intercessions”.¹⁰⁶ Subsequently he has changed his mind, and he indicated to me that he is more convinced than ever that Christ is the only ancestor to be approached through prayer.

Replacing the ancestors as the benefactors of society

Traditionally, the ancestors take care of individuals and the community. They are important for “individual and corporate well-being.”¹⁰⁷ The ancestors protect people on a journey, on the farm or when going hunting. They guarantee the continuation of a family by securing pregnancy and enough food and clothing. For society, the ancestors lay out the communal ethic, punish those who violate the law, and safeguard the power base of the ruler and the sustainability of society. In order to ensure all this and keep the ancestors as benefactors, both the individual and society need to stay in a good relationship with the ancestors. The major way of achieving this relationship is through different forms of sacrifice and other means of remembrance, such as libation and the celebration of festivals.

On the basis that Jesus is Lord, is mightier than the ancestors and is the one who, among the dead, is really alive, Bediako holds the view that Jesus replaces the ancestors as benefactor of the society. Jesus becomes the benefactor of both individuals and society, the source of protection, fertility and ethics. He speaks about Jesus as “mediator of a better covenant relating our human destiny directly to God [...] that meets our needs to the full.”¹⁰⁸ The phrase “to the full”, is a strong indication that in his view there is no need for benefactors other than Jesus, and Christians should therefore look to him. When he uses the expression “a better covenant”, I interpret this to mean that Jesus is of a higher quality than the ancestors because, unlike the ancestors, he is solely beneficent.¹⁰⁹ To underline his message, Bediako describes Jesus as “Saviour”, who gives “protection”, and “guidance”.¹¹⁰ Interpreting one of Afua Kuma’s poems, Bediako points to Jesus as “King” and “Chief” who gives the kings and chiefs the ability

to “sustain the community”.¹¹¹ He also affirms Afua Kuma, when she calls Jesus the “Great Doctor”.¹¹²

Chief

The Akan word for chief and king is *nana*, literally translated ‘grandfather’.¹¹³ Ancestors are also addressed as *nanamon*. In contrast to the title “ancestor”, which is one of Bediako’s preferred titles for Jesus, he does not apply the title Chief to Jesus, despite the fact that there is a close relationship between the ancestors and the chief. Jesus is “*Nana Yesu*” as ancestor, not as chief. For other African theologians, “chief” is an obvious choice, but Bediako consider that it gives the wrong signals about who Jesus is. Bediako argues that Jesus cannot be reckoned as a chief, because the chief rules on behalf of the ancestors, and if Jesus is to be named as chief, the misunderstanding could easily arise that the ancestors have given Jesus authority. That would raise the ancestors above Jesus and make him subject to them. Bediako argues that if one is to use the Christological title “ancestor” consistently, one cannot, in addition, promote the idea of Jesus as chief. Instead, in order to express the kingship of Jesus, he most frequently uses the Biblical image of Jesus as Lord.¹¹⁴ But he acknowledges and appreciates that Afua Kuma praises Jesus as “the Chief of all chiefs”, because Jesus is the King of kings.

Christus Victor – Christ the Conqueror

In addition to be a source of blessing, the spiritual powers are also able and willing to harm. Therefore, people feel they need protection against them. Bediako sees this protection in Jesus as *Christus Victor*.¹¹⁵

When Bediako elaborates this title, he draws mainly from grassroots theology and from Mbiti and his use of *Christus Victor*. Validating this concept Bediako says “Jesus is victorious over the spiritual realm and particularly over evil forces, and so answers to the need for a powerful protector against these forces and powers.”¹¹⁶

According to him, the perception of Jesus as the powerful and victorious Christ is a most prominent one in the Christian communities in Africa. Through their articulation of theological concepts in hymns and praises one gains insight into how Jesus is

actually perceived. Bediako interprets this “grassroots” theology to be evidence of how Christianity has become a non-Western religion,¹¹⁷ and that “Christianity in Africa is a truly African experience”.¹¹⁸ In order to present this contribution to theology by the living Christian community, Bediako quotes some of the poems by Afua Kuma. In these poems Jesus is praised for being *Christus Victor*, the Lord and Protector¹¹⁹ who makes the power of Satan to nothing; a Hunter¹²⁰ among other hunters, in order to set them free from the fear of the evil spirit; and as Doctor,¹²¹ a powerful spiritual person who can deliver from the evil forces that cause infertility and the hazard of child-birth.

Saviour

Bediako uses “Saviour” a more frequently as a title for Jesus than *Christus Victor*. He uses it throughout his writing both as a title and as a confession of who Jesus is and what he has accomplished.¹²² Saviour seems to have a broader meaning than *Christus Victor*, relating to all aspects of life and to all people.¹²³ Jesus as Saviour is an expression of the ability of Jesus to help in every situation, by virtue of the full atonement effected by Christ.¹²⁴ Atonement is understood as the objective removal of the sin that hinders people from living in harmony with God and enjoying the fruits of the kingdom of God when this objective reality is accepted subjectively.¹²⁵ Bediako says that for many African Christians, Saviour is applicable to all three persons of the Trinity so that Jesus is taken to belong essentially to the “more powerful realm of the divinity” and that the humanity of Jesus Christ and his atoning work on the cross are considered less in view.¹²⁶

Bediako finds his notion of Jesus as Saviour mirrored in Afua Kuma’s grassroots theology. In her poems, we meet Jesus as Saviour from hunger, from enmity and as the one who saves by transforming situations.¹²⁷ Jesus is the Saviour from politicians who do not work for our well being, and the Saviour who brought about atonement, the forgiveness of sin through his death on the cross.¹²⁸

In addition, in various articles, Bediako gives an interpretation of Jesus as Saviour from a more scholarly perspective. He reveals a holistic understanding of salvation that includes “spiritual, physical, emotional, social and economic”¹²⁹ aspects. He finds support

for this in the writings of John Mbiti. Mbiti's approach to salvation is related to the idea of wholeness drawn from African ontology, where "God, Spirits, Man, Animals, Plants and inanimate creation exists in" a unity.¹³⁰ Mbiti also finds the concept of incarnation helpful for conveying that Jesus became one with us in our totality. By becoming a true human being, Jesus became one with us so that no area of human life should be disconnected from the divine.¹³¹ Together with Bediako's own interpretation of the Bible, Mbiti's two approaches to salvation are for him a firm foundation for his holistic understanding of salvation. Bediako is, for example, critical to Byang Kato's stress on "the priority of purely spiritual concerns and individual salvation",¹³² for salvation has to do also with social injustice and political oppression.¹³³

As Saviour, Jesus must relate to the ancestors in an appropriate and adequate way.¹³⁴ Bediako argues that ancestors, as "human beings", also need salvation, and claims that Kato has not really understood what is important for African Christians when Kato calls the question of the salvation of the ancestors a "sentimental issue in Africa".¹³⁵

In Mbiti, Bediako finds not so much of a direct answer to the question of salvation of the ancestors, as a strong appreciation of the religious past of Africa. Mbiti sees a clear continuity between African traditional religion (ATR) and Christianity and this encourages Bediako to integrate African religious concepts "firmly into the Christian theological category of a universal salvation history."¹³⁶ On that basis, Bediako is ready to express an open agenda of salvation for the ancestors. For him, their fate is not the most important aspect of a Christian theology of the ancestors, but considerations about this

cannot be treated as though the saving activity of God were absent in the times prior to the historic proclamation and reception of the Gospel. Rather, 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 pre-figured in the quests and responses to the Transcendent in former times, as these have been reflected in the lives of African people.¹³⁷

As I understand him, Bediako here, in a very careful way and without saying it explicitly, proclaims that since we today know the God of grace who brings salvation through Jesus Christ, God in His mercy will also find a way by which the ancestors may be saved.

On the other hand, Bediako is not ready to incorporate as Christian ancestors all those accepted traditionally as ancestors. With Christ, a new interpretative key was given, which points to a Christian future and reveals a Christ-like spirit to which the sphere of the ancestors has to be related.¹³⁸ “Local ancestors who prepared the way for the coming of the Gospel emerge as fellow witness in ‘the multitude that no one can count’”.¹³⁹ On the question about salvation for the ancestors, Bediako seems to be drawn towards both the inclusive strand and the more exclusive understanding of salvation associated with the Evangelical tradition.

Finally, Bediako explores how the Bible shapes the Christological title “Saviour”. His interpretation starts with Colossians 1:15-20. Bediako interprets this passage of the Bible as saying that

Biblical teaching clearly shows that Jesus is who he is (i.e. Saviour) because of what he has done and can do (i.e. save), and also that he was able to do what he did on the Cross because of who he is (God the Son).¹⁴⁰

Bediako points here to a biblical method for Christology, namely, starting with the achievement of Jesus – Jesus has saved all people by his death on the cross and is still able to save people today because of the same achievement. Bediako accepts that the accomplishment of Jesus was possible because of his person. He finds that the Bible underscores the general Evangelical understanding of salvation and Jesus as Saviour: that it is through a personal acceptance of Jesus and relation to Jesus that one can be saved. He quotes from the Letter to the Hebrews that affirms Jesus as giving “eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12) for all those who acknowledge who he is for them and what he has done for them”.¹⁴¹

High Priest

One of the Christological titles Bediako uses that is not exclusively African, but is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, is “High Priest”.¹⁴² At the same time, the way Bediako deals with it makes the title very African and very important. Bediako takes methodological guidance from the Letter to the Hebrews, and praises the author for taking us “to the sublime heights of Christology”.¹⁴³

With the image of Jesus as High Priest, Bediako elaborates the reason why Jesus is an ancestor, why sacrifice is not necessary, and how Jesus is a perfect mediator. He begins by drawing correspondence between the Jewish and African cultures. As it was impossible for the Jews to accept Jesus as High Priest because he did not belong to the right tribe, it is difficult for the Akan to accept as ancestor one from outside the tribe. The High Priest was the supreme mediator between the people and God, annually performing the animal sacrifice for the sins of the people. According to Bediako, Hebrews elaborates a line of argument that opens up the possibility for someone outside the tribe of Levi to exercise a priestly function, by using the achievements of Jesus as a point of connection. As Bediako sees it, Hebrews confers validity on the High Priesthood of Jesus, on the basis of universality, not particularity. Aaron was the first High Priest and his successors had to be of his particular family line. However, Jesus is High Priest after the order of Melchizedek who was a priestly king at the time of Abraham, the original and greatest ancestor of the Jews. Abraham gave tribute to Melchizedek by paying his tithe to him. Therefore, in the Jewish tradition, there is also a High Priest who functions on a universal level, beyond the tribal lineage of Aaron.

Using the analogy of Melchizedek from Hebrews, Bediako concludes that the universality and the nature of Jesus as true God and true human being, places the priesthood of Jesus in a different category from that of lineage ancestors. That makes his accomplishment significant “for *every* human person and *every* human context and *every* human culture.”¹⁴⁴

If Jesus is a universal High Priest, than Hebrews also demonstrates that Jesus can carry out the duties of a High Priest – perform the sacrifices and function as a mediator – also for Africans. Following the exposition of the Hebrews, Bediako believes that

Jesus not only fulfilled the purpose of a regular animal sacrifice, but that he, out of free will, sacrificed himself. This was a once-for-all sacrifice that achieved fully what all sacrifices seek to do, so doing away with all other sacrifices. Therefore, faith in the sacrifice of Jesus makes any future sacrifices unnecessary.

For the Akan, this implies specifically that Jesus is the last *Odwira*, referring to the annual New Year festival of that name.¹⁴⁵ By using the epithet “High Priest”, Bediako is also able to replace all other priestly mediation, with a direct relationship to Jesus. Because Jesus is truly human, he is one of us; because Jesus is truly God, he can mediate within the “divine realm” and bridge the “gulf between the Holy God and sinful human beings and accomplish the community with God other mediators wanted to actualise but just had to ‘approximate’.”¹⁴⁶

For Bediako, Jesus is universal Lord and Saviour, and as such he also belongs to the Akan. Hebrews rendered in the indigenous language shows that one can be a High Priest because of what one has achieved, independent of lineage qualifications. Therefore, Jesus can also be a High Priest for the Akans with all the implications concerning ancestorship stated above.¹⁴⁷

Lord

The way Bediako gives meaning to the title “Lord”, reveals how in his theology, the various titles overlap in establishing the divinity and uniqueness of Jesus among the ancestors. But I have also found that each title brings its own distinct contribution and provides additional aspects that broaden the perspective of his Christology.

To say that Jesus Christ is Lord is not particularly African. It is a Biblical term originally used about God. Early in its history, the Church chose to use the term “Lord” for Jesus, as a confessional statement about the divinity of Jesus. This affirmation challenged the Jewish religious concept of one invisible God, and it caused confrontation with the Roman authorities.¹⁴⁸ The Romans declared that Caesar was Lord, while the Christians countered with the confession that Christ was Lord. In this way “Lord”, as Christological title, has been a challenge to other faiths from the very beginning. This perspective is important also for Bediako, primarily when he relates the title to the pre-Christian ancestors. The Church has also

used the image as a confession of the highest authority. This is also a part of Bediako's theological and confessional context. The challenge for him is to interpret it and fill it with additional meaning in an African context.¹⁴⁹

Bediako establishes the Lordship of Jesus in a variety of ways, and he does not impose any limits on the Lordship of Jesus, as the Lord of the universe, of the nations, the spiritual world, the world of the ancestors, and the Church.

For Bediako there is a distinction between asserting truths as a dogma and confessing truth as the fruit of recognition. The Lordship of Jesus is one such truth of recognition. This confessional way of establishing the lordship of Jesus is a clue to understanding why Bediako can claim the Lordship of Jesus in all areas as a statement of faith.¹⁵⁰

The first use that Bediako makes of the title relates to Jesus as Lord over the Church, using the phrase "sovereign Lord".¹⁵¹ Jesus is the ruler and provider of the Church,¹⁵² which implies that the Church under the Lordship of Jesus "is intended to be the first-fruits and pattern of what the whole created order is destined to demonstrate."¹⁵³

From there he asks the question as to how to establish Jesus as "Lord and Saviour to the spiritual realities of our context".¹⁵⁴ Since Jesus as "the Word of God",¹⁵⁵ is, and from the beginning has always been, the "source of life",¹⁵⁶ Jesus is Lord also of the African spiritual world.

In "Christ is Lord: How is Jesus Christ unique in the midst of other religious faiths?",¹⁵⁷ Bediako claims that Jesus is Lord not just of the Church and the ancestors, but is Lord also over all other religious worlds.¹⁵⁸ This statement of faith is built on the belief that there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ,¹⁵⁹ and is an open invitation to people of other faiths to recognise Jesus as Lord and participate in the community of faith.¹⁶⁰

The last aspect of the Lordship of Jesus, that Bediako develops, is to see him as a universal ruler. Jesus is "Lord [...] of all the nations",¹⁶¹ "Lord of the land",¹⁶² and ruler of "all the varied created orders of human existence".¹⁶³ Jesus is Lord of the world, even if his Lordship is not recognised by all.¹⁶⁴ For Bediako, this aspect of Lordship is a means both to claim the universality of Jesus and to encourage the Church to play a constructive role in the formation of nations and the global world order.

Jesus is not Lord after the pattern of the world, seeking power in order to rule as an untouchable ruler or despot. Bediako portrays Jesus as a servant Lord. As such, Jesus can be an inspiration to the democratic forces in Africa.¹⁶⁵

As Lord, Jesus is to be praised. Bediako illustrates this through some of the royal “honorific titles” given to Jesus in the poems of Afua Kuma. These titles “were and are traditionally ascribed to the human sacral ruler”,¹⁶⁶ but here Jesus is praised as “the Intrepid One”, “the Valiant One”, “Powerful Chief”, and “Field Marshall”(sic).¹⁶⁷

Reformer of Communities

One of the confessional statements given by Bediako is that “God rules in history and human life.”¹⁶⁸ I think this statement is a key to understanding why Bediako points to Jesus also as one who changes society. By being Lord of the World, Jesus is also concerned about how the world is to be shaped. Bediako connects this concern for the transformation of everything – individuals, societies and the whole concept of living – with the resurrection of Jesus, arguing that the resurrection “vindicates the promise that both the world and the human life can become different”.¹⁶⁹ He goes on to say that the Kingdom of Christ is to “transform the world”, even though it does not belong to this world.¹⁷⁰

Bediako points to Latin America and the shift in Christological expression from, “Jesus of the conquistadors” to “Jesus of the poor”.¹⁷¹ He also notes how, in the struggle for African independence from colonial powers, African leaders were inspired by the teaching of Jesus. In addition, Bediako identifies three areas where the world is afflicted and reform is needed: “racial bigotry, social stratification and gender prejudice”.¹⁷² At the same time, Bediako makes it explicit that “the message about Jesus cannot be reduced to any or all of its social and political benefits. It remains essentially a religious message”.¹⁷³ I interpret this as an Evangelical caveat against making the Gospel a political message rather than a religious one with political implications.

If Jesus is to have a reforming impact on society, particularly in Africa, Bediako perceives a need for desacralisation – to remove the divine undergirding from the various manifestations of human exercise of power. Society,¹⁷⁴ the power base of the

chiefs,¹⁷⁵ the ancestors¹⁷⁶ and the political realm are to be desacralized.¹⁷⁷ This process of reforming society is not new to Christianity. From a historical perspective desacralisation has taken place wherever Christianity has made its way and become a dominating factor in society.¹⁷⁹ It is clear that for Bediako, this perspective on African society is built on the desire to make Jesus the sole Lord of persons and of the community.

Bediako sees the need to desacralise the Akan king, to make him a human being among other human beings. This will establish an Akan king who does not rule on behalf of, and as one of, the ancestors, but who rules on behalf of the people and asks God for blessing,¹⁷⁹ power, wisdom and knowledge about the will of God. The act of desacralisation of the chief is not to make religion irrelevant to human political rule. To desacralise is not to “de-spiritualise”¹⁸⁰ the African concept of power. Religion is still important for giving guidance to the chief, but it needs to be religion interpreted within a Christian framework under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Further, Bediako sees the need to desacralise modern African post-colonial national rulers, because the manner in which modern African rulers wield power is nothing but “a secular parody of the old, genuinely religious organism.”¹⁸¹ Rather than ensuring the welfare of the people and being accountable, Bediako interprets the sacralisation of the modern ruler as a way of staying in power¹⁸² and eliminating political opponents, rather than ensuring the welfare of the people and being accountable.¹⁸³ In the old African tradition, Bediako claims, the rulers had to delay pronouncements until everybody has reached the stage of consensus.¹⁸⁴ The Akan ruler is accountable to his people, so that if the chief does not rule according to consensus, he can be removed from office.

The other line of argumentation is that the Christian gospel might offer an alternative approach to power and even a new concept of power. Where national leaders are concerned, power is desacralised when the understanding dawns that power is delegated from God, because “[a]uthority truly belongs only to God.”¹⁸⁵ The contribution of Christ’s concept of power¹⁸⁶ – the non-dominating concept of power – to modern African politics is to enable leaders be human among other human beings. Accor-

ding to Bediako, this concept sets politicians free from seeking personal satisfaction, but makes it possible for them to act as servants to the people, as they serve God and their fellow human beings.¹⁸⁷ The struggle of the church in South Africa against apartheid, and in Kenya and Ghana towards democracy, pluralism and human rights, are examples of how Christ, through the church, might make a valid contribution to the contemporary reformation of African society.¹⁸⁸

The Fulfiller of Religion

Jesus is presented by Bediako as the fulfiller of religion. How then does Bediako portray other religions? He seems to have a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards other religious traditions. He is an inclusive theologian who points to revelation in other religions and wants to accentuate what is of value in all other religious traditions. But he is also a Christian missionary who wants to make Christ the Lord known in the wider religious world. From a third perspective, Bediako can be seen as a Christian apologist who makes religious comparisons, in order to emphasize the superiority of Christianity, or more precisely, of Jesus Christ. The underlying aim is to balance various aspects, pay respect to other religious traditions, but hold on to the missiological and Christological perspectives in his theology.

What is most important for Bediako in relation to other religions, is expressed in the introduction to an article where he assumes “from a Christian standpoint a generally positive and inclusive view of the relationship between the Christian Gospel and other religious traditions”.¹⁸⁹ As an overall description of religions, Bediako borrows the phrase “a tradition of response” from John V. Taylor.¹⁹⁰ This human response is a response to the “reality and disclosure of the Transcendent”.¹⁹¹ He is thereby confirming other religious tradition, by suggesting that divine revelation is a part of their tradition. Further, Bediako often repeats the need for Christians to take seriously the reality of religious pluralism within a plural society.¹⁹² He expresses openness, arguing that Christ is operative also in people of other faiths and in other religions, and that “whatever is ultimate in the religious universe of every ‘tradition of response’ is, at least in intention, Christ.”¹⁹³

The missiological perspective towards other religions is articu-

lated when Bediako makes it clear that even if other religions contain revelation, it is a particular revelation that has to be completed by Jesus Christ. He describes how the one God of the whole world desires to bring a fragmented world – fragmented also religiously – to unity in Jesus Christ.

The partial nature of revelation in other religions is most clearly shown in his view that African traditional religions are not “final” religions. He argues that there is a need to give “room for [...] the fuller divine self-disclosure and involvement that came in and through Christ”. This is in line with a statement by Nyamiti that “African Christian theism has to be one of fulfilment”, to which Bediako refers.¹⁹⁴

I find it difficult to read Bediako without being impressed by the firmness of his conviction about Christ. Talking about the relationship between Jesus Christ and other religious realities, Bediako clearly wishes to make Christ at home and Lord in the entire religious world. He quotes Mbiti’s affirmation of Christ as “the fulfiller of all human cultures”.¹⁹⁵ For Bediako “Christian proclamation can be said to provide a measure by which to assess and evaluate all religious traditions, that measure being Christ himself”.¹⁹⁶ Finally, he locates the superiority of Christianity in the universality of Christ, by declaring that it is the only religion without a special centre; it is at home everywhere, just as Jesus is at home everywhere.¹⁹⁷ Christ is therefore, in the understanding of Bediako, the fulfiller of religion.

Bediako’s apologetic or comparative approach is most obvious when he deals with Islam, a faith that in many ways competes with Christianity for the modern African soul. According to Bediako, “it is in Africa that Christianity and Islam meet each other on something approaching equal footing”¹⁹⁸ and the church must therefore find ways to “engage more meaningfully and fruitfully with Islam”.¹⁹⁹ He perceives Christianity as a universal religion, while Islam’s goal of Arabisation shows that it does not belong in the same way to people everywhere. Christianity is translatable into every language and culture and does not have a geographical focal centre to which everybody must defer, while Islam is only truly authentic when expressed in the sacred Arabic language and culture, with Mecca as the geographical centre for pilgrimage. Christianity, Bediako claims, is a “vernacular (mother-tongue) reli-

gion”,²⁰⁰ a sign that God speaks African language too,²⁰¹ whereas in the Qur’an, God speaks only Arabic.

In addition, Bediako argues for the superiority of Jesus to Mohammed as exhibited in their quality of life.²⁰² Jesus and Mohammed chose different paths when they were faced with a threat from their enemies. Jesus trusted God and though he experienced humiliation, he served the human race through his death and was vindicated by resurrection. Mohammed, by contrast, responded with force. For Bediako, this is an example of how the way of God – understood as the willingness to sacrifice oneself – is exemplified supremely by Jesus. Bediako therefore echoes Mbiti’s view that Islam might be seen as preparatory to Christianity despite the chronology of the two religions.²⁰³

Bediako also acknowledges the qualities in Islam that are attractive to African people. He is therefore ready to enter into dialogue with Islam in order to “do justice to [Islam’s] religious and spiritual depth”.²⁰⁴ At the same time, he sees a need for “developing an apologetic” that is able to convey that the true image of God is to be found in Jesus Christ.²⁰⁵

Bediako has an open attitude towards other religions, and he seems to pay more respect to the various expressions of sincere spirituality than to their theology. But despite his open attitude he does not retreat from his central religious focus, which is Christological and missiological. In and through everything connected to religion, Jesus Christ is the key.

The uniqueness of Christ

With regard to the uniqueness of Christ, Bediako insists that such a claim is meaningless where there are no other “lords” that compete for lordship, since Christ can be said to be unique only in relation to other lords.²⁰⁶

For Bediako, the biblical affirmations of the uniqueness of Christ “have the character of convictions”, not of “fixed data”.²⁰⁷ More than being assertions of a universal truth, such affirmations are an “invitation to recognition”²⁰⁸ and invite a personal response.²⁰⁹ The claim then becomes recognition, so that a person can say: “Yes, I recognise Christ as unique”.

According to Bediako, the uniqueness of Christ is something to “participate in”, not just to “believe in”. Recognising the uni-

queness of Christ comes after understanding who he is and what he has done. It is a truth meant for the whole of humanity, but it is a truth of recognition following a personal commitment.²¹⁰

One indicator of Christ's uniqueness is that he is able to inhabit the world of the other religions as Lord.²¹¹ The reason why he is able to do this is to be found in the earthly ministry.²¹² Bediako points to the events in the life of Jesus as soteriological events, and emphasises that the salvific content of his life, death and resurrection is "validated by the witness of the Scripture".²¹³ These events are testified to in the Bible.

Another point he makes is that the different truths in the plurality of religions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. He finds support for this way of thinking in the Early Church Fathers' understanding of the "pre-Incarnate Word" that also operated in the religious traditions outside the Bible.²¹⁴ But rather than linking the plurality of truths to the pre-existence of Christ, Bediako links it to the Holy Spirit.²¹⁵ He understands the Holy Spirit as moving among human beings and as revealing parts of the divine world. The varied human response to that revelation becomes the various religions.²¹⁶ Even though God "lies beyond all religions", one cannot claim that all religions are clear reflections of God's truth. They are only human responses to what the Spirit revealed. Since human beings respond differently, each religion may also contain a variety of answers to the revelation, and within every religion there will be strands that point toward Christ and others that point away from Christ.

From there, Bediako goes on to elevate Jesus Christ as the key person, not only in every religion, but also in the religious lives of people. Here Christianity is at the same position as other religions. Bediako agrees with Andrew Walls' that "it is not Christianity that saves, but Christ"²¹⁷, and that Christianity, as religion, is also to be challenged by the life and ministry of Christ. The Christ that confronts all religions does so, on the basis of a threefold paradigm:

- divine vulnerability;
- the will to redemptive suffering; and
- reconciling love

The recognition of such a Christ causes us to affirm his uni-

queness. It is not the theological statements about Christ that are the basis of our affirmation of his uniqueness among the plurality of religions, but the recognition that these qualities were incarnated supremely in his life.

The Christian testimony is not so much a doctrine about Christ, as what Christ showed himself to be in his earthly historical life.²¹⁸ And for Bediako, it is this actual historical reality that makes it possible to claim the validity of Christ within other religions too. Whatever good is operating in other religions, it is Christ – at least in intention – who operates.²¹⁹

A New Concept of Christian Ancestorship

For Bediako it is important, in his African context, to preserve what he calls “the religiously significant category of Ancestor”,²²⁰ He thus continues to formulate a theology of ancestors. However, his theology expresses a new concept of ancestors which bears the marks of Christianity. As he said in the interview: “I take it from African traditional religion, but use it in a Christian context.” Rather than formulating a theology where the African ancestors are included in the divine realm, his project is to develop a Christian theology of ancestors with a double dimension. One aspect of this is to preserve the divine dimension by affirming Jesus Christ as the divine and only transcendent ancestor. The other aspect is to make room for a truly human dimension of ancestors where African traditional ancestors and Christian predecessors find a place in the Christian memory and as role models.

I have already discussed his reasons for affirming Christ as ancestor, and for using “ancestor” as a Christological term. At this point I wish to show how Bediako uses Christ as divine ancestor to change and expand the concept of ancestor as a religious category. Bediako is of the view that Christ expands the idea of ancestor because Christ is one “in a far richer sense than is traditionally held about ancestor.”²²¹ In addition, Bediako argues that the concept of African ancestors might contribute to the development and the completeness of Christian theology, making it more holistic:

The place and significance of ancestors in the African primal world view actually offers opportunities for ‘filling out’ some

dimensions of spiritual experience and historical consciousness which are inherent in the Christian religion.²²²

In stating that Christ is an ancestor of a different quality from the old African ancestors, Bediako first points to Christ as divine, while the traditional ancestors have human origins. Further, the power of the traditional ancestors derives from God and the community that elevates them, while Christ as God has divine power in his own right. A third point is that Christ is love, and his love is stable and faithful, while the human African ancestors are understood as being capable of taking revenge, are unstable and even willing to harm their relatives in order to get their message across. Finally, an outstanding quality of Christ is his universality. Christ is for all people everywhere and at every time in human history, while the traditional ancestors are clan ancestors limited in time and space.

Having enumerated all these differences, it is tempting to ask whether “ancestor” is a viable Christological title. If Christ is so much more than the original ancestors, why does Bediako insist on using this term for Christ? This is a question that Bediako also answers. In his book, *Christianity in Africa*, he describes a conversation with an Akan king, Nana Addo Dankwa III, who stated very clearly that traditional African ancestors are not worshipped and are purely human. Because of the differences between God, Jesus and the traditional ancestors, Nana Addo Dankwa rejected the idea of using the title “ancestor” either for God or for Jesus Christ.²²³ For Bediako, the encounter with Nana Addo Dankwa was on the one hand a confirmation that Christ is perceived as unique among the traditional African ancestors. On the other hand, he disagrees with Nana Addo Dankwa regarding the possibility of naming Christ an ancestor.

Bediako consider there is no need to rush or negotiate the ancestors out of the picture, but to gradually let Christ take their place. He argues that the king of Akuapem should be allowed to enter the Church as a full member, and to bring all his royal ancestors with him.²²⁴ In this way, Bediako wants the church to be more receptive to tradition. The history of Christianity in the Akuapem area in Ghana confirms the claim of the official court history that it was “the rulers who first welcomed Christianity to

the realm. Such a claim, made today, means the ancestors, and yet none was a communicant.”²²⁵

Is Bediako suggesting that the Church should pay homage to political power by letting the king become a member, even though he does not fulfil all the requirements? Or is he advocating syncretism, pragmatism and a *laissez-faire* attitude concerning right Christian teaching? I prefer a third option, and suggest that we here find a consequence of the new concept of ancestors. In other words, Bediako takes as his starting point the view that Christ is Lord and the true ancestor, and that the traditional ancestors are under the lordship of Jesus and are mere humans. If the king is ready to enter the church in full membership, the king has accepted that Jesus and is his Lord and is willing to confess it publicly. By accepting full membership, the king, as representative of the ancestors, is actually placing himself and all the other ancestors under the lordship of Christ. And even though the king still has to perform some ancestor rituals, these may be understood as a demonstration of respect from one person to other older and nobler persons. I suggest that to accept the king into full membership in the church is thought of by Bediako as a part of the process of replacing the ancestors with Christ.

Christ comprises the first category of ancestors, the only divine ancestor. What about the other category, the human ancestors? These still have a place, but only as human ancestors. Discussing the place and role of the human ancestors within the framework of this new paradigm, Bediako takes up the ideas of Edward Fasholé-Luke who, for the sake of the African sense of community with the departed, wishes to incorporate the ancestors in the Communion of Saints and let the living receive “the sacraments on behalf of the dead”.²²⁶ But Bediako refuses to see this as drawing conclusions about “the fate of the departed who were not Christians.”²²⁷ He views it as a question of the image of God and of God’s presence in African traditional religions, and the possibility of tracing reflections of this presence “in the lives of African people.”²²⁸ It thus becomes a question of continuity. Bediako shows how people in the past acted in ways that deserve the acknowledgement of recognition as ancestors, and he recounts the stories of prophets who, prior to the coming of the modern

missionaries, prophesied about their coming and their proclamation of the Gospel.²²⁹ The modern missionaries are understood by Bediako as messengers who made Christ manifest in the African context.²³⁰ The Africans who represent the strand that points to Christ are described as “[l]ocal ancestors who prepared the way for the coming of the Gospel” and they are said to “emerge as fellow witnesses in the ‘multitude that no one can count’”.²³¹ African traditional religions are then used as a parallel to the Old Testament, where people “whose faith was not perfect” are offered as an example of how God relates to people.²³² Bediako states that in Christ, biblical ancestors become the ancestors of Christians in Africa.²³³ In the same way:

we too must have had our fathers and mothers, ancestors who like the Biblical ancestors, at critical points in their lives and careers, made choices which went into shaping the destinies of our traditions till in the fullness of time our histories became merged, in Christ, with the history of the people of God.²³⁴

Here, Bediako echoes his patristic mentor, Clement of Alexandria:

Rightly then to the Jews belonged the Law, and to the Greek philosophy, until the advent; and after that came the universal calling to be a particular people of righteousness through the teaching which flows from faith brought together by one Lord, the only God of both Greek and Barbarians, or rather of the whole of mankind.²³⁵

In addition to Africans who prepared the way for the Gospel, Western missionaries who came to Africa, respected the people and the culture, and a legacy to be remembered, are also to be accounted among the ancestors. He has not commented on it in his writings, but in the interview he recounted how he experienced as his ancestors Johannes Christaller and others who established the Basel Mission in Akropong. During the interview, he pointed at the pictures of the missionaries he kept in his office, touched the walls and pointed to other parts of the building, explaining that this is the place where he belongs and that those who had worked here before, as pioneers and links between

Christianity and African culture have a positive influence on him and are counted among his ancestors.

Conclusion

Bediako, therefore, articulates a new concept of Christian ancestors with two categories: divine and human. Jesus Christ is the most prominent and is the only divine ancestor. Among the human ancestors, there is a great variety and it is clear that Bediako is quite flexible here, being ready to include biblical ancestors, the traditional African ancestors – even though he considers that some of them will gradually fade away – new African ancestors who directed people to Christ, and Christians from other parts of the world who played significant roles in the Christian story of Africa. In this way, the old and the new, the local and global, are kept together and everything has passed “through the prism of Christology”.²³⁶

Noter

- * This article has previously been printed in Journal of African Christian Thought, 1-2005
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- ² Bediako, Kwame, *The Impact of the Bible in Africa*:249–250.
- ³ Bediako, Kwame, *The Holy Spirit, the Christian Gospel and Religious Change*: 49.
- ⁴ Bediako, Kwame, *Into all the World*: 223.
- ⁵ Bediako, Kwame, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 98.
- ⁶ Bediako, Kwame, *Response to Taber: Is there more than one way to do theology?:* 13.
- ⁷ Bediako, *Response to Taber*: 13.
- ⁸ Bediako, *Response to Taber*: 14.
- ⁹ Bediako, *The Impact of the Bible in Africa*: 250.
- ¹⁰ Bediako, *Understanding African Theology in the Twentieth Century*: 17.
- ¹¹ Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 18.
- ¹² Bediako, Kwame, *The Significance of Modern African Christianity*: 59.
- ¹³ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 109.
- ¹⁴ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 12.
- ¹⁵ Bediako, Kwame, *Christianity in Africa*: 85.

- 16 Bediako, Kwame, *Cry Jesus: Christian Theology and Presence in Modern Africa* 19.
- 17 Bediako, Kwame, *Unmasking the Powers*: 2.
- 18 Bediako, *Unmasking the Powers*: 4.
- 19 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 19.
- 20 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 17.
- 21 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 20.
- 22 Bediako, Kwame, *Jesus in Africa*: 78.
- 23 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 45.
- 24 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 16.
- 25 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 18.
- 26 Bediako, *Response to Taber*: 13.
- 27 Bediako, *Response to Taber*: 13.
- 28 Bediako, *Response to Taber*: 13.
- 29 Bediako, *Response to Taber*: 14.
- 30 Bediako, *Response to Taber*: 14.
- 31 Bediako, Kwame, *The Willowbank Consultation*, January 1978: 29; Bediako, *Understanding African Theology in the Twentieth Century*: 17; Bediako, *The Significance of Modern African Christianity*: 61.
- 32 Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 97, 103.
- 33 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 18.
- 34 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 16.
- 35 Bediako, Kwame, *The Doctrine of Christ and the Significance of Vernacular Terminology*: 110.
- 36 Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 29.
- 37 Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 112.
- 38 Bediako, *Unmasking the Powers*: 2.
- 39 Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 116.
- 40 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 19.
- 41 Bediako, Kwame, *How is Jesus Christ Lord?*: 34, 39.
- 42 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 13.
- 43 Bediako, *How is Jesus Christ Lord?*: 36.
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- 45 Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*: 85.
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- 48 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 14.
- 49 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 14.
- 50 Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 97.
- 51 Bediako, *Into all the world*: 223.
- 52 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 20.
- 53 Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 20.

- ⁵⁴ Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 13.
- ⁵⁵ Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 13.
- ⁵⁶ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 5.
- ⁵⁷ Bediako, Kwame, *Gospel and Culture*: 8.
- ⁵⁸ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 10.
- ⁵⁸ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 36.
- ⁶⁰ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 40.
- ⁶¹ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 41.
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- ⁶³ Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 18.
- ⁶⁴ Bediako, *Gospel and Culture*: 11.
- ⁶⁵ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 99.
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- ⁶⁹ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 10.
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- ⁷¹ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 14.
- ⁷² Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 99.
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- ⁷⁵ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 99.
- ⁷⁶ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 17–18.
- ⁷⁷ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 115.
- ⁷⁸ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 116.
- ⁷⁹ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 115.
- ⁸⁰ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 115.
- ⁸¹ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 116.
- ⁸² Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 104.
- ⁸³ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 18.
- ⁸⁴ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 18.
- ⁸⁵ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 104.
- ⁸⁶ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 104.

- ⁸⁷ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 104.
- ⁸⁸ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 19.
- ⁸⁹ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 114.
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- ⁹¹ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 19.
- ⁹² Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 13.
- ⁹³ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 105.
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- ⁹⁵ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 115.
- ⁹⁶ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 101.
- ⁹⁷ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 115.
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- ¹⁰⁰ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 11.
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- ¹⁰³ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 115.
- ¹⁰⁴ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 115.
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- ¹⁰⁸ Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion*: 104.
- ¹⁰⁹ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 16.
- ¹¹⁰ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*: 16, 18–19.
- ¹¹¹ Bediako, *Cry Jesus*: 19.
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