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**MISSION FROM AFRICA: A CALL
TO RE-IMAGINE MISSION IN
AFRICAN-LED PENTECOSTAL
CHURCHES IN BRITAIN**

**LEADERSHIP TRAITS
AND PRACTICES:
INSIGHTS FROM
AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGIES**

**LOVING THE BRITISH FOR
THE SAKE OF MISSION**

**CELEBRATING THE
LIFE AND LEGACY OF
BISHOP AJAYI CROWTHER**

**MISSIO DEI:
AN AFRICAN APPROPRIATION**

EDITOR: HARVEY C. KWIYANI

Leadership Traits and Practices: Insights from African Christologies

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Abstract

A good leader is God's servant who helps people realise their God given potential in life. Such a leader opts for leadership traits and practices that ensure good leadership methods and outcomes. This essay attempts to find out the significance of African Christological images for leadership. It argues that African Christological images may enhance leadership by providing leadership notions that may well shape a leader's traits and practices in a productive fashion. The African Christological images of Jesus Christ as healer, chief, ancestor and liberator are examined. These images are then applied to leadership traits and leadership practices to derive the concepts of the leader as a compassionate enabler, competent achiever, credible mediator and courageous reformer. This essay postulates that with the insights of African Christologies, a leader in the family, church, workplace, community and society may be better able to lead people in God's will and ways.

Keywords: leadership, African Christology, transformational leadership."

Introduction

What is the significance of African Christological images for leadership? This essay reasons that Christological images in African perspectives may enrich leadership theory by providing concepts that can shape a leader's traits and practices in a fruitful manner. I will begin with a brief look at the meaning of leadership traits and practices. After this, I will survey the methodological background to African Christology. This will be followed by an examination of the African Christological images of Jesus Christ as healer, chief, ancestor and liberator. I will argue that the application of these images to leaders and leadership may reveal the leadership traits and leadership

practices of the leader as compassionate enabler, competent achiever, credible mediator and courageous reformer.

1. Leadership Traits and Practices

Oswald Sanders says that leadership 'is influence, the ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead.'¹ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby give leadership a theocentric foundation by defining it as 'moving people on to God's agenda.'² In my view, a good leader is God's servant who helps people realise their God-given potential in life. I believe that a leader is a person who influences people to follow God's revelation for their lives so that they may find fulfilment in life. A good leader opts for traits and practices that make her or his leadership efficient and effective. Leadership traits refer to who a leader is or the character of a leader, while leadership practices designate what a leader does or the functions of a leader. Both ethical leadership theory and transformational leadership theory focus on leadership traits and practice. However, ethical leadership places a great deal of emphasis on leadership traits (character), while transformational leadership puts more weight on leadership practices (functions). My contention is that both leadership traits and practices are important for leaders and leadership, and furthermore, since the kingdom of God covers every sphere of life, God seeks leaders with ethical and transformational traits and practices in every area of life – in the family, church, workplace, community and society.

Larry Spears, an expert on leadership studies, affirms the importance of leadership traits in the development of leaders. He remarks: 'Our fundamental understanding of character has much to do with the essential traits exhibited by a person. In recent years there has been a growing interest in the nature of character and character education, based upon a belief that positive character traits can be both taught and learned.'³ Justin Irving insists that leadership practice should be both biblically based and demonstrably effective.⁴ He observes that 'it is powerful when leadership practices that are ethically good and biblically consistent are also found to be effective.'⁵ With reference to leadership traits, Philip Lewis says that leaders should 'focus on values, morals, and ethics.'⁶ In connection with leadership

¹ Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 27.

² Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2001), 20.

³ Larry Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders' in *The Journal of Virtues and Leadership*, Vol.1 Iss. 1, 2010, 25

⁴ Justin Irving, 'A Model for Effective Servant Leadership Practice: A Biblically-Consistent and Research-Based Approach to Leadership' in *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, vol. 3, no. 2, Summer 2011, 118-128.

⁵ Ibid, 120.

⁶ Philip Lewis, *Transformational Leadership: A New Model for Total Church Involvement*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 6.

⁷ Ibid, 6.

practice, Lewis notes that leaders ‘change reality... They are proactive and encourage human potential.’⁷ Tokunboh Adeyemo contends for Christ-like leaders with character and competence in the African church and society and states that such leadership has the traits of ‘purity of heart ... passion for people’⁸ and the practices of ‘power to serve through prayer ... practical wisdom to solve problems.’⁹

The preceding scholars point out that leadership traits and leadership practices are interrelated. In my view good leadership uses ethical means to achieve transformational ends. Thus, in leadership the means and the end must cohere. Leadership is not only a matter of getting results; the method by which the results are arrived at is just as important as the results. My outlook is affirmed in Psalm 78:72 (NIV): ‘And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them.’ King David led Israel with the leadership trait (character) of integrity and the leadership practice (function) of skilful hands. I am of the opinion that with the insights of African Christologies, a leader in the family, church, workplace, community and society may be better able to lead people in God’s will and ways.

2. The Methodological Background to African Christology

In Matthew 16:13-17 (NIV), Jesus Christ asked his disciples two Christological questions with regard to who he is: “‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ ... ‘Who do you say I am?’” The first Christological question relates to who the crowd thought Jesus was and the second relates to who Jesus’ disciples thought he was. The former question deals with the “outsider’s” perception of Jesus Christ and the latter question with the “insider’s” perception of Jesus Christ. This means that for Jesus Christ both the community’s view of him and the church’s view of him are important. In addition from the answers given to the two questions, there appears to be a hermeneutical gap between the outsider (the community) and the insider (the church) with regard to their understanding of the person of Jesus. In my estimation, the community’s view might be discerned in the footprints of Jesus Christ found in human culture, while the church’s view is disclosed in the revelation of Jesus Christ found in the Bible. On this basis, it is theologically legitimate to look for images of Jesus Christ in culture and bring these images into dialogue with the Bible’s revelation of Jesus Christ. By so doing, a gospel-and-culture interface takes place which results in an understanding of Jesus Christ that is on the one hand faithful to Scripture and on the other relevant to culture.

⁸ Tokunboh Adeyemo, ‘Leadership’ in Tokunboh Adeyemo (ed.) *African Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 546.

⁹ Adeyemo, ‘Leadership’ 546.

Nevertheless, in my opinion, the gospel's encounter with culture requires two words of caution. First, care must be taken not to dissolve Jesus Christ into culture through an overemphasis on culture. Second, care must be taken not to freeze Jesus Christ in the past through an overemphasis on Scripture. The former warning helps theology to avoid the danger of assimilation and the latter warning helps theology to avoid the danger of fossilisation. The Gospel of Jesus Christ must critique the demonic elements of culture as much as it affirms the biblical elements of culture. The Christological discourse on the biblical revelation of the identity of Jesus Christ should be held in tandem with the cultural inquiry of Jesus Christ with a procedural priority being given to biblical revelation. In my observation, when Christology and Christopraxis court each other the product is a fruitful marriage in which the portrait of the nature and of Jesus Christ is both biblically authentic and culturally appropriate as well as one in which the universal Gospel encounters cultural particularities in a healthy conversation.

Diane Stinton, in her comprehensive survey of African Christologies, posits: "A widespread methodological presupposition is that genuine Christological reflection cannot be separated from Africa's socio-political, religio-cultural and economic contexts – this is the real and concrete everyday experience within which we christologize."¹⁰ In addition, Clifton Clarke, in his study of Akan African Indigenous Churches in Ghana, asks the question: 'How are Africans in post-missionary Africa to speak of Christ in a way that is truly meaningful to the African, and through the worldview that is their own?'¹¹ He advances the position that orality, a grassroots theology, personal experience and cultural environment are keys to the construction of a Christology which has the Christian faith and African culture as its grounding.¹² However, Victor Ezigbo queries the presupposition that Jesus Christ fills the gaps in African Traditional Religions and that Christ fulfils the religious aspirations of Africans which they cannot fulfil through African Traditional Religions.¹³ He asks whether the fulfilment by Jesus Christ is to be understood as a change of the philosophy and practice of African Traditional Religions or an addition to it.¹⁴ Ezigbo postulates that African Christologies should avoid the mistake of academic theologians who express Jesus in African metaphors, as well as the mistake of lay Christians who see Jesus simply as a solution to their existential problems.¹⁵

¹⁰ Diane Stinton, *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*. (Marynoll: Orbis, 2004), 16.

¹¹ Clifton Clarke, *African Christology: Jesus in a Post-Missionary African Christianity* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 3-5.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Victor Ezigbo, *Re-Imagining African Christologies: Conversing with the Interpretations and Appropriations of Jesus Christ in African Christianity* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 303-305.

¹⁴ Ezigbo, 303.

¹⁵ Ezigbo, 303.

I concur with the observations of these theologians because theology is not done in a vacuum, in isolation, or in an ivory tower. Theology is done in the real life experience of everyday people facing both the challenges and opportunities of human life. At the same time, as I have argued above, Jesus Christ must not be domesticated or assimilated into culture and thereby robbed of his genuine nature. The images of culture used to understand Jesus Christ should not overshadow the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. Steven Bevans warns: 'A real danger in contextualisation is that one could mix Christianity and culture in a way that does not enhance but compromises and betrays Christianity'¹⁶ It is with the recognition of the possibilities and problems in constructing contextual Christologies that the following discussion on African Christologies takes place.

3. Jesus Christ as Healer: The Leader as a Compassionate Enabler

For Cece Kolie, the image of Jesus as healer is one that resonates with African Christians.¹⁷ In traditional Africa, the role of healing is carried out by traditional healers who deal with both natural and supernatural causes of sicknesses and diseases. Kolie studied the traditional healers from the Kpele and Logoma ethnic groups of Guinea in order to derive an ethos of healing which might have ramifications for understanding Jesus Christ as healer. He says that the position of traditional healer in Africa is one of prominence due to the fact that, in general, Africans see life as a quest for blessings both in this world and in the next.¹⁸ Hence, Kolie observes that 'soothsayers and healers, medicine persons of all kinds, are the pillars of social life.'¹⁹ He points out that for traditional healers the cause and meaning of sickness and disease are more important than the symptoms of the illness. He states:

For the African, disease and death always have another cause from the one indicated by clinical symptoms. Unlike the procedure of the Western physician, who has inherited an essentially analytical tradition of autopsy, that of the African healer is more synthetic and comprehensive. What is of supreme interest to the latter is the human being taken in his or her totality, including environment and social relationships. By utterance, the healer will attempt to bring it about that the patient contributes to being delivered from the disease by confessing to sorcery or by describing his or her dreams in order to submit them to interpretation.²⁰

¹⁶ Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 17.

¹⁷ Cece Kolie, "Jesus as Healer" in Robert Schreiter, *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 128-150.

¹⁸ Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 133-134.

¹⁹ Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 132.

²⁰ Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 138.

African traditional healers not only diagnose disease but they also seek to address the conflict in relationships that underlie the disease. Kolie describes this healing practice as relational and symbolic with a connection to the environment of the person in need of healing.²¹ It is a holistic approach to health and healing. The invocation of divine blessings is a feature of African living.²² God's blessings for health, fertility, peace and prosperity are invoked at places of worship, festivals, birth rites and funeral rites. When sickness and disease occur the African seeks the assistance of God and the traditional healer for health and wellbeing for the sick person as well as for the community.

In Kolie's view, Jesus' healing work is performed in the vein of holistic healing as practised by traditional African healers. Jesus' healing ministry addresses the whole person – spirit, soul, body and social context. His healing actions reconfigure social relationships for the betterment of society.²³ Kolie points out that in performing his healing ministry Jesus acts in solidarity with the sick and diseased by giving a part of his humanity to those he heals. Jesus usually heals by his word and his deeds, except in a case when he used the intermediary of water.²⁴ Jesus cures the diseased, expels demons tormenting people, and rehabilitates the outcast of society. Kolie notes that Jesus' healing ministry is linked with his proclamation of the kingdom of God: 'His cures constitute firstfruits, and his death and resurrection are the firstfruits.'²⁵ He adds that the unity of humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ is what makes the name of Jesus potent in healing sicknesses and diseases.²⁶ Kolie emphasises the necessity of Jesus' healing work by posing the question: 'What courage can be asked of those who have known only the face of the Crucified One, and never that of the Risen One?'²⁷ By means of the image of Jesus Christ as healer people who are sick in spirit or soul or body may find healing and health in Jesus. The Crucified Jesus empathises with the sick and diseased and the risen Christ frees them of their sicknesses and diseases.

In my opinion, Jesus Christ as healer, when applied to leadership, portrays a leader as a 'compassionate enabler' – the leader's trait is compassion and the leadership practice is enablement. Jesus Christ as healer was compassionate. Compassion, love in action, was the motivation for his healing ministry. He was people-centred and not selfish. Also Jesus Christ as healer was an enabler. Christ's healing ministry enabled people to overcome their

²¹ Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 130-132.

²² Kolie, "Jesus as Healer," 133.

²³ Ibid, pp. 130-131, 146-147.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 129.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 129.

²⁶ Ibid, p147.

²⁷ Ibid, 142.

sicknesses and diseases so as to experience health and wholeness. Likewise, leaders should have compassion for people they lead. The leader's compassion helps the leader to be concerned about, to empathise with, to be kind towards and to show practical care for the led. In addition, leaders ought to be enablers who 'heal' followers by giving them the resources they need for assigned tasks, by creating the opportunity for them to use their knowledge and skills and by helping them to overcome the challenges they face in carrying out a task.

Larry Spears, observes that healing is a characteristic of effective leaders:

The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact.²⁸

In the steps of Jesus Christ the healer, the leader as a 'compassionate enabler, is to show compassion and care for those led by recognising that people are an institution's most valuable resource.²⁹ As an enabler the leader empowers people by developing individuals and building teams. The leader as a compassionate enabler seeks to establish a relational holism which, as Emmanuel Lartey puts it, is a 'restoration to wholeness of relations within, between and transcending human persons'.³⁰ Like Jesus Christ the healer, a leader can be used by God to be a compassionate enabler.

4. Jesus Christ as Chief: The Leader as a Competent Achiever

François Kabasele uses the image of Jesus Christ as Chief to express a Christology which reverberates with Africans.³¹ In some parts of traditional Africa, the role of governance is carried out by chiefs. Kabasele investigated the chieftaincy practices of the Bantu people in the Democratic Republic of Congo to develop tenets of chieftaincy which might have a corollary for understanding Jesus Christ as chief. The Bantu chief is conferred with authority and power to rule his subjects. He is regarded as a hero, a great emissary, strong, generous

²⁸ Larry Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership', 27.

²⁹ See Myron Rush, *Management: A Biblical Approach*, (Colorado Springs, 1983), 22.

³⁰ Emmanuel Lartey, 'Two Healing Communities in Africa' in Emmanuel Lartey, Daisy Nwachuku, Kasonga Wa Kasonga (eds.) *The Church and Healing: echoes from Africa*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994), 47.

³¹ François Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief' in Robert Schreiter, *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Marynoll: Orbis, 1991), 103 - 115.

and a reconciler.³² The Bantu chief is revered not only for his political, economic and social role, but also for his religious role as the spiritual leader of his people.

For Kabasele, the chieftaincy philosophy and practices of the Bantu parallels that of Jesus Christ's life and ministry. Jesus Christ is chief by virtue of the fact that he has authority and he governs a kingdom.³³ Kabasele claims that Jesus Christ is chief because he is the hero who conquered Satan.³⁴ As the hero of Christians, Jesus defends and protects his people, confronts the enemy and drives him away to be a pillar of support for his people. He is the courageous, mighty, victorious, and majestic hero. Next, Kabasele says that Jesus Christ is chief since he is God the Father's emissary.³⁵ Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to humanity – he is God the Son. As God's emissary Jesus Christ represents God to the people of God. Kabasele also points out that Jesus Christ is chief due to his strength.³⁶ As the strong one, Jesus gives strength to his people in their time of need. The strength of Jesus enables him to overcome both spiritual and physical forces of destruction, to nurture the social cohesion of the people of God so as to bring about community living, to perform miracles and to sustain both the spiritual and physical life of his people. In addition, Kabasele notes that Jesus Christ is chief because of his generosity.³⁷ Jesus' generosity is shown by the accessibility of his presence, his blessing of people, and the giving his life for the benefit of humanity. Furthermore, Kabasele states that Jesus Christ is Chief as he reconciles people with God and each other.³⁸ Hence for Kabasele, Jesus Christ is God's authoritative and anointed chief.³⁹ The reign of Jesus Christ as Chief takes place within the eschatological context of the 'already' and the 'not yet' - Christ is the chief of the present world but the fullness of his chieftaincy will be realised at his second coming when all people and all things will be subjected to his rule.⁴⁰

In my judgment, Jesus Christ as chief, when related to leadership, depicts the leader as a 'competent achiever' – the leader's trait is competence and the leadership practice is achievement. Jesus Christ as chief was competent. He competently lived a sinless life, endured death by crucifixion and rose from the dead to establish God's salvation plan. Also Christ as chief was an achiever. He achieved for humanity redemption from sin, deliverance from evil and transformation for a life of pleasing God. He was competent in achieving

³² Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 106-112.

³³ Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 104.

³⁴ Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 106-108.

³⁵ Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 108-109.

³⁶ Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 109-111.

³⁷ Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 111-112.

³⁸ Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 112.

³⁹ Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 112-114.

⁴⁰ Kabasele, 'Christ as Chief,' 105.

God's will of salvation for humankind. Similarly, leaders should be competent in their leadership by possessing the right knowledge, attitudes, aptitudes, skills and experience requisite for their leadership role. Furthermore, leaders ought to be achievers who empower followers, enhance the wellbeing of their followers and successfully accomplish set organisational tasks.

Larry Spears notes that conceptualising and accomplishing dreams, that is competent achievement, is a characteristic of effective leaders:

Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. The leader who wishes to also be a servant leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. Within organizations, conceptualization is, by its very nature, a key role of boards of trustees or directors. Unfortunately, boards can sometimes become involved in the day-to-day operations – something that should be discouraged – and, thus, fail to provide the visionary concept for an institution. Trustees need to be mostly conceptual in their orientation, staffs need to be mostly operational in their perspective, and the most effective executive leaders probably need to develop both perspectives within themselves. Servant leaders are called to seek a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach.⁴¹

Following the example of Jesus Christ the chief, the leader as a competent achiever is to demonstrate competence in leadership by communicating a creative vision and mission for those who are led.⁴² As an achiever, the leader implements the vision and mission by motivating and mobilising people to perform productive tasks. Brock Brown notes that transformational leaders focus on vision, values, and relationships to involve followers and form change leaders, who in turn build change leaders.⁴³ Analogous to Jesus Christ the chief, a leader can be used by God to be a competent achiever.

⁴¹ Larry Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership,' 28

⁴² See Myron Rush, *Management*, 22.

⁴³ Brock Brown, 'The Building of a Virtuous Transformational Leader', *The Journal of Virtues and Leadership*, Vol. 2 Iss. 1, Summer 2011, 6-14

5. Jesus Christ as Ancestor: The Leader as a Credible Mediator

Kwame Bediako is of the view that the image of Jesus Christ as ancestor makes Jesus Christ more meaningful to Christians in Africa where the concept of ancestor is part of their culture.⁴⁴ Using the Akan ethnic group in Ghana as his point of reference, Bediako says that the Akan spirit world is composed of the Supreme God (*Onyame*), the gods (*abosom*) and the ancestors (*nsamanfo*).⁴⁵ The Supreme God is worshipped but he is approached through the intermediaries of the gods and the ancestors. For the Akans, God and the ancestors are the centres of spirituality. The ancestors are human beings who have left this present world and have gone to the next world.⁴⁶ They are often referred to as the 'living dead' since they are dead yet are still living in the next world. The qualifications for an ancestor are dying at an old age, living an exemplary lifestyle on earth, and contributing to the prestige of one's earthly family.⁴⁷ As clan members living in the next world, ancestors influence the course of events in the lives of their clan members living in this world. Prayer to God using the ancestors as intermediaries brings protection against evil spirits, blessings of good health, fertility for the married and prosperity in educational, professional and business matters.⁴⁸

For Bediako the preceding Akan worldview needs to be taken into consideration if Jesus Christ is to be meaningful to Akans and if the church to avoid syncretism.⁴⁹ Whilst recognising the areas of conflict between the biblical and Akan worldviews, Bediako asserts that the image of Jesus Christ as ancestor still has validity if it is reconfigured to faithfully reflect biblical revelation and grounded in genuine Christian experience.⁵⁰ This is underscored in Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV) which portrays Jesus Christ and God's final revelation and ancestor:

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

Bediako observes that Jesus Christ as ancestor portrays Christ's role as the only mediator between God the Father and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5-6).⁵¹ As Ancestor, Jesus Christ has lived an exemplary earthly life and empathised with humanity through his earthly sojourn.

⁴⁴ Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*. (Accra: Asempa, 1990.), 9-20.

⁴⁵ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 10-11.

⁴⁶ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 11.

⁴⁷ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 11.

⁴⁸ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 11.

⁴⁹ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 12-13.

⁵⁰ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 10.

⁵¹ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 18.

Even though he did not die in old age and his death was a violent death, Christ is not disqualified from being an ancestor. His crucifixion was necessary for the salvation of humanity from sin.⁵² By his resurrection, God the Son lives with God the Father and serves as the mediator who represents humanity to God. Bediako emphasises that since Jesus is the sole go-between between God and humanity, the role of human ancestors as intermediaries to God is rendered redundant.⁵³ The supremacy of Jesus Christ as ancestor also disarms all principalities and powers that threaten humanity. Jesus Christ as ancestor who is in the presence of God the Father gives Christians confidence in approaching God and facing life's challenges. Bediako contends that the universality of Jesus Christ's incarnation for all of humanity, rather than his particularity as a Jew, is the basis for the claim Jesus Christ as ancestor.⁵⁴ Jesus Christ is regarded as the universal Saviour and Akans are included in Christ's salvation. The Good News of Jesus is read by Akan as their story.⁵⁵ Humanity's creation and redemption comes through Jesus Christ the ancestor *par excellence* who the sole mediator and reconciler between God and humanity (Colossians 1:15-23).

In my estimation, Jesus Christ as ancestor, when applied to leadership, describes a leader as a 'credible mediator' – the leader's trait is credibility and the leadership practice is mediation.

Jesus Christ as ancestor was credible. Credibility, inspiring belief, is a feature of Jesus Christ's position as ancestor. Jesus' exemplary life on earth makes him the trustworthy ancestor for Christians to follow his words and deeds. Also Jesus Christ as ancestor was a mediator. Jesus Christ's mediation involved the facilitation of a healthy relationship between sinful humanity and the loving God. This was established by the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and present day intercession of Jesus Christ. The two natures of Jesus Christ, as God and human, make him the singular and credible mediator between God and humanity. Like Jesus, leaders should be credible mediators in the eyes of people they lead. The leader's credibility helps the leader to win the trust of the led. The credibility of a leader is exhibited through a life of integrity, reliability and sincerity. In addition, leaders ought to be mediators who use their credibility to resolve organisational conflicts. To maintain their credibility, conflict resolution by leaders need to be done in a fair and nonpartisan manner.

⁵² Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 18-19.

⁵³ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 19.

⁵⁴ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 13-14.

⁵⁵ Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture*, 13-16.

Larry Spears remarks that persuasion, an ingredient of mediation, is a characteristic of effective leaders:

Another characteristic of servant leaders is reliance on persuasion, rather than on one's positional authority, in making decisions within an organization. The servant leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant leadership. The servant leader is effective at building consensus within groups.⁵⁶

In the footprints of Jesus Christ the ancestor, the leader as a credible mediator is to display credibility by developing good and honest working relationships with people so as to be trusted and believed.⁵⁷ In mediation, Thorsten Grahn observes that serving other associates beyond one's self-interest in the partnership process gives credibility to the mediator.⁵⁸ As a mediator the leader manages conflict and works at reconciling people. Analogous to Jesus Christ the ancestor, a leader can be used by God to be a credible mediator.

6. Jesus Christ as Liberator: The Leader as a Courageous Reformer

Mercy Amba Oduyoye contends for the image of Jesus Christ as liberator.⁵⁹ She perceives Jesus Christ as the *agenkwa*, a term which for the Akans in Ghana means 'the rescuer' or 'the one who rescues.' Oduyoye maintains that Jesus Christ the *agenkwa*:

holds your life in safety, takes you out of a life-denying situation and places you in a life-affirming one.... plucks you from a dehumanising ambience and places you in a position where you can grow toward authentic humanity ... gives you back your life in all its wholeness and fullness.⁶⁰

In effect, Jesus Christ is the liberator who frees people from bondage for them live life in its fullness. Oduyoye observes that Africans face the challenges of spiritual and material struggles – wrongly worshipping nature; sectionalism; promoting of elitism over people's participation; corruption; patriarchy.⁶¹ The challenges necessitate Jesus Christ the liberator,

⁵⁶ Larry Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership', 28

⁵⁷ See Myron Rush, *Management*, 61, 193.

⁵⁸ Thorsten Grahn, "The Three Sisters Garden Analogy for Servant Leadership Based Collaboration, *he Journal of Virtues and Leadership*, Vol. 2 Iss. 1, Summer 2011, 1-5

⁵⁹ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*. (Carlisle: Regnum Africa, 2002), 18-26.

⁶⁰ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 18.

the *agenkwa*, who will rescue Africans from this bondage so as to give them a better spiritual and material life. The religious, social, economic and political condition of Africa calls for Jesus Christ the Liberator.⁶²

In songs of praise and worship, Akan Christians use cultural appellations to refer to Jesus Christ. These Akan terminologies, Oduyoye says, reveal that for the Akans Jesus Christ is the Liberator:

Tufohene – the one who manages the logistics of the military, both physically and spiritually, and who directs the battles, fighting alongside his people

Osagyefo – the one who saves in the battle

Osabarima – the Great Warrior, the Lord of the Battle... the Man of War

Dɔmkuyin – Brave General

Admafo Adu – our Great Friend

Okyirtaafo – Guarantor

Pɔnfo – the one who pays back a loan for someone in debt.⁶³

Oduyoye notes that the African worldview is holistic worldview, where the spiritual and physical are not separated but united as one whole.⁶⁴ Consequently, these Akan expressions show that Jesus Christ liberates people from both spiritual and physical oppression so as to bring them into an experience of God's abundant life. She refers to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt to Canaan by the act of Yahweh Sabaoth as an example of God's liberating action.⁶⁵ Likewise, the Gospels portray Jesus Christ as proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of God which the 'Nazareth Manifesto' in Luke 4:18-22 and Mary's Song of Revolution (the Magnificat) in Luke 1:46-55 testify is a kingdom of freedom, recovery, jubilee, mighty deeds, reversal, benevolence, provision, mercy and grace.⁶⁶ Jesus Christ the liberator transforms the life-denying situation of people into a life-giving situation (Isaiah 19:16-25).

In my assessment, Jesus Christ as liberator, when applied to leadership, describes a leader as a 'courageous reformer' – the leader's trait is courage and the leadership practice is reformation. Jesus Christ as liberator was courageous. He courageously proclaimed the

⁶¹ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 19.

⁶² Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 19.

⁶³ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 19-20.

⁶⁴ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 21.

⁶⁵ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 22.

⁶⁶ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands*, 24.

kingdom of God, died a violent death by crucifixion and rose from the dead to institute God's church and kingdom. Also Jesus as liberator was a reformer. He changed lives of individuals by redeeming people from, delivering people from demonic spirits and demonic structures, healing people of sicknesses and diseases and helping people to live a holy life. He changed the institutions of family, community and society by taking a stand against sexism, racism, ethnocentrism and classism. He was courageous reformer in fulfilling God's agenda for humanity and creation. Similarly, leaders should be courageous in their leadership by choosing to live ethically, to do things right and to do the right thing. Furthermore, leaders ought to be reformers who facilitate the growth of people and reengineer organisations to attain desirable goals.

Larry Spears identifies commitment to the growth of people, which is reformation, as a characteristic of effective leaders:

Servant leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, the servant leader is deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within his or her organization. The servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues. In practice, this can include (but is not limited to) concrete actions such as making funds available for personal and professional development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision-making, and actively assisting laid-off employees to find other positions.⁶⁷

In line with Jesus Christ the liberator, the leader as a courageous reformer is to display courage by being confident and brave in the face of difficulty, whilst undertaking reforms that will make people more productive and organisations more effective.⁶⁸ As a courageous reformer the leader is to be a change agent who stimulates positive and healthy change in individuals and institutions. Bill Hybels asserts that 'courageous, servant-oriented leaders' are leaders who can be agents of change.⁶⁹ Similar to Jesus Christ the liberator, a leader can be used by God to be a courageous reformer.

⁶⁷ Spears, 'Character and Servant Leadership,' 29.

⁶⁸ See Myron Rush, *Management*, p. 102.

⁶⁹ Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002), p. 26.

Conclusion

Leadership is the use of influence to promote the wellbeing of individuals, people and institutions. The profitability of the insights of African Christological images for the enrichment of leadership traits and practices has been demonstrated in this essay. A survey of the methodological background to African Christology showed the possibilities and problems associated with the use of African Christological images. The examination of the African Christological images yielded useful leadership concepts that may help leaders in their leadership journey. To conclude, this essay has argued that the application of African Christological images of Jesus Christ as healer, chief, ancestor and liberator yields the leadership traits and leadership practices of the leader as compassionate enabler, competent achiever, credible mediator and courageous reformer respectively. These leadership concepts embrace both the heart (character) of a leader and well as the hands (functions) of a leader. With the insights of African Christological images a leader may be better equipped with the traits and practices that will enable the influencing of people in God's will and ways in the context of the family, church, workplace, community and society.

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