



**A CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY OF ATONEMENT FOR THE AKAN COMMUNITY OF
GHANA**

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In Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Theology

By

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Promoter: Rev. Dr. Joel Mokhoathi

DECLARATION

I, ISAAC BOAHENG, hereby declare that this thesis entitled, “A Contextual Theology of Atonement for the Akan Community of Ghana” is based on my original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
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2. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
3. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
5. None of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published.

Signature:



Date: April 2021

DEDICATION

To

my wife, Adu-Agyeiwaa Gloria,

my mother, Mad. Mary Ampomah,

my father, Mr. Noah Nti (posthumously)

and my four adorable children: Christian, Benedict, Julia and Kalix.

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Sunyani

Ghana

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GLOSSARY OF AKAN WORDS

Akan term(s)	Meaning(s)
<i>Abosom</i>	Material objects representing a deity which people worship.
<i>Apaeε</i>	A form of traditional prayer which involves the ritual pouring of a liquid (mostly alcoholic drink), as an offering to a deity or spirit, or in memory of ancestors.
<i>Asamando/ Asamanadze</i>	An imaginary realm where the spirits of dead persons who die naturally after leading good lives reside. It is comparable to the Christian concept of Paradise.
<i>Asuman</i>	Man-made objects acquired for protection against evil spirits, successful marriage, good fortune, successful life, favor, promotion, protection, among others. <i>Asuman</i> can also be used to invoke evil powers against someone in order to destroy his or her life.
<i>Fufu</i>	This is a staple food among the Akan and it is prepared with any of the starchy ground provisions such as plantains, cassava, yam, cocoyam and so on. The foodstuff is cooked and pounded in a mortar using a pestle to form a <i>fufu</i> ball which is eaten with soup.
<i>Kakae</i>	An imaginary frightening figure which is greatly feared by the Akan (especially children).
<i>Mmoatia</i>	A very short creature with feet pointing backward which resides in the forest.
<i>Nkwagyεε</i>	The act of rescuing someone, a family or a society from a life-threatening situation.

<i>Ntamgyinafoɔ/ Ntamgyinafo</i>	The Akan term for a mediator, usually in the context of social life but also used in the religious setting.
<i>Ɔkɔmfɔɔ/ Ɔkɔmfo</i>	The traditional priest within the Akan religious setting or a person possessed by <i>ɔbosom</i> (a deity) to perform priestly functions.
<i>Ɔsɔfoɔ/ Ɔsɔfo</i>	An old Akan term for the custodian of the <i>tete abosom</i> (lesser divinities). Presently, this term is used in the Christian setting to refer to the priest of God.
<i>Ɔbosomfoɔ, Ɔkɔmfo-hene/ Ɔkɔmfo-panyin</i>	The chief priest at the traditional shrine.
<i>Sasabonsam</i>	An evil spirit believed to reside on tall trees in the forest.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AD	Anno Domini (In the year of the Lord)
BCE	Before Common Era
cf.	Confer
JB	Jerusalem Bible
LXX	Septuagint
NIV	New International Version
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
MT	Masoretic Text
PHPS	Philip's New Testament
TNT	Tregelles New Testament
Gen.	Genesis
Exod.	Exodus
Lev.	Leviticus
Num.	Numbers
Deut.	Deuteronomy
Josh.	Joshua
Judg.	Judges

1-2 Sam.	1-2 Samuel
1-2 Chron.	1-2 Chronicles
Neh.	Nehemiah
Est.	Esther
Psa.	Psalms
Prov.	Proverbs
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes
Isa.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
Lam.	Lamentations
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Dan.	Daniel
Hos.	Hosea
Mic.	Micah
Matt.	Matthew
Rom.	Romans
1-2 Cor.	1-2 Corinthians
Gal.	Galatians
Eph.	Ephesians
Phil.	Philippians

Col.	Colossians
1-2 Thess.	1-2 Thessalonians
1-2 Tim.	1-2 Timothy
Heb.	Hebrews
1-2 Pet.	1-2 Peter
Rev.	Revelation
Tob.	Tobith
Sir.	Sirach
1-2 Macc.	1-2 Maccabees
v.	verse
vv.	verses

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ABSTRACT

Christianity, like any other religion, cannot thrive successfully in any human society unless it is given a contextual expression. Therefore, the contextualization of the Christian gospel is indispensable to the planting and survival of Christianity in a given environment. In the Akan community of Ghana, the lack of effective contextualization of atonement theology has led to a situation whereby many Christians habitually consult traditional powers to satisfy their quest for power, fame, wealth, longevity, and protection, among others. This literature-based research and textual analysis, therefore, was undertaken to explore how a theology of atonement from an Akan socio-cultural perspective might bring about religious and ethical renewal to Akan Christians and hence empower them to rely solely on Christ's atonement for all their physical and spiritual needs.

The general introduction to the seven-chapter thesis was followed by a socio-historical survey of key theories of atonement that have emerged since the birth of the Church. Next, exegetical analyses of selected biblical texts, including Leviticus 16:1-28; Psalm 51:1-12; Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Mark 14:10-26; Romans 3:21-26; 5:1-21 and Hebrews 9:11-14, were conducted to place the study in the biblical context. This was followed by an examination of atonement in the Akan religious, social-economic and political contexts.

Using the historical, biblical and Akan primal backgrounds of atonement as contextual frameworks, an Akan Christian theology of atonement was formulated based on key thematic areas such as *Nyame-Kra-teasefoɔ* Christology, *Ntamgyinafokann* Christology, *Afɔdepreko* Christology, *Bɔne-ano-aduro* Christology, *Nkunimdie* Christology, *Ahobammɔ* Christology, *Duadanɛ* Christology, *Yiedie* Christology and *Ayaresa-ne-ahofadie* Christology, among others. The findings from the study led to the conclusion that to be meaningful and relevant to the ordinary Akan, Akan Christian soteriology must not only touch on liberation from sin but also on the liberation from social, political, economic, and health challenges facing the Akan community. The atonement theology espoused in this study not only offers an antidote to Akan Christians' habitual consultation of traditional sources for solutions to their existential challenges but also serves to foster an improved divine-human, human-human and human-environment relations.

Keywords: African Traditional Religion, Akan, Atonement, Christianity, Contextualization

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter serves as the foundation for the entire study. It addresses preliminary matters such as the background to the study, the research problem, research hypothesis, research questions, preliminary review of related literature, the scope of the study, the methodology for the research, and definition of key terminologies, among others.

1.2 Background of the research problem

Christianity in Africa has experienced remarkable growth in the 21st century. The Christian faith is no more considered foreign to Africans as it was thought in time past. Africa can now be described as the “heartland” of world Christianity (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013:1). Before the advent of Christianity in Africa, many African societies practiced African Traditional Religion,¹ which, like many other religions has its own beliefs and practices. By African Traditional Religion, the researcher means the primal religious beliefs and practices of Africans before their encounter with other religions like Christianity, Islam, among others. Each African society has some peculiarities in the belief systems. However, African Traditional Religion has some common traditions such as belief in the Supreme God, belief in lower divinities, belief in magic and medicine, belief in ancestors, and belief in spirits, among others. The Akan community of Ghana shares these beliefs with other Africans. It was into such a religious context that Christianity was introduced in Akan.

¹ There is a scholarly debate as to whether one can speak of one African religion or African religions in plural. The researcher is aware of this debate; however, it is outside the scope of this study to delve into the issue. The study proceeds with the use of the expression “African Traditional Religion” because this term seems more appropriate in the context of the present research.

The introduction of Christianity into Africa therefore brought an encounter between the Christian gospel and African primal religious beliefs and practices. In many parts of Africa, the planting of the Christian faith was pioneered by Euro-American missionaries. In Ghana (Gold Coast), for example, Christianity began with Portuguese explorations in the 15th century (Kpobi 2008:67). The Portuguese showed a very strong missionary zeal that resulted in the evangelization of many parts of the country, starting from the coastal area to the hinterlands (Boaheng 2018:207-208; Kpobi 2008:67-68). It was from here that Christianity spread to the other parts of the West African sub-region.

The early missionaries came with a negative perception about African people and culture, perceiving African primal religions as inconsistent with the Christian gospel (Boaheng 2018:207ff.). With the perception that Africans were “barbaric, superstitious, treacherous, cunning, lazy, ‘pagan’ and morally depraved,” early missionaries adopted an uncompromising approach toward African people and their cultural heritage (Boaheng 2018:208). Consequently, the missionaries forbade African converts to participate in traditional festivals; mission churches prohibited drumming, clapping and dancing, and forced polygamous converts to divorce all their wives but one. In addition, the missionaries, influenced by their individualistic worldview, built Christian communities (Akan: *Saloms*) where Christian converts were made to stay away from their families, a strategy which fought against the African communal worldview which prioritizes living together with one’s family (Boaheng 2018:209). Further still, African converts were forced to take “Christian” names at baptism as part of the process of enhancing their Christian lives. The assumption was that African traditional names could not enhance one’s spirituality. In effect, people had to be Westernized in order to be Christianized (Boaheng 2018:212).

This approach by the early missionaries was met with confrontations and criticisms from native Africans who soon began the quest for acquiring a form of Christianity that amalgamated the African culture and the Christian faith (Boaheng 2018:208). Thus, the need for contextualization of Christianity in Africa became obvious not long after the Christian faith was planted on the continent. The preparations for contextualizing Christianity in Africa included the training of African missionaries, indigenous language

development and the publication of mother tongue Bibles (Boaheng 2018:212). However, proper contextualization of Christianity for Africa could not be achieved at that time.

One of the questions the African Church has battled with since the inception of Christianity in Africa is the question of how the Church in Africa can affirm its uniqueness (in terms of the African identity and experiences) and yet be faithful to the beliefs and practices of the Christian religion. How one answers this question is very significant because contextualized Christianity is essential for the survival of the Church in every part of the world, more so in Africa. Despite the importance of the contextualization of Christianity, it is only in recent times African scholars began to engage the issue critically and in a scholarly manner. The need for a contextual approach to theologizing attracted scholarly attention in the early post-colonial era (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) when African scholars began to work out pragmatic ways of interpreting the Scriptures in a way that takes the African worldview seriously (Ossom-Batsa 2007:91-94). Mbiti (1986:73) traces the origin of African contextual theology to the 1966 Consultation of African Theologians in Ibadan, Nigeria, which yielded the publication of *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, edited by Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth, in 1969. The publication highlighted the need to use African concepts and religious understanding as a guide to one's understanding of the Bible. In other words, the study drew attention to the significance of formulating an African Christian theology that takes the African religious and socio-cultural context seriously. It was further contended that Africans are in a better position to understand the Bible from their own perspective because of markable similarities between the religio-cultural background of the Bible and African life and thought. These and other scholarly contentions prompted various studies on African contextual theology.

There are many aspects of Christianity (including marital issues, modern reproductive techniques, healing and deliverance, among others) which need contextualization urgently. The proposed study however focuses on the doctrine of atonement, particularly how Akan Christians are to understand the atonement of Christ and how this understanding must inform their religious beliefs and practices. Many Ghanaian Christian scholars (including Pobee 1979; Bediako 2000; Asante 2009; Ekem 2005 and Takyi 2015, among others) have made different attempts to explain the atonement from the

perspective of the Akan community. Nonetheless, a careful observer would acknowledge that the “Africanization” of Christianity for the Akan (particularly regarding atonement), has achieved just a little more than injecting elements of the African primal religion and beliefs into the Christian religion. This situation is the result of the perpetual influence that the traditional African religio-cultural worldview has on African Christians (Amevenku and Boaheng 2015; see also Mokhoathi 2017:1). Thus, the shift from African Traditional Religion to Christianity has only had little influence on the worldview of Akan Christians. Consequently, many Akan Christians still make sacrifices to gods to seek protection, wealth, peace, power, fame and longevity, among others. Some of them also resort to the use of imprecatory prayers as a means of overcoming powers which “hinder” their progress in life (Amevenku and Boaheng 2015). Most Akan Christians are more “demon-conscious” than “Christ-conscious”, and as Asamoah-Gyadu (2002:30) rightly asserts, a closer look at African Christians reveals that “no amount of denial on the part of the [African] church will expel belief in supernatural powers from the minds of the Christian.” As a result of the influence of the African worldview on the beliefs and practices of Akan Christians, the Akan Christian has become “a hypocrite who in official church circles pretends to give the impression that he [or she] does not believe in these things [that is, evil powers], while in his [or her] own private life, he [or she] resorts to practices which are the results of such beliefs” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2002:30). In other words, the entrenched worldview of the Akan makes most Akan Christians entertain the fear that evil spirits can still affect their lives negatively in spite of their status as disciples of Christ (Ekem 2009). Obviously, most Akan Christians do not acknowledge Christ’s atonement as a perfect fulfillment of what any sacrifice purposes to achieve. The meaning of the atonement for the Akan community and how this understanding should inform religious beliefs and practices has not been appreciated well by most Akan Christians. The need for a theology of atonement that stands on biblical authority and effectively informs the Akan religious beliefs and ethical principles and at the same time is therefore a continuing religious concern.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

From the research background, the major research problem in this thesis is that while the reality of the atonement of Christ is not in dispute among Akan Christians, majority of them habitually consult traditional priests and offer sacrifices to idols in their quest for power, wealth, protection and deliverance from the influence of evil forces. The efficacy of Christ's atonement for the Christian's spiritual and physical security is in doubt among Akan Christians. To sum up, the main problem of the study emerges from the fact that even though the Akan community of Ghana is considered as a Christian society, many Akan Christians behave contrary to the ethical values of the Christian religion, especially as related to the atonement and its benefits.

1.4 Research questions

The main research question in this thesis is: How might a contextual theology of atonement from an Akan perspective function to inform Akan religio-ethical beliefs and practices? To answer this question fully, the study will consider the following subsidiary questions.

- i. What is the perception of the Christian Church on the nature and benefits of Christ's atonement?
- ii. What are the main biblical teachings about sin and atonement?
- iii. What general social, religious, political and economic worldviews of the Akan community inform their beliefs about sin, atonement and salvation?
- iv. What form of contextual theology of atonement is suitable for the Akan community of Ghana?
- v. What are the implications of Akan contextual theology of atonement for African Christian religious beliefs and practices?

1.5 Research hypothesis

The research hypothesis is as follows: A theology of atonement that is both biblically grounded and genuinely contextual within the Akan worldview and culture is relevant to bring about positive reforms in Akan religio-ethical beliefs and practices, and hence empower Akan Christians not only to discontinue their reliance on traditional powers but also to have complete trust in Christ's atonement alone as means of providing them with all their physical and spiritual needs.

1.6 Preliminary study undertaken

The subject of atonement is part of a wider spectrum of Soteriology, the study of the doctrine of salvation. The atonement is so crucial in Christian theology that virtually all theological concepts (including sin, eschatology, anthropology, ecclesiology, and others) directly or indirectly cross it at one point or the other. This concept deals with how God reconciled sinful humanity unto himself through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (Ekem 2005:1). As the Lamb of God who carries the sin of the world away (John 1:29), Christ died not only to fulfill the Old Testament sacrificial system but also to establish a permanent peaceful divine-human relationship. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, therefore, serves as the pivot around which God's salvific plan for humanity revolves (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Different scholars have proposed different theories of atonement, some of which are outlined below. The recapitulation theory has it that, in Christ, God's ultimate purpose for all things which were divinely ordained beforehand are actualized (O'Keefe and Reno 2014:38). The ransom theory holds that, on the cross, Christ paid a ransom either to Satan (the most dominant view) or to God the Father to satisfy the debt humanity owed due to Adam's Fall (Ryrie 1999:355; Geisler 2011:828; Asante 2014:48; Takyi 2015:37). The satisfaction theory understands the atonement as a satisfaction of God's justice (Erickson 1998:813; Morris 2001:118; Falconer 2015:37). The moral influence theory argues that Christ's atonement was meant to bring positive moral change to humanity so that humankind can respond to God's love (Erickson 1998:806ff; Ryrie 1999:356; Morris 2001:117; Falconer 2015). The governmental theory says by his death, Christ suffered

the punishment for human sin and propitiated God's wrath upon sinful humankind (Falconer 2013). The Christus Victor motif considers the atonement as a way Christ defeated the powers of evil (including sin, death, and the devil) so that humanity could be delivered from bondage (Aulén 2003; Asante 2014:49). The penal substitutionary theory (which is a modified form of the satisfaction theory) contends that the atonement was meant to satisfy God's wrath against human sin (Ryrie 1999:356; Morris 2001:118). It differs from the governmental theory in that in the government theory, the punishment Jesus takes is not the exact punishment humanity deserves (Morris 2001:118).

The question of the extent to which the atonement applies to humanity has been approached from the perspective of two main schools of thought, namely the limited atonement view and the unlimited atonement view. The limited atonement view holds that the effect of the death of Christ is limited to certain group of people referred to as the elect (Elwell 2001:114-115; Geisler 2011:946ff; Asante 2014:65). The unlimited atonement view contends, on the contrary, that the effect of Christ's death applies to each and everyone who, by grace, expresses faith in Christ (Elwell 2001:115). While the debate about the meaning and extent of the atonement is still ongoing, the fact that the death of Christ is final, perfect, and enough to save humanity from sin is not a subject of (serious) debate among Christian scholars.

In Ghana, various studies have been conducted to give contextual expression to the doctrine of the atonement. Some of these studies on atonement can be noted and examined. Pobee (1979) is among the first African scholars who developed the concept of ancestral incarnational Christology, a view which shares some similarities with the indigenous African concept of ancestral veneration. According to Pobee (1979:81), the subject of Christology is key to the African understanding of the Christian faith. An advocate of African-brewed Christology, Pobee (1979:82) argues that African Christological discourse must involve the use of African proverbs (and worldview) as against Western metaphysical speculations. One way to achieve this is to acknowledge Christ as a Great Ancestor of humanity who has the power to judge, reward good deeds and punish evil. In other words, Christ, a Great Ancestor of humanity, performs roles similar to what human ancestors perform for the living families. Pobee (1979:98) also

emphasizes the superiority of Christ to all persons (whether living or dead) in all aspects of life including, “personal orientation”, social, economic and political structures.

Ancestral Christology is based on the dual nature of Christ (with more emphasis on Christ’s humanity) and affirms the mediatory function of Christ between God and humanity. In accordance with this view, Christ’s death expresses the fact that he, as a human being, is mortal and must die at a certain point in his life. Against this backdrop, Pobee (1979:90) concludes that “the death of Christ in various facets is a way of referring to the humanity of Jesus in both biblical faith and Akan Christology.” Within the African setting where religion is expected to answer health, spiritual, social and political questions, Christ’s atonement makes him a healer, a deliverer, a priest (mediator) and above all, a Savior.

The ancestral Christology of Pobee was further developed by Bediako (2000:16) who affirms that “the gulf between the intense awareness of the existence of God and yet also of this ‘remoteness’ in African Traditional Religion is bridged in Christ alone” because “there has been a death which sets people free from the wrongs they did while the first covenant was in force” (Heb. 9:15). Bediako notes that Jesus became a universal priest, though he was not born into a priest family (Heb. 7). The Melchizedek order of Christ’s priesthood and Christ’s dual nature, in the view of Bediako (2000:31), places Christ’s priesthood in a different category from the priesthood of the Levitical priests or the traditional Akan priests of the lesser gods. Bediako differentiates Jesus from human priests in that his sacrifice is once and perfect rather than being repeated and imperfect, as it is in the case of African and Levitical cultic settings. Bediako further contends that since Jesus is the universal Lord and Savior, he also belongs to the Akan and therefore what he accomplished on the cross may be appropriated by the Akan. He also discusses the atonement in relation to the Odwira (Purification) festival of the Akan and notes that Jesus’s purification finds its expression in the purification rite associated with the Odwira festival.

In a way, ancestral Christology fits the African context where ancestors are sources of life and the main means by which people reach God (Mutongu 2009:94). Ancestral

Christology promotes the African understanding of the guardianship of Christ as well as his mediatory role. Yet, this kind of Christology presents a number of challenges. Asante (2009:185) observes, for example, that a major problem with reinterpreting Christology in terms of African ancestral motif is “the question of accommodating traditional practices, such as the pouring of libation, and beliefs that can hardly be divorced from the ancestral conception of the African Traditional Religion.” In this regard, the Akan situation is not different from that of the Bantu communities of Central, Eastern and Southern Africa about which Mokhoathi (2018:2) observes that Ancestral Christology has the potential of justifying “the persistent veneration of ancestors in the name of Christ, rather than honoring him as the Great, supreme Ancestor over natural ancestors.” Ancestral Christology promotes the idea that if Christ who is an ancestor is to be worshipped as Lord then human ancestors should also be revered. Another problem with ancestral Christology is that in the strict sense of the word, Christ does not qualify as an ancestor in African thought. Among other things, ancestors are supposed to die naturally at a ripe old age and to have children, both of which Jesus falls short of. More so, this kind of Christology tends to overemphasize the humanity of Christ in the process of Christological contextualization (Mutongu 2009:63). By overemphasizing Jesus’s humanity at the expense of his divinity, ancestral Christology calls into question the perfect priesthood and sacrifice of Christ.

Another work on atonement was conducted by Ekem (2005) who used a linguistic-theological approach to investigate how Christ’s atonement (particularly as expounded in the New Testament) relates to the Akan concept of atonement. Ekem (2005:87) projects the values of the *Christus Victor* motif of atonement as relevant for dealing with the influences of evil forces on people’s lives. He links the priesthood of Christ to that of a traditional priest in the African setting and points out that Jesus serves as the priest for believers who now have to appropriate the benefits of his death and resurrection. Ekem (2005:119) contends further that the perspective of Hebrews on Jesus’s high priesthood is more metaphysical than physical (cf. Heb. 9:11). He also establishes that the metaphysical priesthood of Christ compares with the metaphysical mediation of the Akan spiritual realm by an Akan traditional priest, *ɔkɔmfo*. Against this background, Ekem (2005:120) challenges the Akan translation of the term “priest” as *ɔsɔfo* (priest of God) in

the Akan mother-tongue Bible because, in his view, the Akan term *ɔsɔfo* does not encompass the metaphysical sense of “priest.” He then proceeds to suggest another term *Ntamugyinafopanin* (“Highest Mediator”), a term that underscores the idea of a self-sacrificing high-priest similar to what was prevalent in Hellenistic worldview (Ekem 2005:120).

By the use of a socio-linguistic approach, Agyarko (2009) discusses Christology in the Akan context with emphasis on the priestly function of Christ. Agyarko’s work, which is basically a reinterpretation of the dual nature of Christ for the Akan context, provides a very helpful link between the Akan concept of atonement and the atonement of Christ (2009:iv). Agyarko’s approach, which he labels as *Nyamesofopɛko* (“God’s unique Priest”) Christology, brings out an insightful interaction between the Akan worldview and Christology of the Council of Chalcedon (2009:141). Like Bediako, Agyarko (2009:124) contends that the mediatory role of Christ is perfect and superior to any kind of mediation in the Akan culture. The basis for the perfect nature of Christ’s priesthood is his sinless nature (Agyarko 2009:124). Agyarko (2009:iv) also contends that the sacrifice Jesus made through his death may be considered as someone bearing human sins and standing before God as a representative of humanity. That is to say, Christ was the representative of humanity when he was crucified on the cross.

In a comparative study between atonement in the *Aboakyer* festival of the Effutu community of Ghana and *Yom Kippur* of ancient Israel, Takyi (2015) argues that God instituted the Old Testament sacrificial system to teach ancient Israel the need for blood in achieving purification, redemption and reconciliation. He observes that the various kinds of rituals meant for atonement were climaxed “with the *Yom Kippur* festival, with its ritual complex, that included two special purification rituals, the ritual of the Lord’s goat and the goat for the Azazel” (Takyi 2015:176). Takyi (2015:176) found that the sending away of the goat of Azazel during the *Yom Kippur* foreshadowed the eschatological annihilation of sin from the human society and its transfer to Satan, who is the originator of sin. Takyi (2015:178) identifies belief in the Supreme Being, lower spirits, ancestors, and the human world as important aspects of Effutu cosmology that inform their concept of atonement. Some similarities found between the two festivals include “time of

celebration”; “priestly function/role”; “ritual purification activities before, during, and after the festival”; “purification rites”; and “animal sacrifice” (Takyi 2015:179). In terms of differences, the *Yom Kippur* festival foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but the *Aboakyer* festival does not foreshadow the death of Christ or any Christian-related event (Takyi 2015:180). The *Yom Kippur* ritual of the goat for the Azazel (as part of the process of atonement) is missing in the case of the *Aboakyer* festival (Takyi 2015:180). In view of the similarities and differences, Takyi (2015:180) contends that the concept of atonement in the *Aboakyer* festival is an effective vehicle for propagating the Christian gospel which revolves around the death of Christ. The blood sacrifice associated with the *Aboakyer* festival is meant for cleansing just as the blood of the Lamb of God cleanses humanity of their sins.

The survey of literature on atonement for the Akan community reveals the lack of extensive and thorough engagement with Scriptures, which often results in conclusions drawn mainly from linguistic, socio-linguistic or historical analysis (for example Agyarko 2009; Takyi 2015). The lack of critical and extensive engagement with Scripture in dealing with the doctrine of atonement for the Akan community has also led to syncretism, a situation whereby Akan Christians mingle African traditional religious beliefs with Christian beliefs and practices. Additionally, the existing studies fail to deal with existential issues of the Akan community that have emerged over the last few years, such as *sakawa* (ritual murder for wealth especially among the young), the debate over the acceptability of betting among Christians and the situation whereby pastors claim to give instant money to their followers as means of solving financial problems, all these relating to the Akan view of atonement. In Akan, the salvation that the death of Christ brings is expected to have social, economic and health dimensions (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005) and therefore all the just-listed issues relate directly to the Akan perspective of salvation rooted in the atonement of Christ. More so, no researcher has devoted a full research to the development of a contextual theology of atonement for the Akan community. Previous researchers only touch on the subject at certain points in their studies. The proposed study will bridge these research gaps by formulating a theology of atonement that is based on extensive engagement with Scripture (from both the Old and the New Testaments),

Akan worldview, Akan folkloric tradition, language and idioms, emerging existential issues, and (historical) church tradition regarding atonement theology.

1.7 Research methodology and procedures

The proposed study is a literature-based study and textual analysis aimed at formulating a contextual theology of atonement for the Akan community of Ghana. The data for the research are drawn from both primary and secondary sources such as books, journals, theses/dissertations, and magazines, among other sources. Bevans (1992:1) defines contextual theology as “a way of doing theology in which one takes into account the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the church; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change within that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation.” For Nicholls (cited in Nihinlola 2013:38), contextual theology is “a dynamic process of the Church’s reflection...on the interaction of the text as the Word of God and the context as a specific human situation.” From these scholarly definitions, the researcher deduces three key elements of contextual theology, namely, Scripture, church tradition and social, political, and religious situations of the society that the theology is addressing. In order to have these key components interacting, the researcher employed Osborne’s (2006:379-383) four-fold approach to theological and religious research. This approach has the following components: (1) Scripture, (2) church tradition, (3) historical context, (4) contextual formulation and practical implications. In the light of Osborne’s approach to theological and religious studies, the researcher followed the following steps as a means of reaching the goal of the research.

The first step comprises a historical survey of various theories of atonement. Major atonement theories such as the recapitulation theory, the ransom theory, the satisfaction theory, the moral influence theory, the governmental theory, the *Christus Victor* motif, and the penal substitutionary theory were examined. This step provides the appropriate historical context for the study.

The second step places the study in the biblical and theological context by conducting an exegetical and theological study of key biblical texts related to sin and atonement. The

passages discussed include (but are not limited to) Genesis 3:1-19; Leviticus 16:1-28; Psalm 51:1-12; Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Mark 14:12-26; Romans 3:21-26; 5:1-21; Hebrews 9:11-14. The choice of these passages is informed both by their relevance to atonement theology and the researcher's desire to present a focused examination of passages from as many genres of Scripture as possible. The exegetical approach used comprises (a) contextual analysis; (b) literary analysis including a study of the form (genre), structure and movement of the text; (c) analysis of lexicology (the meaning of words), morphology (the form of words), grammatical function of words (parts of speech), syntax (the relationships of words), figures of speech, and so on.

The third step deals with the Akan context in terms of its religious, social, political and cultural backgrounds. Emphasis is placed on general beliefs and practices of African Traditional Religion, including themes like salvation, atonement (sacrifice), curses and priesthood, among others. Of the various kinds of atonement in Akan religious setting—including, thanksgiving, communion, foundation, preventive, votive, propitiatory and substitutionary sacrifices—the study focused on propitiatory and substitutionary sacrifices due to their outstanding significance for the subject of atonement. This step also gives a brief account of the planting and growth of the Christian faith in Ghana. In the process, the researcher briefly critiques the use of imprecatory prayers among Akan Christians, because of the huge patronage it enjoys in contemporary Christianity as means of overcoming evil forces and other hindrances to people's socio-economic progress.

With the results from the first three steps as contextual frameworks, the fourth step develops a contextual theology of atonement for the Akan community. Major areas considered include sin, evil spirits (witchcraft), poverty, suffering, prosperity, generational (ancestral) curses, social relations, animal and human sacrifice, priesthood, and others within the Akan context. Here, another approach was introduced, namely to consider how relevant portions of Afua Kuma's *Jesus of the Deep Forest: Prayers and Praises* may help formulate an indigenous approach to atonement theology. Afua Kuma was an uneducated farmer in the forest of Kwahu (Ghana) whose work provides a classic example of Christian interpretation and appropriation of the death of Christ through the African folkloric tradition.

The final step outlines the practical, ethical, and religious implications of the study for African Christianity. In the process, the study will relate the cross of Christ to key aspects of the everyday life of the Akan/African Christian.

1.8 Value of the study

The values of the study are evident in the following ways: (a) For the intellectual community, the study has the potential of generating interest in the contextualization of the death of Christ for the Church in Africa, hence fostering some scholarly debates on the subject. In this regard, the study serves as a springboard for future researches on the subject. (b) In terms of Christian belief and practice, the study has the potential of empowering African Christians to come to terms with the relevance of Christ's atonement to their spiritual struggles and hence enable them to develop greater confidence in him alone. (c) For the general society, the study has the potential of bringing about theological, ethical and spiritual renewals that will foster an improved God-human, human-human and human-environment relations.

1.9 Ethics of research methodology

The following ethical considerations were made during the research.

- i. The researcher ensured the use of inclusive language.
- i. The researcher gave credit to all sources used for the research.
- ii. The researcher avoided the absolutization of his insights in the study subject.

1.10 Definition of key terms

The following terms are defined to enhance the reader's understanding when they are used in the study.

Africans: In the context of this study "Africans" refers to the people who live in sub-Saharan Africa, even though the researcher acknowledges that there are people of Western, Indian, Chinese, other origins who were born in Africa and who are therefore Africans.

Christianity: An Abrahamic monotheistic religion which has its foundation on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The idea that Jesus, who is both God and human, died for the salvation of humanity and that he is the Messiah that the Hebrew Scriptures promised are key aspects of the beliefs of Christianity. Christianity requires a continuous commitment to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Christians: They are disciples of Jesus Christ, who through faith in Jesus have become part of God's Kingdom.

Christology: The study of the person Jesus Christ. However, the person and works are so intertwined that Christology may be considered as the study of both the person and works of Christ.

Traditional: This refers to the indigenous African way of life passed on from one generation to another.

1.11 Outline of the study

The seven-chapter thesis begins with a general introduction to the entire study. Here, the thesis focuses on the research problem, its background, the question(s) to be investigated, the hypothesis for the study, research methodology, and the significance of the study, among others. This is followed by chapter two which focuses on key theories of atonement that have emerged in the history of the Church. In chapter three, the study examines selected Old Testament texts in relation to sin and atonement. These texts include Genesis 3:1-19; Leviticus 16:1-28; Psalm 51:1-12; Isaiah 52:13—53:12 and others. The fourth chapter considers how selected New Testament texts (including Mark 14:12-26; Romans 3:21-26; 5:1-21 and Hebrews 9:11-14) inform Christian theology of atonement. The fifth chapter examines atonement within Akan religious, social-economic and political contexts. Chapter six develops a theology of atonement from an Akan perspective and draws ethical and theological implications of the study for the African Christian community. Finally, in chapter seven, the study summarizes its findings, draws some conclusions and then suggests some areas for further studies.

1.12 Conclusion

As an introductory chapter, this chapter has introduced the study and outlined its desired context, by stating the problem, its background, the question(s) to be investigated and the hypothesis for the study, research methodology, and the significance of the study, among others. The main research gap identified is that, even though theologians have made many important contributions toward the contextualization of the Christian faith in the Akan community of Ghana, yet, most of these studies have not succeeded in empowering Akan Christians to disassociate themselves from traditional powers. Most literature on atonement for the Akan context lacks a thorough engagement with Scripture and contextualization of biblical teachings. The concern of this study is to formulate an atonement theology that fills the literary gap identified in this chapter.

With the foundation laid in this chapter, the study continues to the next chapter to examine how the doctrine of atonement has been formulated in the major epochs of the history of the Christian Church. This helps to situate the study in its proper historical context.

CHAPTER TWO

ATONEMENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a brief socio-historical survey of major interpretations of the atonement and its scope, with the aim of showing what each generation and particular theologians have contributed to the Christian understanding of Christ's death. The major views examined in this chapter include the recapitulation theory, the ransom theory, the satisfaction theory, the moral influence theory, the penal substitutionary theory, the moral governmental theory, and the *Christus Victor* theory. Two main schools of thought about the extent of the atonement —namely, the “limited atonement” view (usually associated with Calvinistic tradition) and the “unlimited atonement” view (usually connected with Wesleyan tradition)—are also explored. The historical study of the atonement is relevant not only to place the entire study in the right socio-historical perspective but also to facilitate a better understanding of various misconceptions about the atonement so that the researcher may be in a better position to guard against similar errors when formulating a contextual theology of atonement for the Akan community, later in the study.

2.2 What is an atonement theory?

Before exploring the various interpretations of Christ's death and resurrection, it is important to define what an atonement theory is. The word “atonement” derives from the combination “at + one + ment” in reference to causing two divided parties to unite. It was Thomas More who (in 1513) used the term for the first time in reference to the price paid to reconcile two parties (Selvam 2017:6). Christianity teaches that the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1ff) was inherited by all human race down to the present generation such that all humans have sinned and fallen short of divine glory (Rom. 3:23; 5:12-20).

Consequent to the Fall of humanity and the universality of sin, the universe has permanently become a place of death, destruction, sin and alienation of humans from God. The reciprocal love that existed between God and humanity has been affected adversely by the Fall of humanity. The need to bridge the gap between sinful humanity and God is evident in various tenets of the Christian faith (Selvam 2017:1). Atonement has to do with God's activity in human history by which he deals with sin to re-establish the broken relationship between himself and humanity (Selvam 2017:6). It is the state of being "at one" (that is, being reconciled) with God (Green 2006:344; Selvam 2017:6). It denotes Christ's sacrifice on the cross, that is, Christ's death for humanity and the various ways that lead to the restoration of the right divine-human relationship (Green 2006:344-345). According to Selvam (2017:6), Christ's atonement brings about "the restoration of a reciprocal relationship of love between God the Father and the human race" by ensuring that "the way has been cleared for humans to enter into the desired fellowship with God." For Campbell (2017:52) atonement has to do with "that by which God has bridged over the gulf which separated between what sin had made us, and what it was the desire of the divine love that [humans] should become." In this sense, whatever Christ did had something to do with atonement.

The concept of atonement in Christian theology belongs to soteriology, that is, the doctrine of atonement is concerned with God's salvation of human beings from sin. Atonement theology is closely related to several other branches of theology including sanctification, eschatology, ecclesiology and others. Generally speaking, Christians believe that Christ died for the reconciliation between God and humans. However, no consensus has been reached regarding how Jesus's death achieves this reconciliation. By reconciliation is meant the process of restoring the divine-human relationship which was broken through sin. This study will later unpack how God achieved this reconciliation through the death of Christ. The different theological viewpoints led to the emergence and development of different theories of atonement. An atonement theory is simply an attempt to explain how Jesus's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection reconciles sinful humanity with the holy God. The role of any theory of atonement is to account for how the barrier between God and humanity is overcome. The various theories of atonement have rich theological interpretations for the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.

With this brief background, the study proceeds to examine major theories of atonement that have emerged throughout the history of the Christian Church.

2.3 Patristic interpretations of the atonement

The theological understanding of the early church concerning the atonement of Christ was based on their understanding of the work of Jesus Christ and was referenced against the Old Testament sacrificial system. As a result, Jesus's death on the cross was linked to the sacrificial lamb that was slaughtered during the Jewish Passover feast (Exod. 12: 1 Cor. 5:7; cf. John 1:29). Few patristic scholars who gave various interpretations of the death of Christ can be noted and examined. One of the earliest Christian writers in the period immediately following the New Testament era was Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 35-108 CE), who was a student of John the Apostle (Andrews 2020:340). The theology of Ignatius was developed in the context of his opposition to Gnosticism and Docetism. These are two heretic² schools of thought that embrace not only the pagan dualism (that is, the idea that Satan is the evil opposite of a good God, and that the two are equal in power) but also argue that the spirit is good, and the flesh is evil (see Macquarrie 2010:151). Ignatius argued that Christ possessed both flesh and spirit; he was God existing in flesh, and by his suffering and death God achieved human redemption (Horn 2020:15). Clement of Rome (ca. 30-100 CE) describes Christ's death as a substitutionary death that Ekem demonstrates the love that the Father and the Son have for humanity (Allison 2011:np; Ekem 2005:5; Enns 2008:453). Polycarp (ca. 69-155 CE) also refers to the substitutionary dimension of the atonement in stating that Christ "took up our sins in his own body upon the tree" (Enns 2008:453). Justin Martyr (100-165 CE) argues that Jesus took upon himself the curse that Adam's sin placed upon humanity (Robert 2007:247). According to Justin (2003:146) Christ experienced the curse of the human race, because "the Father of the Universe willed that his Christ should shoulder the curses of the whole human race, fully realizing that he would raise him again after his crucifixion and death." No longer do humans look to the mere shadows of animal sacrifices, "but by faith through the blood and the death of Christ who suffered death for this precise purpose" (Justin 2003:22).

² The word heresy from which "heretic" is derived, means a belief that contradicts orthodox Christian belief.

Another patristic interpreter of the atonement was Melito of Sardis (died ca. 180 CE). Melito interprets the atonement in terms of sacrifice, and thus comments on Abraham's attempt to sacrifice Isaac as follows:

In place of Isaac the just, a ram appeared for slaughter, in order that Isaac might be liberated from his bonds. The slaughter of this animal redeemed Isaac from death. In like manner, the Lord, being slain, saved us; being bound, he loosed [freed] us; being sacrificed, he redeemed us (Melito cited in Robert 2007:759).

It is clear from the foregoing that the substitutionary view of the atonement was common among the early Church Fathers. Yet, this interpretation was not well formulated until the time of the 16th century Protestant Reformation when Protestant scholars developed and popularized it. Again, it must be noted that the patristic scholars (whose views have been outlined above) did not formulate any systematic interpretation of the atonement, except Irenaeus whose views are considered below.

2.3.1 The recapitulation theory

Writing about hundred years after the apostolic period, Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 140–202 CE) became the first to articulate a complete theory of the atonement, the recapitulation theory (Laing 2018:np; 2018:141). His recapitulation theory is therefore the earliest identified atonement theory within historic Christianity. Born probably in Smyrna (near Ephesus, in what is now western Turkey), Irenaeus was a very brilliant “irenica” leader, thinker and by far the most outstanding Christian scholar of the second century (Snyder 2018:141). He heard the preaching of Polycarp. Irenaeus was one of the early Fathers who opposed Gnosticism.

The English word recapitulation is formed from the Latin *recapitulatio*, an ancient rhetoric term used to signify “the end of a speech when the speaker drives home the point with a summary of the strongest arguments” (O’Keefe and Reno 2014:38). Literally, it means “re-heading”, or “providing a new head” in the sense of providing a new source, and it is

therefore used to indicate “final repetition,” “summing up,” “drawing to a conclusion” (O’Keefe and Reno 2014:38). Irenaeus took over the classical meaning of *recapitulatio* and then added layers of historical and ontological significance arguing that Christ is not only the God’s “summary statement” but also “the logic or purpose in and through which the whole divine economy is conceived and implemented” (O’Keefe and Reno 2014:38). In Christ, God expresses his ultimate and conclusive argument, bringing together the logic and purpose of all things that had been divinely ordained beforehand.

Irenaeus argues that Christ achieved reconciliation through his incarnation, life, death as human and resurrection. Irenaeus’ atonement theology has many dimensions. First of all, Irenaeus’ interpretation of the atonement theology is based on the Second-Adam motif. He considers Christ’s salvific work as his whole life and ministry, rather than just his death on the cross. For Irenaeus, all human beings participated in the Fall of Adam and are therefore incapable of living according to God’s will. The bondage in which humans find themselves prevents them from developing and relating with him the way he wants. Humanity was not in any position to free themselves from this bondage and so they needed a liberator. To avert the situation, it was necessary for a Second Adam to come in the form of the first, and to make the right choices at every step where the first Adam failed, thereby giving humanity a second lineage, and bestowing on them life and righteousness rather than death and sinfulness (Hollen 2015:23; O’Keefe and Reno 2014:38). In the same way, just as the first Eve disobeyed God in the Garden and made all humanity sinful, so the second Eve (the Virgin Mary) reversed this curse by her obedience to God (O’Keefe and Reno 2014:39). Christ achieved his salvific task by reversing Adam’s disobedience through his own perfect obedience to God’s Law. The Son of God reworked and fixed the elements that led to the enslavement of humanity to sin, death and the devil, thereby releasing humanity from that slavery and hence reconciling humanity back to God. The idea of the Second Adam originates from the writings of St. Paul, who stated that: “The first man, Adam, became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45 RSV, cf. Rom. 5:18-21). However, while Paul simply considered Christ’s coming (as another human being) as the rectification of the wrongs of the first Adam, Irenaeus considered Christ “as ontologically the same as Adam”, or “the second iteration of that same archetype”, who is Adam (Hollen 2015:23).

Another emphasis of the recapitulation view of atonement is the restoration of humanity's potential. As hinted earlier, Irenaeus held a holistic view of Jesus's life, considering it impossible to separate some aspects of Christ's life as more significant than others with respect to God's salvific plan. Against this backdrop, Irenaeus argues strongly that Christ needed to pass through every stage of human existence, including conception, birth, baptism, growth to maturity, subjection to temptation, betrayal, and, eventually, death, resurrection and ascension in order to accomplish his task as the Savior of the world (Brondos 2018:1229). In his opposition to Gnosticism, Irenaeus argues that the cross proves Jesus's humanity beyond doubt. He also contended, based on Pauline's Christology of the cross, that it is on the cross that the God's image in humanity became perfect in Christ. Christ, as fully human and fully God, sums up and renews humanity on the cross by showing an infinite love to the same people who were causing his suffering (Vogel 2007:452). Though it is the cross that gives Christ the opportunity to reverse Adam's acts, placing too much emphasis on the role of the cross in God's salvific agenda makes one miss the significance of the incarnation, and the divine power living among humanity. By participating in human nature through the incarnation, Christ restores human dignity and glory which was marred by the Fall of humanity.

Further still, Irenaeus' recapitulation theory holds that Christ's death brought about the defeat of Satan, an idea that makes this interpretation fall under the *Christus Victor* category (to be discussed later). Irenaeus perceived Satan and his threat as a reality rather than as an abstract concept. He therefore reasons that the recapitulation must not only reconcile humanity to God but must also defeat Satan's power on this earth (Brondos 2018:1229). This defeat, according to the Church Father, was achieved not only on the cross but through a battle Christ fought with Satan (throughout his life), the final defeat occurring on the cross and proven by the resurrection.

Irenaeus' emphasis on the entire life of Christ rather than the cross makes his view about Satan's defeat a bit different from other viewpoints under the *Christus Victor* category (Crell 2014:20). Following Irenaeus' teachings, Finger (1998:46) shares the view that every aspect of Christ's life was a form of battle, which he won until his final battle on the cross. He writes: "In the wilderness, for instance, the devil tempted Jesus to disobey

God's law by quoting from it; yet Jesus, by responding according to the law's true intent, showed that his opponent was transgressing the law and was condemned by this act" (Finger 1998:46). Finger's line of thought links well with the assertion by Irenaeus (1992:18.5) that Christ has "summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam." One could therefore conclude that it is not enough for Christ to bring humanity into the right relationship with God without defeating Satan, the adversary, so he cannot continue to make fruitful attempts to lead humanity astray. By defeating Satan, Christ accomplished two things, namely, freeing the believer from the grasp of temptation, and completing the antithesis to the defeat of Adam the devil in the Garden. Therefore, the recapitulation achieved by Christ goes beyond his victory over hostile powers which held humanity captive to empowering the Church to overcome these powers through the work of the Spirit. Irenaeus however admits that Satan can make some attempts to deceive humanity as he did in the Garden (Gen. 3). Yet, such an attempt will fail because Christ has given believers power over Satan, such that any believer who abides in Christ and utilizes this power will not be led astray by Satan's schemes (Irenaeus 2018:349-350). From this discussion, it becomes clear that the recapitulation view of the atonement posits that: "everything Adam did, Jesus undid. Everything Adam failed to do, the Second Adam did" (Pugh 2014:26).

As a way of evaluation, it may be pointed out that Irenaeus did well in recognizing the key role of the atonement in the salvific plan of God. The Second Adam motif as well as the idea that Christ reversed humanity's course from disobedience to obedience is biblical. However, it seems Irenaeus over-emphasizes the bestowal of life rather than forgiveness, and the believer's victory over hostile powers rather than over sin.

2.3.2 The ransom theory

Darnell (2013:100) traces the roots of the ransom theory to first-century scholarly reflections on the death of Christ. However, it was Origen Adamantius (ca. 185-254 CE) who, in the third century, developed and popularized this theory using financial imagery to describe what went on during Jesus's death and resurrection (Ekem 2005:9; Darnell

2013:100). Origen's ransom theory emerged from Jesus's statement that he came to give his life as a "ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, cf. 1 Tim. 2:5-6; see also 1 Cor. 6:20). Also called the classic or dramatic view of atonement, the ransom theory contends that Christ's death on the cross was a price paid to satisfy the debt humanity owed due to Adam's Fall (Ryrie 1999:355; Enns 2008:331; 2011:828). In other words, by his death, Christ paid a ransom in exchange for human souls, which Satan had held captive on account of sin. This theory begins from the premise that God and Satan compete for souls such that those stained by sin, belong to Satan and are under his grip while the "clean" ones are God's. If God wants sinful humanity as his possession then he must not violate the rules of competition by simply snatching them back from the devil. Rather, God is obliged to pay an acceptable price to cause the release of the people under Satan's control. Christ therefore died as a price that earns God the right to human souls despite the sinful lives of humans.

The idea that theological formulations are culturally conditioned is true for the ransom theory. Proponents of this theory, such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, lived in a society full of "social unrest characterized by capturing and ransoming" (Ekem 2005:10). This background led to the assumption that redemption means "to buy back" the human race from the grip of the devil.

The concept of ransom begs the question: To whom was the ransom paid? According to Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine, the ransom was paid to Satan, who established control over humanity through a cosmic struggle between good and evil in which Satan prevailed (Patterson 2007:572). Through the sin of Adam and Eve, Satan usurped God's rightful ownership of humanity; thus, all sinful humanity legitimately belongs to Satan (Erickson 2013:810). Origen argues that since it is Satan, rather than God, who was holding sinners in captivity, the ransom to release people from captivity had to be paid to no other person than Satan. God could not "steal" humanity back (after losing them to Satan) and so he needed to pay a price in order to justly bring back humanity under his control. While it is not clear how Satan established his control over humanity, the Bible tells us that Satan is the ruler of this world (John 14:30) and that he is "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4.4).

Origen's theory was developed further and popularized by Gregory of Nyssa (335-395 CE), a fourth-century Cappadocian theologian, who most vividly illustrated the ransom theory through his fish-hook imagery. Gregory, like Origen, argues that Satan obtained legal rights over humanity after the Fall of humanity and that God's salvific plan could only materialize after redeeming back that legal right to himself. Gregory maintains that because humanity freely chose to be under Satan's dominion, it was fair for God not to use any arbitrary means to deprive Satan of his captives. According to Gregory, Satan was tricked by God into taking Christ in the same way as a fish is tricked to take a bait. God used the humanity of Christ as a bait to deceive Satan into accepting Christ as a ransom with Christ's divinity serving as a hook. Gregory (cited in Crell 2014:24) states, "The deity was hidden under the veil of our nature, so that, as with the ravenous fish, the hook of the deity might be gulped down along with the bait of flesh." In other words, the incarnation of Christ became an event by which the hook was hidden "beneath the form of human flesh" to entice the ruler of this age to a contest that Christ "might offer [Satan] his flesh as a bait and then the divinity which lay beneath might catch him fast with its hook" (Rufinus cited in Oh 2018:24).

Satan erroneously thought that he could hold Christ in hell. Like a sea monster, Satan snaps at the bait and then realizes, too late, the hook. With the divinity of Christ "dressed *incognito* as human flesh as the hook, God got Satan gulped down and then defeated" (Crell 2014:26). Christ powerfully arose from the grave on the third day and as a result, the devil released both Christ and human souls, which he had held captive from Adam's time. Satan was obliged to forfeit his legal rights because he unjustly claimed authority over a sinless person, Jesus Christ, something he had no right to do. Gregory taught that Job's allusion to Leviathan (41:1-2) and Jonah's story foreshadow the ransom theory of atonement.

Aware of the moral problem which Origen's idea suggested, Gregory expanded the theory to explain how a just God can deceive Satan without compromising his justice. Paul (2002:55), therefore rightly notes that "Gregory is not unaware of the moral problem of how to reconcile the absolute justice of God with perpetrating a deception in order to achieve his ends." Gregory begins by outlining two conditions required for an act to be

just, namely, all parties involved in the act must have their due, and the motivation behind the act must be love for humanity (see Erickson 2013:811). He argues that these two conditions were all met in the redemption process. The act is justified in that Satan got his due in the transaction and God's motive for the transaction was pure. Origen reasons that it was right for God to deceive Satan to redeem humanity because Satan was the one who first used deception to get humanity into his bondage. He argues further that the reason why Satan's deception should be condemned while God's should be approved lies in the purpose behind the deceptions. In the case of Satan, his deception was to ruin human nature, while for God, his deception was for the good purpose of saving humanity (Schaff and Wallace 2007:495). That being the case, the devil has no ground for a just complaint regarding the method God used to ransom humanity from his grip, since human beings voluntarily bartered away their freedom. After a lengthy discussion of the issue, Paul (2002:55) concludes that the deceit was in reality "a crowning example of justice and wisdom", in the sense that what God did was the best example of paying the devil in his own coin. In Gregory's defense, one must note that the picture he presents is not a statement of what happened but an analogy of what happened. Therefore, a point-by-point correspondence between the two scenarios in the comparison should not be sought.

Augustine also held the ransom view of the atonement, with a different explanation as to how God defeated Satan (Enns 2008: 331). Augustine uses the "mousetrap" analogy, which views Satan as being trapped like the mouse, to explain the atonement transaction (Oh 2018:24). Like Gregory, Augustine argues that Satan rightly had power over sinners and that the cross was a bait, which hooked him. So, Augustine argues that from the time the first human couple sinned all humanity became the legitimate property of Satan (Rosenberg 2018:185). However, Christ "came to the captives not having been captured himself. He came to redeem the captives, having in himself not a trace of the captivity, that is to say, of iniquity, but bringing the price for us in his mortal flesh" (Rosenberg 2018:186). He pushes the argument further by stating that Satan was not deceived by God but he (Satan) deceived himself under God's permission and this deception led to the event that brought about human salvation. It was Satan who determined the price, received it and accepted it as worthy enough to free humanity (See Erickson 2013:811). In exchange for the freedom of souls held under his sway, Satan demanded the blood of

Christ as a *pretium*, (“a price” or “ransom”). Having accepted the ransom, Satan had no right to keep humanity any longer and so God was able to free humanity from Satan’s grip. Satan realized after accepting Christ that he could not enslave Christ because of his (Christ’s) holiness (Ekem 2005:10). The devil was therefore deceived into thinking that he could capture the Son of God, not having realized initially the unbearable torture involved in such an attempt. Christ overcame both Satan and death, both for himself and his followers, making Satan a victim of his (Satan’s) own scheme (Ekem 2005:10). Rosenberg (2018:175, 185) observes that the idea of ransom only partially represents Augustine’s view and incompletely describes his theological position; he also emphasizes the refashioning of human nature as a key component of Christ’s act of ransoming humanity. Augustine (cited in Rosenberg 2018:186) links this idea of the ransom theory to the reformation that took place through the ransom, stating (regarding Isaiah 53), that “Christ’s deformity is what gives form to you. If he had been unwilling to be deformed, you would never have got back the form you lost. So, he hung on the cross, deformed; but his deformity was our beauty.” In this sense, “Christ is the former and reformer of humans, the creator and recreator, the maker and remaker” (Rosenberg 2018:186).

Augustine’s view of the atonement also involves the priestly role of Christ in which he is both the representative of humanity on the cross and the one who makes an atoning sacrifice in the stead of humanity (Pecknold and Toom 2013:43). For Augustine, Christ became the true Mediator between God and humanity when he assumed the form of a servant (Pecknold and Toom 2013:43). Though as God, he (Christ) receives sacrifice together with the Father, he chose to offer himself as a sacrifice rather than to receive it, thereby, making him both the offeror and the offering at the same time (Pecknold and Toom 2013:43). He is at the same time careful not to separate the Godhead in the atonement drama. Augustine’s view seems to anticipate the God-ward dimension of the atonement advocated by Anselm as well as the penal substitutionary view of the Reformers (Ekem 2005:10).

Evaluating the ransom view, one notes that the use of the image of the cross as a victory over the evil powers and the use of the metaphor of ransom or redemption are in line with New Testament usage. The ransom metaphor powerfully communicates the salvific

importance of the cross and the critical need of humanity for liberation from enslavement to sin and the powers of evil at both the personal and corporate levels. Nonetheless, the ransom theory has been criticized for some reasons.

In the first place, it seems to make God less than omnipotent. The proposition that Satan was the one who demanded Christ's blood as a price undermines God's sovereignty and makes him one who can owe Satan something and then be under Satan's command to pay a price to him (Crell 2014:27). In so doing, the ransom theory not only gives Satan (a created being and a fallen angel who disobeyed God) too high a role in human redemption but also ignores the demands of God's justice with regards to sin (Grudem 2011:581).

Secondly, the Bible teaches that no one is equal to or greater than God; for this reason, no one can compel God to do anything. The ransom theory has the potential of implying that God and Satan are two equal and opposing powers and this is inconsistent with Christian doctrine and biblical teachings. By arguing this way, the ransom theory fails to acknowledge that God is the constant supplier of life to everyone, including Satan and his followers (cf. Job 12:10; Psalms 36:9; Luke 20:38; Acts 17:28).

Thirdly, the ransom theory makes God a deceitful trickster, an idea that is very difficult to accept in the light of a broader theological and ethical perspective (Crell 2014:26). The explanation given by advocates of the ransom theory about God maintaining his justice while deceiving Satan is not satisfactory.

Finally, contrary to the idea that, on the cross, Christ paid a ransom to Satan, several passages in the Bible allude to the fact that Christ's death was a sacrifice to God rather than Satan (Isa. 53:10; Eph. 5:2). At the same time, the theory does not deal adequately with passages that speak of Christ's death as a propitiation offered to God the Father for the forgiveness of human sins (see for example, 1 John 4:10).

2.4 Medieval interpretations of the atonement

This section is dedicated to the examination of two key medieval theories of atonement, namely, the satisfaction theory of Anselm and the moral influence theory of Abelard. Before these theories, the ransom theory had dominated the Christian perspective of the

atonement. In their era, both Anselm and Abelard disagreed with the ransom theory and came up with their formulations in accordance with their own socio-cultural contexts. Thus, Anselm's and Abelard's views echo two medieval models: Anselm's model echoes feudalism and Abelard's model is based on the medieval idea that the transforming power of love parallels courtly love (Walters 2004:246). The study now proceeds to examine these theories briefly below.

2.4.1 The satisfaction theory

Developed in the latter part of the eleventh century by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and held until the times of the Reformers, the satisfaction theory holds that the atonement of Christ was meant to compensate God, the Father (Erickson 2013:813-14; Schmidt 2017:217). Anselm raised a number of issues regarding the ransom theory (which had dominated the theological thought of the Church for almost a millennia), and then went on to propose his theory of the atonement. Anselm is described as "the most original thinker the Church had seen since the days of Augustine" (Schmidt 2017:217). His view about the atonement has been upheld within Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed circles. While one may trace the root of the satisfaction theory to Anselm, this view seems to have been anticipated by Tertullian (ca 155-225 CE) who (centuries before Anselm) thought of the cross as a motivator for ethical conduct and repentance as a form of compensation to God (Laing 2018:np). Aulén (2003:81) notes that after Tertullian had prepared grounds for this interpretation, Cyprian began to work it long before the time of Anselm. Tertullian betrays his view that satisfaction is the compensation which a human makes for his/her trespass in the form of payment is evident in his assertion that it is absurd not to perform penance and yet expect the remission of sin or to leave the price for sin unpaid and yet expect to be forgiven (Tertullian cited in Hach 2011:26). Therefore, for Tertullian, penance may be considered as satisfaction, it is the acceptance of a temporal penalty to avoid eternal damnation.

Anselm was a Monastic theologian whose theological perspectives were informed by a Platonic worldview. In his *Cur Deus Homo?* ("Why God Became Man?"), a document described as "the truest and greatest book on the atonement that has ever been written"

(Denney cited in Ekem 2005:13), Anselm completely destroyed the predominance of the classic view that Satan had a right of possession over humanity and that God needed to ransom humanity through the shedding of Jesus's blood as a ransom paid to Satan. Anselm then presents his own theory, which is the first thorough and scientific exposition of the atonement. Anselm's theory must be understood in relation to his doctrine of sin, for what sin is understood to be will strongly affect one's view of what needs to be done in order to counter it.

According to Anselm (2004:II.1), God created humans as rational beings so that they might be happy in enjoying him, and therefore, humanity's happiness is informed by their obligatory subordination to the perfect will of God. The obligatory subordination of humanity to God is the debt humans owe to him. The one who pays this debt is righteous; while the one who does not pay it is a sinner. Hence, for Anselm (2007:202) sin is nothing other than a non-payment of debt due to God. Therefore, the payment of one's debt to God makes one upright and failure to pay this debt renders one unrighteous. In this sense, Anselm considers sin as taking from God what rightly belongs to him and dishonor him (Erickson 2013:815; Laing 2018:np).

Contrary to Origen, Anselm argues further that the devil does not have any legal right over humanity which needs to be nullified by any business transaction. For Anselm, Satan has no "right of possession" over humanity because humans are God's possession and he shares this right with no one. Anselm (2006:108) questions the ransom theory, saying "The devil and man belong to God alone, and neither one stands outside of God's power, what case, then, did God have to plead with his own creature, in his own affair?" Therefore, God did not have to purchase humanity from Satan. Anselm shifts the focus from Satan to God, arguing that the Fall was the result of human choosing sin over obedience to God, their Creator, and thus dishonoring him. He argues further that the original sin occurs as an objective problem to God's entire creation because a sinner disturbed creation order and beauty (Anselm 2007:223). Anselm contends that human salvation is conditioned on the demands of divine justice that only Jesus's death could satisfy. His starting point is the premise that disobedience denies God of his due and the one who dishonors God sins (Ekem 2005:13).

Anselm's idea was informed by the feudal system of his days (Ahn 2018:130). Under medieval feudalism the poor pledged themselves to lords in exchange for defense. The poor would often work their lord's land, give him honor and obey every ruling of the lord for this protection. In his time, the Roman view of justice had been substituted by the more concrete personal dignity of the feudal overlords. A breach of the law, be it public or private, was viewed as a direct offense against a person; therefore, justice and law had now turned into a personal matter (see Oladini 2011:30).

Consequently, in Anselm's theory, God was no longer a Judge, but rather a feudal Overlord who was bound to safeguard his honor and to demand an adequate satisfaction for any infringement of the same (see Oladini 2011:30). In other words, God is a feudal Lord and all of human beings were indebted to him. In this system, when someone (for example, the lord) was dishonored, a debt must be paid the value of which depends on the person's status. A key responsibility of humanity is to honor their Overlord, God. Unfortunately, humanity has not kept this responsibility of honoring God: "Through our sinful behavior, humankind caused God dishonor. Anyone who does not give this honor to God steals from God what belongs to him, and dishonors God, and this is sin. What is more, as long as he does not repay what he stole, he remains guilty." Certainly, sinners need to restore to God the honor they have taken from him. The restoration of God's honor demands either infinite punishment or adequate satisfaction if justice is to be upheld. This necessity is rooted in the infinite perfections of God. However, God is unlike an earthly lord in Anselm's day who would seek restitution from his subjects after they have disobeyed him and thus dishonored him. The loving God opted for satisfaction, knowing that the infinite punishment which sinners deserve would destroy humanity, and thus impede his purpose for creation (Lewis and Demarest 2010:375).

This raises the question: How can a finite being satisfy an infinite offense? According to Roman civil law, satisfaction was an alternative to punishment in matters regarded as private offenses. Such an offense requires punishment unless satisfaction is made. Satisfaction is the payment for or the return of a stolen item to the victim, together with an extra payment for dishonoring the victim. This concept is not strange to the modern judicial system of the Akan society. A person found guilty of stealing a goat is not only

required to return the goat to the victim or to pay to the victim the price for the goat but also required to pay punitive damages or serve a prison sentence. Therefore, sinners are not only required to return to God what they have taken from him but also to give additional compensation for the injury that has been done to him (Erickson 2013:815; Ahn 2018:122; Laing 2018:np). This is so because the original intent of jurisdiction is not just “to inflict punishment on offenders, but also to rehabilitate victims from dishonor and pain” (Ahn 2018:122).

According to Anselm (2007:258), the immutability of God’s honor and his sovereign will to maintain the order of his perfect creation are the two decisive factors that must be required for the restorative satisfaction of God’s honor. Therefore, Anselm’s interpretation of the atonement emphasizes the harmony of God’s perfect being and his will to maintain the order and beauty of the universe. Anselm (2007:288) argues however that God was not compelled to save any of his creatures and so his provision for salvation was to save humanity based on his own free will. This is so because God is a sovereign being who does as he wills and has no limitation regarding what he may do and what he may not do. It is God’s attribute of love that made him have the will to save humanity and so God’s divine necessity is grounded upon his inner being (Anselm 2007:291). In other words, the atonement was God’s self-decision intended to preserve his perfect nature and to do his divine work of creation and salvation.

Even though satisfaction to God was a necessary condition for reconciling humankind with God, for the following reasons, humankind was not in any position able to render such satisfaction to the infinite God. In the first place, when humans sin against God, the disgrace it brings to God’s honor is like an infinite insult such that the greatest compensation from a finite human being is still finite and unworthy of the infinite injury to God’s honor. Anselm (2007:221) also insists that “the punishment of the sinner” fails to give “honor to God,” because “when the sinner does not repay what he took away but is punished if the punishment of the sinner is not to the honor of God, then God loses his honor and does not regain it.” Secondly, humans have a continuing duty of complete allegiance and obedience to God so that they have nothing to pay for wrongs committed in the past. In other words, humans were created for good works and therefore one’s

future good works cannot pay for the wrongs done in the past. As Erickson (2013:815) puts it, "Humans could not possibly have rendered satisfaction on their own behalf, for even if they were to do their best, that would be nothing more than giving God his due." Thirdly, human nature after the Fall renders humanity impotent to do good or to render an acceptable satisfaction to God.

The answer to the question of how a finite person can pay for an infinite debt is found in the death of a God-man, Jesus, the Christ (Ahn 2018:122). A pertinent question, then, has to do with how God could take human flesh and become human. The crucial bases for Anselm's doctrine of Atonement are thus the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth (Ekem 2005:13). Thus, since adequate satisfaction could not come from a being so inferior to God as humankind is, the eternal Word of God became flesh (John 1:14) to pay human debt. The Savior, being divine, could pay the infinite debt required for the satisfaction of divine justice. At the same time, his perfect and sinless human nature made him suitable to represent humanity for whom he died on the cross. Christ was not obliged to die because he is sinless (see 1 John 3:5; John 8:46); therefore, when he willingly died on the cross, he received (as a reward of his merit) the forgiveness of the sins of all who come to him by faith. In this theory, the idea of satisfaction to divine justice is the leading formula. The atonement was not a God-Satan transaction, rather, it was a restoration of God's honor.

The "Anselmian" view of atonement rightly holds that human sin and disobedience leads to disruption in the ordered relationship of beauty and harmony of nature. Therefore, the death of Christ satisfies God's honor and also restores order to creation (Weaver 2011:232). Yet, this model of atonement has some pitfalls. Critics argue that Anselm puts so much weight on God's mercy that he seems to diminish God's holiness and his covenantal justice (Rom. 1:16-17) (Hach 2011:28). Also, the theory does not pay much attention to the obedient life of Christ. Anselm also shows overdependence on rational speculation instead of reliance on Scripture. No Scriptural support is given for the idea that God's pride is wounded by sin such that he keeps a running account of what humankind owes him in repayment for this "dishonor." More so, the "Anselmian" view fails to explore how the atonement is appropriated by the believer. Furthermore, this theory

seems to pay less attention to the vicarious dimension of Christ's suffering (Enns 2008:332).

2.4.2 The moral influence theory

The moral influence theory has its roots in the teachings of Peter Abelard (1079-1142), a French philosopher-theologian, a student of Anselm at his school in Laon and one described as the sharpest and boldest person of the twelfth century (Darnell 2013:107). In his view, Christ died neither because a payment had to be made to Satan nor because innocent blood was needed to appease an angry God. Instead, the atonement was meant to bring positive moral change to humanity so that humans can respond to God's love (Erickson 2013:806ff; Grudem 2011:581; Ryrie 1999:356; Morris 2001:117). That is to say, the purpose and result of Christ's death was to influence humanity toward moral improvement. This theory, is therefore, a theory of emotional appeal of divine love.

Abelard's theory summarizes as follows: "It is the love of God which is visible in the cross of Christ; this produces our love. It is not an objective mechanism between transcendent powers that enables God to forgive, as it is in Anselm, but it is the subjective act of divine love which evokes in us a love for him" (Tillich 1972:172). This model views God as loving and lays just a little emphasis on divine justice. God's love is so strong that it overcomes the resistance of sinners.

Abelard's most comprehensive discussion on atonement is found in his *Expositio in Epistolam ad Romanos* (Abelard 2000). He raises three objections to the ransom theory. He argued, first of all, that Christ's death was meant to redeem the elect,³ who were never under Satan's grip (Abelard 2000:282). He also argues that when Satan deceived our first parents, he never fulfilled his part of the "bargain" or transaction (Gen. 3:4, 5, 7, 19); hence, he could not have obtained any legal rights over humanity (Abelard 2000:282). More so, Abelard accused Anselm of not dealing adequately with the divine attribute of love and argued that love is the primary attribute of God, and this supreme love is demonstrated in the incarnation and passion of Christ (Laing 2018:np). According to

³ The "elect" refers to a particular person or group of people God chose in eternal past for salvation.

Abelard, Anselm's presentation of God as angry and vindictive is unacceptable. Again, Abelard contends that even though God may have given Satan the permission to punish humanity because of their sins, the sovereign God could easily release them after forgiveness, without paying any ransom, because Satan had no legitimate power over humanity (Abelard 2000:282). Abelard (2000:282) argues further that God who alone is the *summum bonum* (the highest good) could not have acted immorally by granting the one who seduced humanity in wickedness, any special right, power, or dominion over his victims. Like Anselm, Abelard (2000:346) contends that the ransom theory was not capable of answering the question of why God became human. In his opinion, the biblical view of reconciliation has to do with setting aside humanity's misinformed hostility toward God, rather than a righteous God demanding the blood of his Son for judgment on sin.

As to the way humanity has been justified by the atoning blood and reconciled to God, Abelard (2006:283) writes:

through this unique act of grace manifested to us—in that his son has taken upon himself our nature and preserved therein in teaching us by word and example even unto death—he has more fully bound us to himself by love; with the result that our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace, and true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him.

Thus, for Abelard, the atonement was not necessitated by the issue of honor and satisfaction, but by God's loving nature. The justification that the atonement brings provides for humanity the kindling of divine love in the heart and in the presence of the cross (Darnell 2013:107). It is the act of love that frees humanity from sin and gives them liberty in Christ, at the same time inspiring love for God in humanity (Abelard 2006:284). For Anselm, the purpose of the atonement is to restore God's honor, while for Abelard, it is to demonstrate God's love. Anselm focuses on the effect of the atonement on God while Abelard focuses on its effect on humanity. Abelard's view of sin comprises four main areas, namely: (a) vices or defects of the mind that do not constitute sin as such but inner

weaknesses and inclinations that tend to reduce one's power to resist temptation; (b) an evil will that brings about sinful action; (c) "to intentionally yield to, consent to, or indulge in these vices is sin, yet in order to be considered sin, there must be not merely the thought of the action but actual readiness to put the action into practice"; and (d) the performance of the sinful action (Kaiser 2015:23). The steps to reconciliation between the sinner and God are repentance; confession; and satisfaction (Kaiser 2015:23). Abelard speaks of love in several ways: It is the tool by which God brings humanity to himself more fully; the true love that, fired by the divine grace in Christ, would endure anything for God; that great love in humanity through Christ's death; something that fears nothing on God's behalf (Campbell, Hawkins and Schildgen 2007:29).

Abelard's view is in consonance with the courtly love that was developing during his time. He first experienced this courtly love⁴ in his relationship with Heloise, and then transformed this personal experience into theological formulation (Walters 2004:246; see also Paul 2002:55). The courtly love was characterized, among others, by its ennobling quality. For Benson (cited in Walters 2004:247) what distinguishes courtly love is not only the theme of suffering, "that love is not only virtuous in itself but is the very source and cause of all the other virtues, that indeed one cannot be virtuous unless he is a lover." As to the appropriation of the atonement by the believer, Abelard teaches that the Holy Spirit applies faith, hope and love to the believer to help him/her appropriate the atonement (Walters 2004:247). Thus, Abelard considers the message of John 15:13—"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (RSV)—crucial for a proper understanding of the meaning of the atonement. He also writes:

Our redemption through the suffering of Christ is that deeper love within not only frees us from slavery to sin, but also secures for us the true liberty of the children of God, in order that we might do all things out of love rather than out of fear—love for him that shown us such grace that no greater can be found" (Abelard 2011:343).

⁴ Paul (2002:81) opines that the love Abelard talked about was more of eros than agape.

Abelard teaches a binding reciprocation of compassion. Building upon such biblical texts as Luke 7:47 and Romans 3:26; 5:1-11, Abelard contends that the cross demonstrates God's love that moves sinners to realize their sinfulness, repent and respond in love to God. He comments on Romans 3:26 as follows:

Thus our redemption is that loftiest love inspired in us by the passion of Christ, which not only frees us from the slavery of sin, but also gives us the true freedom of the sons of God, that we may be wholly filled not with fear, but with love of him who has displayed such grace to us. . . . He testifies, therefore, that he came to extend among men this true liberty of love (Abelard 2006:278).

Abelard (cited in Kaiser 2015:4) also suggests a five-fold purpose of Christ's death based on his interpretation of Romans 4:25: (1) to bear the punishment for human sins; (2) to take away the punishment of our sins; (3) to pay the price required to bring humanity back into Paradise; (4) to draw human minds away from the desire to sin; and (5) to enkindle in humankind the greatest love of Christ. Commenting on Romans 5:5 Abelard states that Paul "expresses the mode of our redemption through the death of Christ, viz. when he says that he died for us to no other end than that that true liberty of love might be propagated in us, through that loftiest love which he displayed to us" (Abelard 2006:278). Referring to the "righteousness of God," Abelard (2006:278) avers that faith in Christ is the instrument by which one's love grows; this happens "by virtue of the conviction that God in Christ has united our human nature to himself and, by suffering in that same nature, has demonstrated to us that perfection of love."

What is distinct in Abelard's atonement theology is not the originality of having formulated a new kind of theology (because the love aspect of the atonement was alluded to by patristic scholars and Anselm as well) but his emphasis on the divine love as a complete account of human redemption rather than a mere aspect of it (Paul 2002:81). As Moberly (cited in Grensted 2001:105) notes, Abelard "seems to lay so much causal stress upon the 'exhibition' of the love of the cross, as though he conceived it as working its effect

mainly as an appeal, or incitement, to feeling.” Abelard, while appealing to his audience to reciprocate the love shown to humanity by Christ, also notes that no matter how much human love is inflamed by God’s great love, it still is imperfect and needs the merits of Christ’s own perfect love.

A critical assessment of this theory reveals that Abelard’s emphasis on the love of God as revealed in the work of Christ is biblical (John 3:16). Without love, God could not have brought his Son into the world to become flesh and die a shameful and painful death to save sinful humanity. The fact that Christ’s death elicits in humanity some kind of moral influence is also ethically grounded. This view also promotes a personal relationship with Christ which is the main motive behind the Christian faith. The “Abelardian” view is therefore primarily communal.

Yet, Abelard’s theory has some shortfalls. First of all, it sees the cross as a mere incentive to love which makes it appeal to emotion and feeling without acknowledging Christ’s death as a necessary condition for the forgiveness of sins. This position does not take seriously, the assertion “in Christ we have our redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin” (Eph. 1:7). In other words, this theory does not regard sin as eliciting active retribution from a holy God. Another flaw of the moral influence theory is that it considers the atonement as an act of love with the ability to change humanity without changing God’s perception about humanity. That is, it emphasizes the need for humanity to be reconciled to God without giving room for God to be reconciled to us. In this sense, the “Abelardian” view demonstrates an overemphasis on human being and hence becomes too subjective (Grudem 2011:581). More so, it fails to acknowledge that, on the cross, God upheld the justice of his moral nature while justifying sinners. A balanced position should consider the love of God without diminishing the necessity for divine justice.

2.5 Reformation and post-reformation interpretations of the atonement

This section focuses on atonement theories that were featured during the Reformation period and afterward. The key theories discussed include the penal substitutionary theory, the moral theory and the *Christus Victor* theory.

2.5.1 The penal substitutionary theory

The 16th century Reformation that took place in the Christian Church affected many Christian doctrines, including the doctrine of atonement. Before the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church had dominated Christianity for almost one and a half millennia. The satisfaction view of the atonement (rooted in the Catholic doctrine of penance) became dominant after its formulation by Anselm in the 12th century. During the Reformation, people began to question many beliefs and practices of the Church, and atonement was among the many things that underwent an interpretation transformation. By this time, medieval feudalism had died out, and Teutonic political theory had replaced it such that “there were now judges who enforced laws through punishment when laws were disobeyed”, a situation which “transformed Anselm’s metaphor of a feudal lord with serfs to God as a judge who seeks justice” (Spann 2016:5).

Consequently, the Reformers developed and popularized another view of the atonement, generally referred to as the penal substitutionary theory. The concept of penal substitution in which Christ’s death is the satisfaction of divine justice in the stead of humanity had allusions in the teachings of the Church of the first thousand years. Few of such earlier allusions to the penal substitutionary view could be noted. Eusebius (cited in Griffiths 2019:151), for example, affirms that the Lamb of God was chastised on behalf of humanity, he suffered a penalty he owed not, received death for us and by so doing became the cause of the forgiveness of human sins. Another example comes from Chrysostom (cited in Edwards 2009:108) who in his Homily on Galatians 3:3, states that “Just as, when someone is condemned to death, another innocent person who chooses to die for him releases him from that punishment, so Christ also did.” Augustine (2016:np) also alludes to substitutionary atonement when he says Jesus Christ is the one and only mediator between God and man, became flesh, lived and died on behalf of humanity, undertaking punishments he did not deserve so that through him we could obtain the grace which we did not deserve.

The penal interpretation is a slight extension of the satisfaction interpretation. The Reformers adopted Anselm’s idea of satisfaction but reinterpreted it in terms of

substitution instead of merit (Darnell 2013:101). The Reformers agreed with Anselm that salvation is dependent on the atonement which is God's own initiative. While Anselm held that Jesus's sacrifice secured such merit as was capable of being imputed to the guilty, the Reformers taught that Christ's suffering was a penal substitution for the sinner. Also, while Anselm argued that the satisfaction which Christ offered could not have been his obedience, because, as a man, he owed this satisfaction to God, the Reformers considered Christ's active obedience as a part of the redemptive price together with voluntary death. Also, the Reformers stressed the guilt that results from sin rather than being an insult to God's honor. Unlike Anselm, the Reformers avoided interpreting the atonement in terms of the medieval Roman Catholic penitential system. Further still, unlike Anselm, the Reformers did not abstract Jesus's atonement on the cross from his life of willful obedience to God. Christ's obedient death was but the culmination of his entire life of obedience to God's law.

The substitution theory states that "Jesus took our place on the cross, died in our stead, suffered the guilt and punishment that rightly belongs to us, became a curse in our place, and did everything in our place as a substitute" (Darnell 2013:101). The doctrine as taught by the Reformers is that sin inherently deserves God's wrath and curse, God's own nature demands that he gives to his creatures the punishment they deserve. The Son of God incarnated, fulfilled all righteousness and took upon himself the punishment of our sins such that those who believe in him have his righteousness imputed upon them (Hodge 2016:104). Jeffery *et al.* (cited in Wood 2011:50) define penal substitution as the idea "that God gave himself in the person of his Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin." That is to say, by his death, Christ took upon himself the penalty for all human sins, and in doing so he became a curse on behalf of humanity. To say that Christ died a substitutionary death means, by his death, Christ "took upon himself God's righteous judgment and wrath against the sins of those for whom he died... paid the penalty for their sins, and he therefore both propitiated God's wrath against their sins and expiated their sins so that the sins of Jews and Gentiles would be forgiven" with the net effect being that, all people (whether Jews and Gentiles) "would be justified by faith, forgiven of their sins, reconciled to God, participate in the resurrection, and saved from God's wrath" (Williams 2010:583).

He blotted out through death the sentence of death, that by a new creation of our race in himself he might sweep away the penalty appointed by the former Law. He let them nail him to the cross that he might nail to the curse of the cross and abolish all the curses to which the world is condemned (Hilary 2012:np).

According to this theory Christ suffered and died to present an atonement that brought an actual reconciliation between God and humanity. This view contends that Christ's death has a retrospective effect such that it is able to save those who lived before his time. Christ' sacrifice actually brought about the redemption of all saints of all time (Laing 2018:np). The proponents of this viewpoint point to passages such as Romans 5:9-10; Colossians 1:21-22; Hebrews 2:14-15; Titus 2:14; Revelation 5:9-10; Ephesians 1:7 for support. The views of key Reformers (like Luther and Calvin) regarding the atonement are considered for this point.

In the view of Pannenberg (2013:np), "Luther was probably the first since Paul and his school to have seen with full clarity that Jesus's death in its genuine sense is to be understood as vicarious penal suffering." Luther presents the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, which took away the death sentence that sin placed on humanity. In his view, Christ's resurrection does not only signify God's acceptance of the atonement but also ensures the end of Satan's power over believers (Kolb 2009:123). Luther's atonement theology also depicts God as disclosing his salvific plan to believers in the person and work of Christ. This is depicted in two ways: In the first place, in the preaching of the Christian gospel; and, secondly, in the existential impartation of Jesus's personality to the believer, resulting in the believer's freedom from the Mosaic Law and his/her entrance into a new life of reconciliation with God. Luther further opined that by his life, death, and resurrection, Christ suffered the divine wrath against sin and the death sentence that the law justly demanded. By so doing, he frees those who trust him from the curse of the law, restores their relationship with God and guides them to perfect righteousness (Lewis and Demarest 2010:376).

Luther (2018:44) explains the penal substitutionary theory as follows:

Because an eternal, unchangeable sentence of condemnation has passed upon sin—for God cannot and will not regard sin with favor, but his wrath abides upon it eternally and irrevocably—redemption was not possible without a ransom of such precious worth as to atone for sin, to assume the guilt, pay the price of wrath and thus abolish sin.

Luther (2018:45) argues further that this kind of ransom could not be paid by any other person than the Son of God who became human in order to bear the load of God's eternal wrath (making his death a sin sacrifice) all because of his "immeasurably great mercy and love toward us, giving himself up and bearing the sentence of unending wrath and death." Therefore, in the view of Luther, Christ was a legal substitute for us on the cross and that he bore the penalty for sins that is due to humanity (Laing 2018:np). On the cross, Christ was punished (penal) in the stead of humans (substitution).

John Calvin's view about the atonement is rooted in Christ's roles as prophet, king, and priest. As a priest, he reconciles sinful humanity to God by his atoning death. Calvin explains this point as follows:

As a pure and stainless Mediator he [Christ] is by his holiness to reconcile us to God. But God's righteous curse bars our access to him, and God in his capacity as judge is angry toward us. Hence, an expiation must intervene in order that Christ as priest may obtain God's favor for us and appease his wrath (Calvin 2001:57).

"The priestly office", according to Calvin (2001:57), "belongs to Christ alone because by the sacrifice of his death he blotted out our own guilt and made satisfaction for our sins. Calvin also argues that the atonement is necessary because of God's wrath against sin. According to Calvin (cited in Sanchez 2019: 223-224) the sinner is

estranged from God through sin, is an heir of wrath, subject to the curse of eternal death, excluded from all hope of salvation, beyond every blessing of God, the slave of Satan, captive under the yoke of sin, destined finally for a dreadful destruction and already involved in it.

Calvin's concept of vicarious sacrifice needs further examination. Like Luther, Calvin (2006:510; see also Thipa 2019:60) also avers that Christ is the bearer of the sin of humanity: "The Son of God, utterly clean of all fault, nevertheless took upon himself the shame and reproach of our iniquities." In addition, he is the believer's righteousness in that without Christ the believer has no righteousness of his/her own (Calvin 2006:510; see also Thipa 2019:60). He uses three key theological concepts to explain his idea of atonement. The first concept is propitiation which refers to the act of appeasing a deity, thus incurring divine favor or avoiding divine retribution (Ngien 2019:81). This means that by his death Christ fulfilled God's holy demands and dealt with the divine wrath for all who come to him in faith. So, Calvin (2016:234; see also Ngien 2019:81) asserts, "God, to whom we were hateful because of sin, was appeased by the death of his Son to become favorable to us." The second term is redemption, which has to do with the humanward focus of the cross, unlike propitiation, which is Godward. Redemption means by his sacrifice Christ frees believers from sin, guilt, and the penalty of death (Calvin 2006:511, 532). The third expression, reconciliation, denotes both the Godward and the humanward dimensions of the death of Christ. It means by his death Christ brings repentant sinners and the holy God together to be at peace: "Christ had to become a sacrifice by dying that he might reconcile his Father to us"; therefore Christ is used in the salvific plan as a means of reconciling humanity unto God (Calvin 2006:107, 350, 502; 2016:15, 222, 234, 286).

Evaluating the penal view, it is clear that its strength lies in its ability to explain how Old Testament saints were saved. The biblical data in support of this view are also good. However, the penal substitution theory is not without valid objections, despite its popularity in some sections of the church. It has argued that it is immoral to transfer the punishment which was due to the sinner onto a party who was innocent. Therefore, critics

argue that this theory which is based on God's justice is self-defeating in that it is fundamentally unjust in itself.

2.5.2 The moral governmental theory

In 1617 Hugo Grotius, a lawyer, wrote *A Defense of the Catholic Faith concerning the Satisfaction of Christ: Against Faustus Socinus* in opposition to Socinus' teaching that God could forgive sin without requiring satisfaction (Erickson 2013:806). The idea of God's government of the world was developed in the context of the second half of the Dutch's War of Liberation from the Papist Oppressors from Spain (Mulsow and Rohls 2005:121). Yet, Grotius' unique approach to the atonement based on his professional interest in international relations resulted in what eventually became known as the governmental theory of atonement. His approach has both an objective component ("the atonement being regarded as satisfying the demands of justice") and a subjective component ("Christ's death is seen as a deterrent to sin by impressing on the sinner the gravity of what is involved in sin") (Erickson 2013:806). Objectively, Grotius argues that Christ's death was a real offering made to God as a display of divine justice. God, however, by his love for humanity modified the demands of strict justice so that he did not require the full penalty for sin (Erickson 2013:806). Yet, "the offering of Christ did render God favorable so that he could pardon sins and restore sinners to fellowship. God could have relaxed his law altogether and not punish Christ, but such a course would not have achieved the maximal deterrence for future sins" (Lewis and Demarest 2010:378). Subjectively, Grotius argues that "the punishment inflicted on Christ is exemplary in that it communicates God's hatred of sin and strikes fear into the hearts of persons so that they will forsake evil and seek personal reformation" (Lewis and Demarest 2010:378).

The governmental view was meant to be a mean between the Reformers' view and the Socinian view of atonement (Berkhof 2005:388). The views that preceded the governmental model pictured God as a sympathetic and indulgent Being and considered the atonement as a necessity to restore God's favor after one has responded appropriately to his love. Since such a view could possibly lead to antinomianism, with the consequence of breaking God's law, Grotius' theory places a huge emphasis on the

seriousness of sin (Erickson 2013:806). Grotius argues that by his death Christ demonstrated to humanity what their sins deserved at the hand of the just Governor and Judge of the universe. Though his death did not actually pay the debt of anyone's sin, it allows God justly to forgive humans if, on other grounds, such as their faith, their repentance, their works, and their perseverance, they meet his demand.

An understanding of Grotius' concept of God is imperative for understanding his theory of atonement. Grotius perceived God as the Ruler of the universe who preserves moral government. In other words, God is the moral Governor of the entire universe, having divine power "according to which his infinite wisdom and unfathomable divine will are exercised over his creatures to direct them to their various appointed ends" (Gelston 2019:16). Grotius supports his teachings with Isaiah 42:21, "The Lord was pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious" (RSV). God's moral government therefore has to do with his specific interaction with his rational creatures. Grotius also reasons that it is God's actions that are determined by his dominant attribute of love. He has chosen to forgive sin in a way characterized by clemency and severity because of the interests of his moral government (Erickson 2013:807).

God governs his rational creatures by the moral law he has put in place for them, the moral law being how "God displays the righteousness of his self-love, makes his moral perfection and holiness comprehensible to the creature, and threatens those who despise his general benevolence toward and authority over His rational creatures" (Gelston 2019:16). The most fundamental requirement of the moral law, according to Edward (cited in Gelston 2019:18) is "to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls, with all our strength, and all our mind." The violation of these laws constitutes sin, though such violations do not in any way attack the personality of God. As a Ruler, God's main concern is the administration of the laws (Erickson 2013:806). Being a Ruler, God has the right to punish sin, because sin inherently deserves punishment.

Grotius sees law as a positive statute or enactment, which is neither inward in God nor in his will and nature, but an effect of his will and can change or abrogate it according to his pleasure (Storms: online). Grotius borrowed the idea that divine law is a positive

enactment from the province of human jurisprudence. As human law-making power, God formulates a statute by a positive enactment forbidding certain acts within his jurisdiction, so that the heavenly sovereign law-giver promulgates universal positive laws. In both instances, the law-giver is higher than the law since the law comes from his volition.

Having laid down a definition for law, Grotius now proceeds to introduce the idea of relaxation (*relaxatio*) of the law. Grotius' scheme is shaped by the idea of relaxation, and not the satisfaction of law. In his view, God relaxed the law to save the transgressor. Grotius further reasons that humans deserve to die because of sin (Gen. 2:17 cf. Rom. 6:23). God however decides not to execute this statute for believers because they are free from eternal condemnation and death. Yet, one should not feel that the statute is abrogated, because it is executed upon unbelievers. Grotius locates a middle course of legal proceedings between the execution of the law at one hand, and the entire abrogation of the law on the other hand. He referred to this middle position as a "tempering" (*temperamentum*) of the law, which is a "relaxing" of its claims, in order that while the law continues to exist, God can pardon some people (that is, believers). The tempering or relaxing of the law is made possible because the law in Genesis 2:17 is a positive law which is relaxable upon the pleasure of the Lawgiver. The relaxation of the law in this context applies only to the penalty of flouting the law and not its requirements.

The obvious question that comes up is that if God (by an act of will) can relax his positive law and forgive the sinner, why did he not forgive sin without inflicting any pain on Christ? In other words, what necessitated Jesus's suffering on the cross if God's forgiveness comes from another means? In response, Grotius argued that God cannot prudently remit the whole penalty of breaking his law, so far as the created world is concerned, because such an act will make the universe unsafe. Christ's death was necessary for the remission of sin not because the attributes of God require it but because the interests of the creature need it (Gelston 2019:15). That is to say, it was in the best interests of humanity that Christ came to die because forgiveness of sins if given without someone paying the penalty, would undermine the law's authority and effectiveness. The creature cannot be forgiven with safety in the interest of the creature unless God at the same time displays his anger for sin. The passion and resurrection of Christ are therefore meant to be an

exemplary display of God's hatred for sin, in connection with the remittance of the penalty of sin, something that God's attributes could have allowed him to do without Christ's death but was necessary to happen to ensure safety and prudence in the universe (Gelston 2019:15). It is in this sense that the atonement was necessary to provide grounds for forgiveness while, at the same time, retaining the structure of moral government. God could have forgiven sin without Christ's death but such an act would have been prejudicial to humanity. Therefore, "Christ performs the work of penal example, whereby he vindicates God's moral law and government without vicariously substituting himself for particular individuals, as is the case in penal substitution" (Gelston 2019:15). That is,

Christ thus satisfies the legal demands of the moral law for everyone, not as a means of releasing them from their individual and particular debts to divine retribution [but rather] to satisfy the unmet demands of the moral law, which in turn restores dignity or honor to God—the Lawmaker (Gelston 2019:15).

The moral law is therefore the measure of sin's offense. Christ atones for sin as a penal example rather than a penal substitute, in order to make it possible for God to remit the penalty of sin (Erickson 2013:807-808). It is further argued that punishment is not transferable and so Christ could not suffer the punishment due to humanity (Erickson 2013:808). What God demonstrates through Christ's death is what divine justice will require humanity to go through if they continue to sin. Grotius (cited in Pugh 2014:135) argues, "God, who has supreme power as to all things not unjust in themselves, and who is liable to no law, willed to use the torments and death of Christ for the setting up of a weighty example against the immense faults of us all." A key implication of this argument is that God does not inflict punishment as a matter of strict retribution. The punishment of sin is not because sin deserves punishment but for deterrence of further commission of sins, either by the one punished or by another person who observed the punishment. The moral governmental theory has been held also by significant figures such as Charles Finney, John Miley, and Nathanael Taylor.

Evaluating this view, one may say that Grotius did well in speaking about the need for sin to be punished. Also, the teaching that Christ's death is meant for societal transformation is necessary for the life of human society. However, his theory lacks explicit biblical foundations. Rather than engaging specific biblical texts, one finds Grotius concluding general principles of Scripture (Erickson 2013:809). Consequently, he mistakenly makes the main purpose of the atonement a subordinate purpose (Berkhof 2005:389). Also, Grotius gives an unworthy picture of God. According to this theory, God originally threatens humankind (Gen. 2:17) so as to deter them from committing sin; he does not execute the threat sentence, but later replaces it with lessons to be drawn from Christ's punishment; and yet threatens those who refuse to accept Christ (Berkhof 2005:389). The problem has to do with how sure one can be that God will actually carry out this new threat of eternal punishment. Further, the theory seems to downplay God's mercy in that God makes Christ go through unimaginable torture, not because it is some inevitably just necessity for salvation, but simply because he wants to tell humanity that: "Now let that be a lesson to you" (Pugh 2014:135). Moreover, this theory fails to account for how Old Testament saints were saved because if Christ's death is only meant to deter people from sin, then it cannot have any "retroactive significance" (Berkhof 2005:389).

2.5.3 The *Christus Victor* theory

Gustaf Aulén (1879-1977) is credited for the early development of the *Christus Victor* (Latin for "Christ the Victor") renaissance in the Postmodern era. After studying at Uppsala University, Aulén became professor of Dogmatics at Lund University in 1913, then the Bishop of Strängnäs in the Church of Sweden in 1933. He was a Lutheran theologian who made a very significant contribution to scholarly discussions on atonement through his presentations in 1930 in Sweden at the University of Uppsala (where he taught theological prolegomena) and in Germany. From his lectures, Aulén published his seminal book, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* in which he purposed to present a strictly historical account of the theology of atonement and its various hypotheses proposed by different scholars in various epochs of church history (Aulén 2003:xxi). In the opening, Aulén (2003:12) contends, "The subject of the atonement is absolutely central in Christian theology; and it is directly related to

that of the nature of God.” The *Christus Victor* is based on the idea that God and his Kingdom are in battle with evil forces attacking humankind. The title *Christus Victor* precisely depicts Christ’s role in this battle (Aulén 2003:ix). In this work, Aulén presents a central metaphor depicting a struggle between Christ and the devil, in which Christ defeats the devil and his pomp and by so doing, frees their prey (that is, lost humanity) from their grips. The scene of the triumphant victory is the Calvary cross.

Aulén (2003:11) describes the classic theory as “dualistic.” After all, it takes seriously the role of Satan in the history of God’s salvific agenda and “dramatic” because its dominant picture is that of the struggle between Christ and evil powers. In the twentieth century, Gustaf Aulén rehabilitated this ancient thought with its central idea being that by his death and resurrection, Christ “fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the ‘tyrants’ under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in him God reconciles the world to himself” (Aulén 2003:4). Thus, the *Christus Victor* motif holds that by his death and resurrection, Christ triumphed over the evil forces of the universe which held humanity in bondage, rescues his people and establishes a new relationship, “a relationship of reconciliation” between God and the universe (Aulén 2003:5). Christ’s service, love, meekness and sacrifice demonstrate Christ’s victory in the battle.

Aulén groups the various atonement views into three, namely, the “classic”, the “Latin” (satisfaction or objective) and the “ethical” views (Aulén 2003:5-6). The classic idea is the presentation of the atonement in terms of the victory won by Christ over Satan, the Latin view is the “Anselminian” view that the atonement was meant to satisfy God’s justice. Aulén (2003:14, 38) describes the Latin view as “legalistic” and problematic and traced its roots to the medieval scholasticism and medieval concept of penance, which required human beings to make an offering or payment for sin in order to satisfy God’s justice (Aulén 2003:38). The ethical (or subjective) view refers to the “Abelardian” view that the atonement signifies God’s reconciling love toward humanity. This view, according to Aulén (2003:19ff) denies both the dramatic concept of God struggling with Satan and overcoming him at the cross as well as the concepts of satisfaction, propitiation and substitution which are key to the Latin understanding of the atonement. Aulén (2003:137,

139) criticized the subjective view of atonement for being anthropocentric and ineffectual with its main weakness being the teaching that:

the forgiving and atoning work of God is made dependent upon the ethical effects in human lives; consequently, the Divine Love is not clearly set forth as a free, spontaneous love. ... the active hostility of the Divine Love toward evil has faded away and the dualistic outlook has been banished by the monism which dominates the view.

Aulén (2003:6-7) argues that he was not introducing any new doctrine because the idea of atonement as victory prevailed in the early church and, though scholars of the middle age sidelined/downplayed it (though one finds traces of it in their art and literature), was rediscovered by the Reformers. For Aulén the classic view was dominant in both the Latin and Greek Fathers. For Aulén (2003:10-11) contends that Paul espoused an atonement theology which neither aligns itself with the Latin view or humanist view; Paul's view of the atonement belongs to the classic view. He describes Irenaeus as "the first patristic writer to provide us with a clear and comprehensive doctrine of the Atonement and redemption" (Aulén 2003:17). The idea of atonement as "divine conflict and victory" dates back to patristic times but was abandoned during the Enlightenment era when Christian scholars became enemies of orthodoxy (Aulén 2003:4). For example, Irenaeus (cited in Aulén 2003:19) asks the question, "For what purpose did Christ come down from heaven?" and answers, "That he might destroy sin, overcome death, and give life to man." Irenaeus (II 23.1) elaborates this in the following quotes:

Man had been created by God that he might have life. If now, having lost life, and having been harmed by the serpent, he were not to return to life, but were to be wholly abandoned to death, then God would have been defeated, and the malice of the serpent would have overcome God's will. But since God is both invincible and magnanimous, he showed his magnanimity in correcting man [humankind], and in proving all

men [persons], as we have said; but through the Second Man he bound the strong one, and spoiled his goods, and annihilated death bringing life to man who had become subject to death. For Adam had become the devil's possession, and the devil held him under his power, by having wrongfully practised deceit upon him, and by the offer of immortality made him subject to death. For by promising that they should be as gods, which did not lie in his power, he worked death in them. Therefore, he who had taken man captive was himself taken captive by God, and man who had been taken captive was set free from the bondage of condemnation.

The *Christus Victor* motif was present in the teachings of Luther and Calvin as well. Luther (cited in Ngien 2018:286), for example, emphasized the “magnificent duel” between Christ and Satan, in which Christ won a victory over Satan and his hosts and gave this victory to his followers. Consequently, even though these enemies may accuse and terrify believers, they cannot drive true believers into despair and/or condemn them because Christ has won victory over them and has also become the righteousness of his followers (cf. Rom. 4:25). Christ’s victory means that he

takes away the law, kills my sin, destroys my death in his body, and in this way empties hell, judges the devil, crucifies him, and throws him down into hell. In other words, everything that once used to torment and oppress me Christ has set aside; he has disarmed it and made a public example of it triumphing over it in himself” (Kolb 2009:122; cf. Col. 2:15).

Christ’s death not only liberates the conscience of the sinner and makes the believer deaf to “the voice of the law that lingers, directing attention to past sins”, but also “knocks out the teeth of the law, blunts its sting and all its weapons, and utterly disables it” (Kolb 2009:122, 123). Luther (cited in Kolb 2009:123) personifies sin as “a powerful and cruel

tyrant, dominating and ruling the entire world, capturing and enslaving all people . . . a great and powerful god who devours the whole human race” who “attacks Christ, but in dueling against it, conquers and kills [it], so that righteousness prevails and lives.” Luther (2018: article II) also expresses the *Christus Victor* motif in his Large Catechism, article 2, which reads, “He has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and all evil. For before I had no Lord nor King, but was captive under the power of the devil, condemned to death, enmeshed in sin and blindness.” Therefore, in this motif, “atonement is portrayed as a salvation battled for, a powerful, real adversary overcome and a *war* actually won by the Victor God” (Smith 2016:132).

Calvin (1992:85; see also Edmondson 2004:104) also expresses the *Christus Victor* motif of the atonement when he avers that, to undergo God’s wrath means Christ “also grapples hand to hand with the armies of hell and the dread of everlasting death.” For Calvin (1992:85; see also Edmondson 2004:104), not only does Christ atone for human sins, he is also the champion sent out to overcome the enemies under whose bondage we have been. Calvin (2006:517; see also Edmondson 2004:134), considering the Hebrew text that says humans are “through fear of death subject to lifelong bondage”; Christ “by his wrestling hand to hand with the devil’s power, with the dread of death, with the pains of hell, he was victorious and triumphed over them, that in death we may not now fear those things which our Prince has swallowed up.”

Aulén (2003) distinguishes the classic theory of atonement from the other views on three grounds. First of all, the classic theory regards God himself as one who carried out the work of Atonement. God is not only active in initiating the plan of salvation, but also in ensuring that the plan materializes. This makes the classic view different from the “Anselminian” view in that in the former, the reconciliatory work is a continuous divine act while in the latter although the reconciliatory act originates from God, in effecting the plan, Christ (as man and on humanity’s behalf) makes an offering to God (Aulén 2003:5). Secondly, the classic view has a dualistic background in that it considers the reality of evil forces that are hostile to the divine will; these forces bring about the enmity between God and humanity. The dualistic view leads to a double-sidedness which makes God both the Reconciler and the Reconciled at the same time. The world now stands in a new relation

to God; God also stands in a new relation to the world (Aulén 2003:5ff). Thirdly, this theory, while considering the atonement as the work of God, does not also lose sight of the fact that it is carried out in and through humankind. For example, the Incarnation made the divine *Logos* enter into human flesh to accomplish God's saving work under the conditions of human nature.

Concerning demonic forces, Aulén (2003:85) writes,

The array of hostile forces includes also the complex of demonic 'principalities,' 'powers,' 'thrones,' 'dominions,' which rule in 'this present evil age' (Gal. 1:4) but over which Christ has prevailed. There is comparatively little direct mention of the devil, but he is without doubt regarded as standing behind the demonic hosts as their chief.

This view is supported by biblical passages—such as Colossians 2:15; 1 John 3:8; 5:19—that emphasize Jesus's victory over evil powers. Aulén's proposal suggests that Christ, through his death and resurrection, won victory over the "evil forces" of the cosmos which have dominated the world. He identifies the powers holding humanity in slavery as sin, death, the law, and demonic forces. Speaking about sin and death, Aulén (2003:67) argues that, "Sin takes the central place among the powers that hold man in bondage; all the others stand in direct relation to it. Above all, death, which is sometimes almost personified as 'the last enemy that will be destroyed' (1 Cor. 15:26 RSV), is most closely connected with sin. In the New Testament Jesus came to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8 RSV); to "destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" in order to "free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death" (Heb. 2:14-15); he lived, died and rose again to establish a new reign that would ultimately "put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:25 RSV).

Chalke and Mann (2003: 182-183, 191-192) argue that all the evil powers planned to destroy Jesus, but although the cross was a "symbol of failure and defeat", the truth is that it was "a symbol of love" indicating "just how far God as Father and Jesus as his Son are prepared to go to prove that love." Drawing on Church Fathers like Irenaeus, Gregory

of Nyssa and Origen, Chalke (2008:43-44) considers Jesus's incarnation, life, death and resurrection as his victory over sin and evil forces, which fight against humanity, and so avows that: "On the cross, Jesus does not place God's anger in taking the punishment for sin but rather absorbs its consequences and, as three days later he is raised, defeats death. It is the resurrection that finally puts the *Victor* in *Christus Victor!*" Boyd (cited in Smith 2016:129) opines that Jesus's incarnation, death and resurrection ended the cosmic war that had been existed from time immemorial. The *Christus Victor* interpretation has been called the dramatic view because of its vivid and poetic presentation of the eternal, cosmic battle between God, and Satan together with his (Satan's) evil spirits that stand in opposition to divine will and purposes for humanity (Aulén 2003:5).

This approach is criticized for Aulén's rejection of the idea of the atonement as a legal exercise, rather than an argument from Scripture. The theory fails to explain biblical data that present the suffering of Christ as a propitiation, or satisfaction (1 John 2:2). Again, because he is asserting that Christ's sacrifice was not meant to satisfy divine justice, this theory considers the Law as one of the evil things Jesus defeated through his sacrifice made on the cross. If God and Christ are fighting against the powers of darkness, they would be fighting Satan, sin, and, ironically, the Law that made sin a problem in the first place.

2.6 The extent of the atonement

Almost all Christians believe that the satisfaction rendered by the death of Christ was in itself enough for the salvation of humanity. There is, however, no consensus as to whether Christ's suffering and death was meant for the purpose of saving all humanity or only the elect. The review of atonement literature reveals that the question of the extent of the atonement has been answered from two predominant perspectives, namely the view that Jesus Christ died only for the elect and the one that holds that he died for all people. This section will discuss the extent of the atonement by examining these two predominant views. The purpose of the study (at this point) is not to determine which position is biblical but to present the arguments of each of these dominant views.

2.6.1 Limited atonement

This brings to mind the “five points of Calvinism” which is represented by the mnemonic device TULIP: Total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints (Erickson 2013:927-930). These five points are inseparable; to accept one is to accept all and to reject one is to reject all. Total depravity means, all humans are sinners and are unable to be good enough to merit salvation. This does not however mean that human beings are totally evil and have no traces of goodness in them. Rather, it means that, on their own, humans are unable to decide to follow God. Unconditional election is the idea that because of the depravity of humanity, it is God who chooses those who will be saved and leaves the rest unsaved. This means God knows people who will go to heaven and those who will go to hell. The people who he has chosen to be saved are referred to as the “elect.” The term limited atonement simply means Christ’s death was only for the elect. Irresistible grace means that all the elect will definitely be saved because God’s grace by which the elect are drawn is so strong that it cannot be resisted by the elect. The last idea of the five points of Calvinism, which is the perseverance of the saints, means those who are part of the elect will never lose their salvation after they have been saved. In other words, the elect will persevere to the end such that they will never lose their salvation once they have experienced it. For Calvin, those who claim to have turned their lives toward God and then stop living that way were never truly saved as they might have claimed.

Limited (particular or definite) atonement refers to the belief that Christ died for the elect only, but not for everyone in the world (Berkhof 2007:87; Elwell 2001:115). It is further argued that there is no single person among the elect that will ultimately fall short of salvation. Writing about the Reformed position, Berkhof (2005:394) states, “The Reformed position is that Christ died for the purpose of actually and certainly saving the elect, and the elect only. This is the equivalent of saying that he died for the purpose of saving only those to whom he actually applies the benefits of his redemptive work.” It is important to note that Reformed Theology emerged out of John Calvin and his followers after the Reformation. Elwell (2001:115) traces the root of this theory to post-Reformation implications of the satisfaction theory and the doctrine of election. Palmer (2014:50)

defines the doctrine of limited atonement as “Christ died only for the believer, the elect, only for those who will actually be saved and go to heaven.” Berkhof (2007:87) also states that biblical data on atonement reveals that Christ’s death is meant for the benefit of a certain qualified number of people (cf. Luke 19:10; Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13; Eph. 1:7).

A number of arguments have been outlined in defense of limited atonement. The first is that the Bible makes it clear in many passages that only those who qualify in a certain way will benefit from the atonement offered by Christ. For example, the Bible says that Christ died for “his sheep” (John 10:11, 15), “his church” (Acts 20:28), “the elect” (Rom. 8:32-35), and “his people” (Matt. 1:21). The second argument is that though God is capable of saving everyone, he will not save all people because the Bible is clear that those who reject Christ are lost (1 John 5:12). If those who reject Christ are not saved then one may reason that Christ did not die for everyone (Elwell 2001:115). Thirdly, it is argued that if Christ died for everyone, then it will be unjust for God to send people to hell for their own sin because to do that makes God punish the same offense twice, first punishing Christ on the cross and then punishing the sinner in hell for the same sin (Elwell 2001:115). Grudem (2011:594) says, “For God could not condemn to eternal punishment anyone whose sins are already paid for: that would be demanding double payment, and it would therefore be unjust.” Pink (2015b:182) writes, “And it certainly is not to the glory of God to suppose that he designed to save any that perish, for that would show his benevolent purpose was frustrated and would proclaim a disappointed and defeated deity.” Based on this logic, it is safe to conclude that on the cross Christ paid for the sins of the elect and in hell, the “non-elect” will pay for their sins.

It is argued, in the fourth place, that to perceive Christ as dying for everyone logically leads to universalism (the idea that all people will eventually be saved), an idea that advocates of general atonement do not generally accept (Elwell 2001:115). Further still, it is argued that Christ’s intercessory work (particularly his priestly prayer in John 17:9, in which he prayed for those the Father has given him) supports limited atonement. Kuiper (cited in Erickson 2013:844) argues that “Since Christ prayed exclusively for those whom the Father had given him, it follows that they are the only ones for whom he died.” Hodge

(2016:223-225) takes this argument further by comparing Christ's priestly role to that of the Aaronic priest saying that the Old Testament priest interceded for only those for whom he made sacrifices, so Jesus also made a sacrifice for only those on whose behalf he interceded before the Father. Therefore, Christ cannot "be assumed to intercede for those who do not actually receive the benefits of his redemption" (Hodge 2016:223).

In opposition to this view, attention has been drawn to passages which teach that Christ died for the world (John 1:29; 3:16; 1 John 2:2; 4:14). It is argued that the word "world" refers to every individual who is part of the human world. There are also passages which say that Christ died for all humans (Rom. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:4, 6; Tit. 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:9).

2.6.2 Unlimited atonement

Those who argue against the limited atonement position opt for unlimited atonement theory, which is examined briefly below. The roots of this view are found in the Reformed doctrine of predestination. This view holds that by his death and resurrection, Christ atoned for the sin of everyone though the benefits of his atonement can be enjoyed by only those who accept the Christian gospel (Elwell 2001:115). Arminian/Wesleyan scholars maintain that "the atonement is unlimited in its invitation but limited in its application" (Houdmann 2014:47). In other words, God calls all people to experience his salvation; yet, only those who respond in faith to the gospel message benefit from the atonement. In this sense, one may consider salvation as universal in the provisional sense, but conditional in its application to an individual person. The universal aspect of the atonement signifies its sufficiency in dealing with the sin of the entire human race.

In support of this view, references have been made to three groups of biblical texts. The first group comprises those that speak of the atonement in universal terms. Here, one may cite text such as John 3:16 where John says "whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life" as well as John 1:29 where he also says Christ is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Paul's assertion that God is reconciling the world onto himself (2 Cor. 5:19) and that Christ "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6) are also considered as supporting the unlimited scope of the

atonement. The second category consists of texts which refer to the universal proclamation of the Christian gospel. They include Matthew 24:14; 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47, cf. also Mark 1:5; 16:16; John 3:36; Acts 17:30). Thirdly, some Scriptures clearly state that Christ died not only for those who may be saved but also for those who may perish (see Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:11; Heb. 10:29).

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the study sought to answer the question: "How has the Christian church come to understand the nature and benefits of Christ's atonement?" The study has revealed that the death of Christ has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. The limited scope of the research allowed only a brief examination of theories such as Irenaeus' recapitulation theory, which perceives the atonement as a reversal of the wrong decisions of Adam by Christ, the Second Adam; Origen's ransom theory with its emphasis on God's use of Christ death as a price paid to Satan to obtain legal rights over imprisoned humanity; Anselm's satisfaction theory which says Christ's death was to satisfy God, Abelard's moral influence theory which contends that Christ's death was meant to influence humankind toward moral improvement; Reformers' penal substitutionary theory which contends that Christ died as a substitute for sinful humanity; Grotius' moral governmental theory which states that Christ's death is meant to awaken human love toward God, and Aulen's *Christus Victor* theory which sees the atonement as the victory over Satan and his forces. These have been discussed as representatives of the major atonement views required to provide the needed socio-historical context for the study. It will be observed from the discussions that the various theologians expressed views that were either a refinement of what their predecessors held or views that were to be held by their successors. Discussions on the theories of atonement were followed by a brief discussion of two major views on the extent of the atonement. The limited atonement view holds that Christ's atoned for the elect or those who God chose in eternal past to save. The unlimited atonement view contends that Christ died for all human beings but only those who will believe the Christian gospel will be saved.

To end this chapter, the study draws a few conclusions from the discussions. First of all, it could be deduced that one may by faith appropriate the benefits of the atonement and yet not have a proper theory of explaining it, or to hold a proper or a correct theory of the atonement and still not have experienced the saving faith. Another key deduction is that while there may be valid objects about the various theories of atonement, it must be noted that each theory has some truth to contribute to the holistic understanding of the atonement. Therefore, the study of atonement must be approached, on the one hand, expecting to find some truth in all the views that have been espoused in an attempt to make meaning of it, and on the other hand, with a conviction that after all that people have said about the subject, there remains other areas of the subject that have not been explored, and doubtless, the future brings discoveries. Thirdly, most of the errors found in the various atonement theories are mainly the result of undue emphasis upon one of the essential elements of the atonement over the others. The idea of satisfaction or propitiation, the need to uphold the dignity of the divine government and the concept of divine love as the drawing force are among the vital elements of the atonement. Finally, in dealing with the various theories of atonement, one should not feel compelled to choose anyone of them as containing all the facts about atonement, while rejecting all the others as being totally false. As the study has shown, the holistic character of the atonement can hardly be substantiated by focusing on a particular theory.

With this background, the study now proceeds to examine the biblical foundations of the subject of sin and atonement.

CHAPTER THREE

ATONEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

3.1 Introduction

Atonement is an Old Testament concept that developed through different epochs until the New Testament period when it was perfected. Therefore, a study of the biblical concept of atonement cannot be conducted without first tracing its Old Testament roots. This chapter examines the concept of atonement in the Old Testament through exegetical studies of three key texts, namely, Leviticus 16:1-28, Psalm 51:1-12 and Isaiah 52:13—53:12. Since the subject of atonement presupposes human sinfulness, a proper understanding of atonement cannot be achieved without a prior understanding of sin. Cognizant of this, the researcher finds it imperative to begin this chapter with a brief study of the origin and consequences of sin before moving on to examine the selected passages.

3.2 The origin and consequences of sin

3.2.1 The creation of humankind

There are at least two passages in Genesis that account for the creation of humankind. The first passage deals with the creation of both male and female in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28). The writer uses the Hebrew verbs *עָשָׂה* (“to make”, v.26) and *בָּרָא* (“to create”, v. 27[3x]) to describe the creation of humankind (Lewis and Demarest 2010:28). Here, humankind is said to be God’s image-bearer, making humans distinct from lower animals. The *imago Dei* (or the doctrine that humans are created in the image of God) forms the basis upon which God charged humanity to have dominion over the earth and all living creatures (v. 28).

Grudem (2001:445-447) outlines many dimensions of the *imago Dei*. First, there is a moral aspect that gives humans a sense of right and wrong and hence makes them responsible for their actions. Second, there is a spiritual aspect which means humans are

not only physical beings but spiritual ones as well. The mental aspect gives humans the ability to think and make reasonable decisions. In addition, there is a relational dimension of the *imago Dei* by which humans relate to God, other humans and the environment.

The second passage on the creation of humans (Gen. 2:7, 18-23) employs the verb יָצַר (“to form” or “to shape”) to describe how God fashioned Adam out of the ground and breathed into his nostrils to make him a living soul (v. 7; Moskala 2011:47). Verses 18-23 focus on the creation of one whom Adam called הַאִשָּׁה (woman) because she was taken out of אָדָם (man). The text depicts God as an architect by the use of the verb בָּנָה (“to build,” v. 22) in describing how the woman (Eve) was created from one of Adam’s ribs.

After creating humans, God put them on probation in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Gen. 2:8, 15). God placed two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—in the center of the Garden (2:9) and gave humans the liberty to eat from all the trees except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17) (see Pink 2015a:20). The tree of life signified the communication of divine life to humanity as well as humanity’s constant dependence on God whereas the tree of the knowledge of good and evil signified an intellectual knowledge about evil, not an experiential one (see Thompson 2012:81).

3.2.2 The Fall of humanity

One of the key attributes of God is holiness (Isa. 6:3), which makes it impossible for him to be the author of sin (see Gen. 1:31; Job 34:10; Berkhof 2005:220). How then did sin enter the human world? According to the Bible, sin began in the angelic world when legions of angels, led by Lucifer, rebelled against God (cf. 1 John 3:8; 1 Tim. 3:6). Concerning the human world, sin began with the transgression of Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-24). The historicity of the Fall is attested not only by the many references that other parts of Scripture give to the details of the Garden narrative (Job 34:15; Isa. 65:25; Ezek. 28; John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13-14) but also by the emphasis laid upon what really happened there (Job 31:33; Ezek. 28; Hos. 6:7; Matt. 19:4-5).

In the Genesis account of the Fall, the tempter comes from the spirit world, acts through the *נחש* (serpent) (Gen. 3:1; see Rev. 12:9) and tempts Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit with the promise that they would be like God (Gen. 3:5). The temptation had a threefold element, including, sensual desire (she sees that the fruit is “good to eat”), aesthetic desire (the fruit is “pleasing to the eye”) and intellectual desire (the promise of the knowledge of good and evil) (3:6). Eve, after yielding to the temptation, made Adam also eat the forbidden fruit, and this made both of them become aware of their nakedness for which reason they put some fig leaves together to cover themselves (3:6-7).

The account of the Fall underscores the fact that though Adam and Eve were created without sin, they were capable of sinning. If so, what made the planting of the forbidden tree in the Garden a necessity in the life of humanity? As stated earlier, humanity, being God’s image-bearer, is a self-conscious, self-determining, moral agent with the capacity for taking moral actions. Moral action in turn requires a character-determining law—a law that the subject may or may not obey. This law forms the basis to which either praise or blame is attached (Geisler 2011:745-747). The absence of such a moral quality would lead to the destruction of the character of the moral being and hence, make humans live like robots, without free will (Geisler 2011:745ff). If every choice that one is capable of making belongs to only one category (say wrong or right, good or bad), then there will not be any basis for praise or blame (Geisler 2011:745ff). The point therefore is that human beings could only enjoy their moral nature through the existence of alternatives choices.

Further, it was through Adam’s and Eve’s free will that the human state of holiness could be tested and perfected. In the same way, the temptation was an occasion to develop and perfect the moral life of humanity. The obvious conclusion is that though the will of humankind was holy and inclined in the right direction at the beginning, there was also the tendency of this will reversing its course and moving toward the opposite direction. Humanity’s holiness was susceptible to compromise because humankind developed desires which could lead to sin.

Sin brought serious consequences, some of which are outlined below.

3.2.3 Consequences of the Fall of humanity

Several consequences of the Fall of humanity can be noted and examined. In the first place, the Fall affected the perfect relationship that humankind had with God. Consequently, Adam and Eve hid from God after sinning (Gen. 3:8-10). Sin erected a wall of separation between humanity and God, where previously there had been none. The only way reconciliation could take place was for God to mercifully and graciously visit humanity in the form of a human being and as a human representative, not only to obey God perfectly but also to shed his blood to pay for the penalty of humanity's sin. God's plan for redemption is announced for the first time in his promise of a Savior in the form of "the seed of the woman" who would destroy the works of the devil (3:15). God foreshadowed the blood that would be shed on the cross by shedding animal blood to obtain a skin to cover Adam's and Eve's nakedness and shame after the Fall (3:21).

Secondly, the Fall destroyed the human-human relationship. Adam's reference to Eve (after the Fall) as "the woman you [God] put here with me" (3:12) rather than his own earlier description "the bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (2:23) signifies the negative impact the Fall had on human-human relationship. The results of this marred human-human relationship include competition, selfishness and wickedness that characterized the world soon after the Fall (4:8, 9, 23).

The third effect of the Fall was the destruction of humankind's relationship with the environment. This happened when God declared that the earth, which was originally created to produce its bounty for the benefit of humanity, would now yield its fruits only with great human labor (3:17-19). God's purpose for human work, however, was only hindered, but not destroyed.

Also, the Fall resulted in a change in Adam's and Eve's residence. They were driven from the Garden of Eden (3:23-24), the Garden symbolizing a place of constant communion with God, and expression of fuller life and greater blessedness that was in store for humanity (Berkhof 2005:226). The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden was meant to prevent them from eating the tree of life, and thus living forever.

Finally, because of the Fall, every human being (except Jesus Christ) inherited a sinful nature from Adam. Theologians refer to this inherited sinful nature as “original sin.” This means that Adam’s posterity became guilty before God when Adam sinned in the Garden. The issue of “original sin” will be examined further later in this study.

3.3 Key biblical terms for sin

This section outlines some key Hebrew and Greek terms for sin as a way of giving an overview of the biblical concept of sin. The Hebrew term *חָטָא* appears about 293 times in biblical literature with the basic meaning “fall short of” or “miss the mark” (Judg. 20:16; Prov. 8:35ff; Job 5:24), though it can also mean “missing the way or the objective” (Prov. 19:20; 1 Sam. 2:25), guilt (cf. Isa. 29:20-21), an offense against either God (Lev. 4:14) or another person (Gen. 31:36) (Strong 2009:1573; Vine 2015:363-364).

From the Arabic word which means “disjointed, ill-regulated, abnormal and wicked”, the word *עָשָׂה* depicts sin as “wickedness” or “guilty” specifically in the sense of departing from the right path (cf. Exod. 9:27; Deut. 25:2; Job 3:17; Isa. 57:20-21; Jer. 5:26) (Vine 2015:364). It is used specifically for murderers (2 Sam. 4:11) and to express the “guilt of death” (Num. 35:31).

The word *נָסָה*, literally meaning “breaking up” or “ruin” (Norman 2007:421), is another Hebrew term for sin. The shades of the meaning of *נָסָה* include that which is “bad”, “evil” or sin that is hurtful (1 Sam. 30:22; Esth. 7:6; Job 35:12; cf. Psa. 10:15), calamities or that which is morally wrong (Gen. 3:5; 38:7; Judg. 11:27), evil words (Prov. 15:26), distress (Neh. 2:17), adversity (1 Sam. 10:19; Psa. 94:13; Eccl. 7:14), evil thoughts (Gen. 6:5), evil actions (Deut. 17:5, Neh. 13:17); something that is unpleasant because of the pain (Gen. 47:9; Exod. 33:4; cf. Gen. 37:2), sorrow (Gen. 44:29; Neh. 2:2), wretchedness (Num. 11:15), affliction it produces (Num. 11:11); something that is defective and not suitable for sacrifice (Lev. 27:10; Deut. 17:1) (Norman 2007:421; Vine 2015:365).

From the word *נִמְצָה* meaning “to be bent, bowed down, twisted, perverted” or “to twist” *נִמְצָה* means “iniquity” with respect to “injustice; unfairness; hostile; adverse” (Vine 2015:362). In relation to sin, *נִמְצָה* means “perversion of life (a twisting out of the right way), a perversion

of truth (a twisting into error), or a perversion of intent (a bending of rectitude into willful disobedience)” (Vine 2015:362). In most of its occurrences *חַטָּא* occurs in parallelism with other sin-related words like *חַטָּא* (“sin”) and *עֲוֹן* (“transgression”) (1 Sam. 20:1; Job 14:17) (Vine 2015:362).

Another Hebrew word for sin is *מַגֵּן* which means “evil; trouble; misfortune; mischief; grievance; wickedness; labor” (Vine 2015:361). The Arabic cognate means “to get tired from hard work” while the Aramaic equivalent means “‘make’ or ‘do,’ with no necessary connotation of burdensome labor” (Vine 2015:362). Generally speaking, *מַגֵּן* denotes “either the trouble and suffering which sin causes the sinner or to the trouble that he inflicts upon others” (see Jer. 20:18 where it signifies self-inflicted sorrow) (Vine 2015:362).

The word *חַטָּא* depicts sin as “iniquity; vanity; sorrow” (Vine 2015:360). Though scholars do not agree as to its root, there is a general consensus that *חַטָּא* means “the absence of all that has true worth” and hence denotes “moral worthlessness,” as in “the actions of wrongdoing, evil devising, or false speaking” (Vine 2015:360-361). It also implies a “painful burden or difficulty”—that is, “that sin is a toilsome, exhausting load of ‘trouble and sorrow,’ which the offender causes for himself or others” (see Psa. 90:10; Prov. 22:8; Vine 2015:361). In addition, *חַטָּא* may represent a crime or offense which is punishable by law (Mic. 2:1) or deception (Psa. 36:3).

The Greek word *ἁμαρτία* (*harmatia*) is one of the most common found words for sin in the New Testament. From it comes the theological expression for the doctrine of sin, Hamartiology. It occurs 170 times and means “missing the mark” just like the Hebrew word *חַטָּא*. *ἁμαρτία* denotes “failing to meet God’s revealed moral, ethical, and ritual standards” (Renn 2014:907). The New Testament presents sin as “violating God’s laws” in passages such as Matthew 1:21; Mark 1:5; John 8:2ff; 1 Timothy 5:24 and James 2:9. Other Greek terminologies include *παράπτωμα* which means “trespass” (cf. Matt. 6:14-15); *ἀνομία*, meaning iniquity, lawlessness (Matt. 7:13; 1 John 3:4); *παράβασις*, denoting transgression (Rom. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:14) and *ἀσέβεια*, meaning ungodliness (Rom. 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:9).

Having considered the origin of sin and the biblical view on the meaning of sin, the study now continues to conduct exegetical studies of selected passages on atonement.

3.4 Exegesis of Leviticus 16:1-28

3.4.1 Historical context of Leviticus 16:1-28

The English title “Leviticus” is derived from the Latin version of the Greek term *Leuitikon*, meaning “that which concerns the priests” or “the book pertaining to the Levites” (Wenham 1979:3; Rooker 2000:31). Like those of the other books of the Pentateuch (or the Torah), the Hebrew title for Leviticus derives from the initial words of the book, thus *אָרָא*, meaning “And he called” (Longman and Dillard 2009:81). Leviticus records laws that form a sequel to those revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai after God freed Israel from their Egyptian bondage; thus, it continues from the instruction and subsequent completion of the tabernacle which ended the book of Exodus.

The authorship and composition of Leviticus are integrally related to the composition of the entire Pentateuch. Traditionally, Moses is considered the author of the Pentateuch (Rooker 2000:31). Mosaic authorship is supported by the Pentateuch itself (see Exod. 17:14; Exod. 24:4), other parts of the Old Testament (for example 1 Kings 2:3) and the New Testament (cf. John 1:17 cf. Acts 13:39; Mark 12:26; Luke 24:27; John 5:46-47; Acts 15:21). However, a critical biblical scholarship that emerged in the eighteenth century challenged the traditional view base, for example, on the evidence of multiple accounts of the same event (for instance, two creation accounts; see Genesis 1:1-2-3 and 2:4-25), discrepancies in Pentateuchal records (among others, the use of different terms for God; read Exod. 6:2ff with Gen. 4:1, 26), and anachronism (like the record of Moses’ own death in Deut. 34:5).

Amid the debate, Julius Wellhausen proposed a theory which holds that the Pentateuch is a composite of four separate, complete, and coherent documents: (1) the Yahwist (abbreviated J from the German word for Yahwist), (2) the Elohist (E), (3) the Deuteronomist (D) and the Priestly (P), together (JEDP) (Rooker 2000:31). The J source which prefers the name YHWH is believed to have been composed in about 850 BCE

with traces of early Israelite religious traditions (such as the anthropomorphic view of God) (Rooker 2000:31). The E source (composed approximately 750 BCE) shows a preference for the name Elohim and portrays God in a more transcendent sense than the J source while the D (Deuteronomistic) source (written near the time of Josiah's reform in about 621 BCE) is the clearest independent source (Rooker 2000:31-32). The P source is believed to have been composed for the post-exilic Jews between the mid and late fifth century BCE with a particular interest in stories and laws related to priests (Rooker 2000:32). Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis connects the Priestly author(s) with the book of Leviticus because of the concerns this book shows for priestly matters (Longman and Dillard 2009:82).

A careful study of literature on the authorship of the Pentateuch leads to the conclusion that Moses wrote part of the Pentateuch and his work went through a series of developments until it reached its present stage. Moses most likely documented his portion during the wilderness wanderings of Israel while redactors of the fifth century revised Moses' documents and added their own documents to give the book its present form.

3.4.2 Literary context and structure of Leviticus 16:1-28

The book of Leviticus is located in the middle of the Pentateuch between Exodus and Numbers, with its immediate context being Israel's deliverance from their Egyptian bondage (Exod. 1-18). Leviticus is a part of a bigger document on regulations that starts from Exodus 25:1 and ends at Numbers 10:10, covering events that took place when Israel was camped at the foot of Mount Sinai (Lasor, Hubbard and Bush 1996:81). It was here (at Mount Sinai) that God made his covenant with the Israelites, gave them Laws about their daily lives and their worship system, among others. God's instructions concerning the building of the Tent of Meeting (beginning in Exod. 25) reached a climax in Exodus 40:34-38 with the glory of God descending from the top of Mount Sinai to rest on the Tent of Meeting. Accordingly, the book of Exodus ends with YHWH changing his place of abode from the mountain to the holy sanctuary (Exod. 40:34-35), so that Moses would no longer have to go to the mountain to receive messages from God for Israel but

wait upon him (God) to come and speak to him (Moses) directly at the Tent of Meeting, his (God's) presence shown by the appearance of a cloud.

Leviticus seeks to provide instructions on how Israel, the people who had been called to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6 RSV) under the Sinai Covenant, must live under God's grace in accordance with his statutes. The book divides conveniently into five sections, namely, chapters 1-7, focusing on how worship should be conducted by the covenant people; chapters 8-10, dealing with the consecration of priesthood; chapters 11-15, with its focus on ceremonial purity; chapter 16 which focuses on the rites of the Day of Atonement; and chapters 17-26, with a focus on the Holiness Code, plus supplementary vows in chapter 27 (Micklem 1956:3). Leviticus 16 serves as a transition between the previous sections (1-7, sacrifices and offerings; 8-10, ordination; and 11-15, purity and impurity) and the "Holiness Code" of chapters 17–26, and therefore "has a pivotal function in the book, both structurally and theologically" (Rooker 2000:60). Being a book on Law, Leviticus has a considerable amount of material regarding sin and its types as well as ways by which atonement can be made for sin.

In this regard, Leviticus 16 (especially verses 1-28) stands out in its treatment of cultic purity especially in relation to the ritual of *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement. The first ten verses comprise presuppositions, preparations and a summary of the rituals performed on the Day of Atonement. Verses 1-2 prohibit Aaron from entering the Holy place except during the Day of Atonement. Verses 3-5 state some items that are necessary for Aaron for the ceremony: a young bullock as a sin offering, a ram for the burnt offering and sacred garments, including, a linen coat, linen breeches, linen girdle, and linen miter. The congregation is told to bring two he-goats as a sin offering, and a ram as a burnt offering. In 16:6 Aaron makes atonement for himself using his bullock as a sin offering (with details of the process stated in v. 11ff). In 16:7-10 the two goats are placed at the door of the Tent of Meeting (16:7); and then lots are cast upon them to select one as a sin offering for YHWH and the other for Azazel (16:8), sent into the desert (16:10).

Verses 11-24 give a detailed description of the ritual itself and give fuller instructions concerning how Aaron is to use the different sacrificial materials; verses 11-14 concern the atonement for Aaron and his house, including killing the bullock, and sprinkling the blood once on the front of the top covering and seven times in front of it. The ritual for the first sin-offering goat for the congregation is presented in verses 15-19. Verses 20-22 focus on the ritual with the second sin-offering goat for the congregation. The goat is brought in the midst of the people (v. 20), a ceremony of the transfer of guilt takes place through the laying of Aaron's hands upon the goat's head (v. 21) and the live goat is sent to the desert for it to carry the guilt to an uninhabited land (v. 22). The next two verses (23-24) conclude the whole ceremony where Aaron removes his linen clothes in the Tent of Meeting, puts them down there, bathes in the holy place and again wears his usual attire and finally brings the burnt offering meant for himself and his people. Additional directions concerning the consumption of the sin offering (v. 25), and the purification rites for those who took the second goat to the desert (v. 26) before entering the camp are given. Instructions on the burning of the fat, flesh and dung of the animal used for the sin-offering, and then the blood that was brought into the (inner) sanctuary (outside the camp) are also given (v. 28).

The final part of the chapter (vv. 29-34) forms an original and independent law (except 34b). In this sub-section are additional directions concerning the Day of Atonement, particularly, the day appointed for this solemn feast (v.29), the relationship between the atonement ceremony and the Sabbath (v. 32), and duties of various people on this day (v. 33), among others.

Writing about its genre, Levine (cited in Lavatai 2016:200) notes that ritual texts such as Leviticus 16 may be either prescriptive (with a focus on instructions about how, why, and when rituals are to be performed) or descriptive (dealing with the recording of the performances of rituals and rites). The former is a road map that one follows in order to satisfy a deity with regards to cultic rituals while the latter is a narrative of what happened in the past. Obviously, Leviticus 16—with its focus on instructions given to Aaron through Moses about what he (Aaron) must do on the Day of Atonement to maintain and restore Israel's covenant relationship with God—is prescriptive (Lavatai 2016:201). Of the several

kind of laws contained in the Pentateuch, Leviticus focuses on ceremonial, symbolic of cleanness and purity and sacrificial laws for the Day of Atonement, moral laws for the everyday life of the entire community, and a sacred calendar law describing how a Holy Day should be observed.

The study adopts the following structure given by Lavatai (2016:211).

Narrative Frame	(vv. 1-2a)
First part of YHWH's speech to Moses	(vv. 2b-28)
Preparations for the ritual	(vv. 2b-5)
Taboos of the holy place	(v. 2b)
Provisions for priests	(vv. 3-4)
Provisions for the people	(v. 5)
Lots rite	(vv. 6-10)
The first part of the ceremony: Purifying the sanctuary	
The sin offering	(vv. 11-19)
Second part of the ceremony: Purifying the community	
The scapegoat rite	(vv. 20-22)
Conclusion of the ceremony	(vv. 23-28)

The above background serves as the basis for the close reading of the text in the next section.

3.4.3 Close reading of Leviticus 16:1-28

3.4.3.1 Narrative frame (v. 1-2a)

1. וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה וַיִּמָּתוּ:

2. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ וְאֵל־יִבְיָא בְּכָל־עֵת אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבַּיִת לְפָרֶקֶת אֶל־פְּנֵי הַכִּפֹּרֶת.

אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאֲרֹן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בְעֵנָן אֲרָאָה עַל־הַכִּפֹּרֶת:

Verse 1 places the ceremony of Day of Atonement in a particular historical context by indicating that YHWH spoke to Moses, after the death Aaron's two sons who approached him in an unworthy and unauthorized manner (cf. Lev. 10:1-2). The expression *וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה* ("YHWH spoke/said to Moses/Aaron") appears many times in Leviticus (about 38 times) to signify that what follows is a divine speech (Rooker 2000:51-52). According to Milgrom (1991:1011) Leviticus 16 follows upon chapter 10; however, the redactor inserted chapters 11-15 to specify ways by which the sanctuary can be defiled (15:31) so as to make the purification rite of chapter 16 a necessity. The pollution of the sanctuary caused doubly by Nadab's and Abihu's sin and in their death by their corpses, connects well with the procedure for purging the sanctuary stipulated in chapter 16 (Milgrom 1991:1011). Therefore, the author is contrasting the unauthorized way by which Aaron's sons approached YHWH and died, with the proper way by which the high priest was to come into the presence of God and not die (Wenham 1979:228).

3.4.3.2 Preparations for the ritual (Lev. 16:2b-5)

3.4.3.2.1 Taboos of the holy place (Lev. 16:2b)

The expression *דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אַחִיךָ* ("tell your brother Aaron") signifies that though the instruction about Israel's sacrificial system and, indeed, the whole instructions regarding the priestly duties are communicated to Aaron, YHWH has chosen Moses as the mediator for this divine communication, except few cases (10:8; see also Num. 18:1, 8, 20) where Aaron is addressed directly.

Milgrom (1991:1012) opines that expression *בְּכָל־עֵת* (“at all times”; cf. Exod. 18:22, 26; Psa. 34:2) together with *אֶל־בֵּא* (“not to come”) constitute a warning (rather than an apodictic prohibition) meant to limit the number of times Aaron could go into the Holy Place. This instruction parallels the Akan religious tradition where a god instructs the traditional priest, “Do not come at will into the shrine, come only when it is necessary.” The limitation on the number of times Aaron could visit the Holy Place is meant not only to ensure that the holiness of the Holy Place is not abused but also to underscore the need for Aaron to adequately prepare himself spiritually, emotionally, and physically before entering the Holy Place to perform his priestly functions.

The Jewish tabernacle had three chambers, including the Courtyard, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Though *הַקֹּדֶשׁ* (“the Holy Place”) may refer either to “the Most Holy Place” behind the veil or the “sanctuary area” in general (see Exod. 26:33 where *הַקֹּדֶשׁ־שֵׁמִים* is designated for “the Most Holy Place” while *הַקֹּדֶשׁ* refers to the holy place in general), in the present context it refers to the Most Holy Place, the innermost shrine where the ark was kept, where YHWH dwelt to meet with his people (Harris 1990:589). This position is supported by the description *מִבֵּית לְפָרֹקֶת* (“inside the veil”) which is another expression for the adytum and a common way of referring to the Holy of Holies (vv. 12, 15; Exod. 26:33; Num. 18:7).

The word *אָרוֹן* (“box” or “chest”) refers to the Ark of the Covenant (or the Ark of the Testimony), an acacia box in which the two stone tablets on which God wrote the Ten Commandments were kept (Exod. 25:16; 31:18). The account of the construction of the box, with pure gold covering its inner and outer surfaces and gold rings as support for carrying it, is found in Exodus 25:10-22. The Ark was kept in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle. Jewish tradition has it that the Hebrews carried the Ark throughout their wilderness experience until they reached the Promised Land. Later, the Ark got lost and so post-exilic Jews did not have this Ark.

The word *כַּפֹּרֶת* (“mercy seat” [RSV] or “atonement cover” [NIV]) is derived from a root meaning “to cover,” which may be understood as “covering” or forgiving of sin or just a “covering” or “lid” on top of the Covenant Ark and it is related to *כָּפַר* which means “to

propitiate” or “to make atonement” (Lindsey 1983:196; Harris 1990:589; Watts 2007:130). The mercy seat was a massive gold plate (3.75 feet by 2.25 feet) which served as a lid for the Ark and formed one piece with two cherubim that rose from it above the Ark, “kneeling and facing each other with bowed heads and outstretched wings” (Milgrom 1991:1014).

3.4.3.2.2 Provisions for priests (Lev. 16:3-4)

3. *בְּזָאת יבא אהרן אל־הקֹדֶשׁ בְּפָר בֶּן־בָּקָר לְחַטָּאת וְאֵיל לְעֹלָה: .*

כִּתְנֵת־בַּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבַּשׁ וּמְכַנְסֵי־בַד יִהְיוּ עַל־בְּשָׂרוֹ וּבְאֲבָנָיִם בַּד יִחַגֵּר וּבְמִצְנָפֶת בַּד יִצְנַף בְּגָדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְרַחֵץ

בְּמִים אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ וּלְבָשֶׁם: . 4.

The word *בְּזָאת* (“this is how”) underscores the fact that God is about to give instruction concerning the priestly duties of Aaron, in this case, the materials required for the cleansing of the sanctuary were about to be supplied (vv. 3-5). The first preparation for the Day of Atonement is made by Aaron (the principal celebrant). In preparing for the Day of Atonement, the chosen sacrificial victims were brought to the sanctuary “a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.” Aaron is expected to go into the sanctuary along with a bullock for his sin-offering, and a ram for his burnt-offering—both of these for himself, as an individual—and two goats and another ram for the people (v. 4). In the Old Testament, Israel was instructed to bring offerings periodically (sometimes daily, Exod. 29:38) to God as a means of atoning for their sins and maintaining their relationship with him. Two of such offerings, mentioned in the present text, are examined briefly below.

The word *חַטָּאת* (translated “sin offering”) is used mostly in Exodus (29:14, 36) through Numbers (15:24) and in Ezekiel (40:39; 44:27) to mean both “to sin” and “the sin offering” in the ceremonial instructions of the Law of Moses. Every Israelite whether a commoner or a high priest was expected to make the sin offering. The substance used for the offering was informed by the worshipper’s social status. The poor could use two doves (Lev. 5:7) or a tenth of an ephah of fine flour (5:11; cf. Heb. 9:22); those in the middle class could offer a female goat (Lev. 4:28) or a lamb (4:32); a leader offered a male goat (4:23), while the high priest, as well as the congregation, offered a young bull (4:3, 14).

Three circumstances necessitated the sin offering. First of all, it was required from people such as a new mother after childbirth (Lev. 12:6-8), those cured of leprosy (Lev. 14:13-17, 22, 31), those cured of abscesses and hemorrhaging (15:15, 30), a Nazirite who has defiled himself through contact with a corpse (Num. 6 6:11, 14, 16) in order to make them ceremonially clean. Secondly, it was required for an unintentional transgression of a prohibition, that either has brought guilt upon the individual or the community (Lev. 15:25-29) (Vine 2015:361). Without repentance on the part of the sinner, however, the offering was not efficacious (Num. 15:30). Finally, the sin offering was given at each of the Hebrew festivals including the Passover (28:22-24), the Feast of Weeks (28:30), the Feast of booths (29:16, 19), the new Moon festival (28:15), the festival of Trumpets (29:5), and the Day of Atonement (29:11).

Milgrom (1991:253) challenges the traditional translation of *תִּשְׁלַח* as “sin offering” on contextual, morphological and etymological grounds. He rather suggests the expression “purification offering”, arguing that the present context shows that *תִּשְׁלַח* is connected with offerings concerning ritual purity such as those a new mother offers after childbirth (Lev. 12:6-8) and the dedication of the new altar (8:15; see Exod. 29:36-37). He argues further that a grammatical parsing of *תִּשְׁלַח* shows that its usage is a derivative of the verbal form that means “cleansing, decontaminating, purifying,” (cf. Ezek. 43:22, 26; Psa. 51:9) in contrast with the other verbal form which means “to sin.” Furthermore, the expression “waters of *תִּשְׁלַח*” in Numbers 8:7 suggests that *תִּשְׁלַח* has an exclusive purifying function (see also Num. 19:19; Ezek. 26:25). Milgrom concludes that the only valid translation of *תִּשְׁלַח* is “purification offering.”

On the contrary, Anderson (cited in DeBroeck 2017:87) argues that Milgrom’s failure to acknowledge the role of the *תִּשְׁלַח* offering in removing human sin makes his position not fully convincing. Anderson draws attention to the biblical teaching that *תִּשְׁלַח* ritual makes atonement for the sin of the worshipper: “...the priest shall make atonement for them [the assembly], and they shall be forgiven” (Lev. 4:20 RSV; see also 4:26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13). Kiuchi (1987:35) also contends that it is in the ritual action (not in the experience of guilt) that the offender is forgiven: “Sequentially forgiveness (*נסלח*) is always granted after the *kipper* [כִּפֶּר]-acts and never before them (Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10,13).” he further

argues that the *kipper*-act focuses directly on sin (in terms of its punitive consequence) in addition to the pollution of the *sancta* (sanctuary) brought about by sin.

The researcher's opinion is that *תאֲחִיֶּה* carries the sense of both offerings for sin and purification. The way the term *תאֲחִיֶּה* is translated connects closely with the purpose of the offering. Translating *תאֲחִיֶּה* as "purification offering" is to attribute to it a purifying function; translating it as "sin offering" means it is meant for expiation. The two terms "purification" and "sin" are closely connected but not synonymous. Therefore, translators should decipher which meaning is appropriate for a given context and then translate it accordingly. In the present text, however, *תאֲחִיֶּה* is directly related to the atonement for sin and so it should be rendered "sin offering." The Septuagint's rendering of *תאֲחִיֶּה* as *ἁμαρτία* ("sin") and evidence from Philo (Laws 1:226) and Josephus (Ant. 3:230) all point in this direction.

The second offering is *הֶלֶבֶט* which literally means "an ascending offering," "that which ascends" or "an offering of ascent", signifying that the animal used for the offering is completely consumed by fire (except for the skin), the smoke and aroma from the fire rising to the heavens (DeBroeck 2017:53). The burnt offering was not limited to ancient Israel, it was also found in the Ugarit and Hittite civilizations which existed before Israel (Walton, Matthews and Chavals 2000:120). According to DeBroeck (2017:53) *הֶלֶבֶט* has two possible meanings— "burnt offering" derived from the Ugarit word for "burnt" or "whole offering" derived from the Hebrew root meaning "wholly" or "entirely" (*קָלִיל*) (Lev. 6:22). In Exodus 29:38-39, this offering is described as "continual" because as long as Israel continued to sin, they were required to make this complete and continual atonement and purification.

According to Leviticus 1, the materials used included an offering of livestock, a male without blemish from the herd (that is, a bull [vv. 3-9]) or from the flock (that is, a sheep (or goat) (vv. 10-13), or a bird (such as turtledove or young pigeon, without any emphasis on the sex of the bird) (14-17). Apart from being healthy and unblemished, sacrificial animals were supposed to be fattened, not scrawny (Scurlock 2006:17). A sacrifice of a lean animal was considered as an insult to the deity. Wenham (1979:55) reveals that male

animals were considered more valuable than females. Apart from the burnt and reparation offerings, there was no sex restriction in terms of the animal to offer. The limitation to male animals in the case of these two offerings (that is, burnt and reparation offerings) might therefore signify their high status before God.

Among others, *הֵעֹלָה* had an expiatory function. Milgrom (1991:176) considers the *הֵעֹלָה* as the earliest form of expiatory sacrifice recorded in Scriptures (Job 1:5; 42:8). He argues that this offering was used for expiation before the purification and reparation offerings were included in Israel's sacrificial system. An indication of the expiatory intention of the burnt offering is noted in Leviticus 1:4 (NRSV), "You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be acceptable in your behalf as **atonement** for you" (emphasis mine).

Verse 4 gives the prescribed priestly vestments for the occasion. Exodus 28 lists the vestments for the high priest as comprising a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash, gold bells, pomegranates, engraved plate and linen undergarments. The list presented in the present passage includes a shirt, shorts, sash, and turban each of which is made of linen. Comparatively, the high priest is to dress in a less flamboyant way during the *Yom Kippur* festival than during other priestly functions. Here, the high priest strips himself of all the grandeur associated with his office and appears as a servant of YHWH.

Before donning the priestly garments, the high priest bathes his body. It was a normal biblical requirement for the priest to wash his hands and feet before entering the Tent or officiating at the altar (Exod. 30:19). This practice underscores the significant value, purpose and meaning that both the priest and the people needed to accord the priestly garments. Any time the priestly garments are worn the priest acts on God's behalf, for which reason the people must take all he does seriously.

3.4.3.2.3 Provisions for the people (Lev. 16:5)

5. וּמֵאֵת עֵדוּת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִקַּח שְׁנֵי־שְׂעִירֵי עֲדִים לְחַטָּאת וְאֵיל אֶחָד לְעֹלָה: .

The high priest is to take from the assembly of Israelites “two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.” The expression *לחטאת* (“as a sin offering”) signifies that the two goats constitute one sacrifice, meant to atone for the sin of the people. Since the text gives no instructions regarding the sizes, colors, and the provider of the goats it is likely that they came from anyone who offered to give these animals on behalf of the entire community or from someone appointed by Aaron and/or the community to supply them (Lavatai 2016:214).

The prescription for the congregation, a *חטאת* male-goat and an *עלה* ram connects better with that of Leviticus 9:3 (cf. Num. 15:24) than that of Leviticus 4:14. The verb *יקח* (usually translated “take”) may be translated “receive” (as in NJB and NAB) or “procure” (as in AT) to avoid carrying the idea of taking the offerings by force. The main idea is that the people must give their offering to the high priest who after receiving them, offer them on behalf of the people. Only one of these goats is actually offered as a sin offering; the other is allowed to live but is sent out into the desert (vv. 20-22).

3.4.3.2.4 Lots rite (Lev. 16:6-10)

6. *והקריב אהרן את־פר החטאת אשר־לו וכפר בעֶדוּ ובעֶדוּ וּבְעֶד בֵּיתוֹ:*
7. *וּלְקַח אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׁעִירִים וְהֶעֱמִיד אֹתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה פָּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:*
8. *וַנִּתֵּן אֹהֶרֶן עַל־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׁעִירִים גּוֹרְלוֹת גּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַיהוָה וְגוֹרֵל אֶחָד לְעִזָּאזֵל:*
10. *והקריב אהרן את־השעיר אשר עלה עליו הגורל ליהוה ועשהו חטאת:*
11. *והשעיר אשר עלה עליו הגורל לעזאזל יעמד־חי לפני יהוה לכפר עליו לשלח אתו לעזאזל המדברה:*

At the heart of the rituals of the Day of Atonement was the ritual of the sin offering of the two goats, a ceremony which is not mentioned again in the Old Testament. These verses describe no more than the order and manner of arranging the events of the day. Using his bull, Aaron (who represents all the high priests who succeeded him) makes atonement for himself first and then for his family (the entire Aaronic priesthood). Details of how this is done are found in verses 11-14.

Then, a lot is cast on the two goats, whose different destinations are determined. Gerstenberger (cited in Rooker 2000:370) considers the lot as a yes-stone and a no-stone put in a container such that the one which falls first after the container is turned indicates the answer to the question posed. Stuart (cited in Rooker 2000:370) also argues that the lot was something like the modern die with “alternately light and dark faces” such that the answer to a question posed was determined by which side of the die turns up. The casting of the lot means that neither Aaron nor any other person has the right to determine what should be done to any of the two goats; it is YHWH who chooses which goat is to be used for what purpose. Lavatai (2016:214) adds that the lot rite also prevents Aaron and the congregation from making the wrong choice and hence committing another sin against God.

Steens (2018:17) relates כָּפַר (“to atone”) to the Arabic *kafara* (“to cover”), and the Akkadian *kapparu* (“wiping on or off”). Watts (2007:131) also traces כָּפַר to the noun כֶּפֶר (meaning “ransom” or “payment”) (see Exod. 30:15–16; Lev. 17:11; Num. 31:50). Since atonement not only purifies but also reconciles humanity to God, the verb כָּפַר goes beyond the idea of purification to include the concept of compensation. The price of the blood of an animal was nowhere near what was required to bring a perfect and acceptable atonement before God. Hence, the acceptance of the blood of a slaughtered animal as a means of purification and reconciliation was based solely on God’s mercy. That being the case, it is theologically wrong to think of the Old Testament way of dealing with sin as based on works rather than on God’s mercy and grace. The Day of Atonement is therefore a manifestation of divine love, mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Perhaps, the most problematic issue to arise from Leviticus 16 is the translation of the term מְזַחֵל (vv. 8, 10 [2 times], and 26), which (apart from Leviticus) occurs in no other biblical text. Four main positions have emerged. The first view is that מְזַחֵל is a description of a dispatched goat (“scapegoat”) based primarily on the root meaning מְזַחֵל as “the goat that goes away or departs.” This translation (followed by NIV, NASB, KJV) agrees with the early English Tyndale translation in 1530, the Septuagint and Vulgate (Pinker 2007:12).

The second view takes *אֲזָזִל* as a location, “a rough and difficult place” or the dessert to which the goat is sent on the Day of Atonement. This position is based on a midrashic translation of *אֲרָץ גְּזֵרָה* in verse 22 as “a rough and rocky terrain” and this finds support from its cognate Arabic word, ‘*azazu* (“rough ground”) or ‘*azâzilu* (“jagged cliff/precipice”) (Milgrom 1991:1020; Pinker 2007:9). Rashbam (cited in Pinker 2007:9) identifies *אֲזָזִל* as the place where the live goat was sent to the pasture (Exod. 3:1), just as in the case of the birds of a leper (Lev. 14:7). In this case, *אֲזָזִל* is the name of a desert, not in the negative sense of a deserted place but in the positive sense of a field where flocks and herds find pasture.

According to the third view, *אֲזָזִל* is a proper name for a demon, deity, or spirit in the wilderness to which the live goat is dispatched. The syntactic parallel between *לַיהוָה* (“for YHWH”) and *לְאֲזָזִל* (“for Azazel”) (v. 8) as well as the meaning of *אֲזָזִל* in post-biblical Midrashic literature (cf. 3 Enoch 4:6) are used to support this view (Milgrom 1991:1020). There is enough textual evidence that the desert to which the goat is sent (Lev. 16:10, 22) is full of demons (see for example, Isa. 13:21; 34:14-13; Hab. 3:3; Bar. 4:35; Toh. 8:3; Matt. 12:34; Luke 11:24; Rev. 18:2), making it more probable that Azazel is the name of one of such demons. In line with this thought, the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient Jewish books declare Azazel as the leader of the angels that sinned in Genesis 6:1-4 (see 4Q 180, 1:8). More so, Jewish texts of the Intertestamental period depict Azazel as a demonic figure (see 1 Enoch 8:1–2, 9:6, 10:4–8 and 13:1).

The fourth view understands Azazel as an abstract reference to “destruction” or “entire removal” (Rooker 2000:271; Pinker 2007:10). Roskoff (cited in Pinker 2007:10) also understands Azazel as a personification for impurities and that Azazel is not an entity to whom a sacrifice is made for atonement but an abstract impurity in distinction to YHWH’s absolute purity. Therefore, as the goat goes into the wilderness, never to return, so is the sin of Israel removed completely.

Amid the difficulty in deciding exactly what *אֲזָזִל* stands for, two key biblical and theological foundations are very helpful. First of all, both goats are depicted as comprising the same “sin offering” (v. 5), meaning *אֲזָזִל* “makes atonement for the people” (v. 10) just

as the sacrificial goat. Secondly, the ritual done with עֲזָאזֵל (vv. 20-22) depicts the complete removal of Israel's transgressions from the presence of YHWH. Therefore, the two goats together symbolize first, the propitiation for sins by death and second, the complete removal of sins for which atonement was made. The slaughtered goat achieves the first purpose through the shedding of its blood (vv. 15-20) while the second goat achieves the second purpose by being sent away with Israel's sins on its head which it carries away, never to return.

3.4.3.2 The first part of the ceremony: Purifying the sanctuary

3.4.3.2.1 The sin offering (Lev. 16:11-19)

11. והקריב אהרן את־פר החטאת אשר־לו וכפר בעֲדוֹ וּבְעֵדוֹ בֵּיתוֹ וְשַׁחַט אֶת־פֶּר החטאת אשר־לו: 11.

וְלָקַח מִלֹּא־הַמִּחְתָּה גֹחַל־אֵשׁ מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִלֶּפְנֵי יְהוָה וּמָלֵא חֲפָנָיו קִטְרֶת סַמִּים דָּקָה וְהֵבִיא מִבֵּית לַפְּרֹכֶת: 12.

13. וְנָתַן אֶת־הַקִּטְרֶת עַל־הָאֵשׁ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְכֹסֶה אֶעֱנֵן הַקִּטְרֶת אֶת־הַנִּפְרֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָעֵדוּת וְלֹא יָמוּת: 13.
וְלָקַח מִדַּם הַפָּר וְהִזָּה בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ עַל־פְּנֵי הַכִּפֹּרֶת קִדְמָה וְלִפְנֵי הַנִּפְרֹת יִזֶּה שִׁבְעַ־פְּעֻמִּים מִן־הַדָּם בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ: 14.

וְשַׁחַט אֶת־שְׁעִיר הַחַטָּאת אֲשֶׁר לָעֵם וְהֵבִיא אֶת־דָּמוֹ אֶל־מִבֵּית לַפְּרֹכֶת וְעָשָׂה אֶת־דָּמוֹ כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְדַם הַפָּר וְהִזָּה אֹתוֹ עַל־הַנִּפְרֹת וְלִפְנֵי הַנִּפְרֹת: 15.

וְכֹפֶר עַל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִטְּמֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִפְּשָׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל־חַטָּאתָם וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה לְאַהֲל מוֹעֵד הַשְּׁכָן אֶתֶּם בְּתוֹךְ טְמֵאתָם: 16.

וְכָל־אָדָם לֹא־יְהִי אִ בְּאַהֲל מוֹעֵד בְּבָאוּ לְכַפֵּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ עַד־צֵאתוֹ וְכֹפֶר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵדוֹ בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעֵדוֹ כָּל־קֹהֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל: 17.

וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה וְכֹפֶר עָלָיו וְלָקַח מִדַּם הַפָּר וּמִדַּם הַשְּׁעִיר וְנָתַן עַל־קַרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב: 18.

וְהִזָּה עָלָיו מִן־הַדָּם בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ שִׁבְעַ פְּעֻמִּים וְטָהְרוּ וְקִדְּשׁוּ מִטְּמֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 19.

The main concerns of this section are the offerings for the high priest himself (vv. 11-14), and for the people (vv. 15-20). The passage begins with Aaron as the active subject *וְהִקְרִיב אֶהֱרֹן* (“Aaron shall present”) of the action *וַיִּכַּפֵּר* (“and make atonement”). Verse 11 is identical with verse 6, and it seems to be a repetitive resumption after the writer digressed on the goats (in v. 7). Verse 11 mentions the sin offering for Aaron two times as a way of underlining the importance of atonement made for the high priest at the beginning of this ritual. The verse emphasizes the fact that the high priest, like any other human, is polluted by sin and therefore needs to cleanse himself first in order to be in a position to mediate for the cleansing of the sins of his people.

After presenting his own bull as a sin offering and killing it, Aaron took *שֹׁמֵרֵי-אֵשׁ* (lit. “coal of fire”) from *הַמִּזְבֵּחַ* (“the altar”) and *וּמֵלֶא חֲפָנָיו קִטְרֶת סַמִּים דָּקָה* (“two handfuls of incense”) behind the curtain (Lev. 16:12). Milgrom (1991:1024) suggests that the burning of incense was done either on the altar incense (4:7) or in a portable censer (which may comprise a pan with a long handle (10:1 *מִחֲתָתוֹ*; Num. 16:6; 17:11) or an upright pan (*מִקְטָרֶתוֹ*; Ezek. 8:11). The high priest used the former twice daily (Exod. 30:7-8). The latter could be used by any priest in the courtyard of the Tabernacle (Lev. 10:1) and, under exceptional situations, even beyond the sacred area (Num. 17:11-12).

According to Rooker (2000:372) the *קִטְרֶת* (“incense”) was either meant to “conceal the atonement cover and thus protect the high priest, who would be standing close to the mercy seat or to keep the high priest from seeing God (Exod. 24:15–18; 33:18–21; Lev. 16:13).” The *מִזְבֵּחַ* (“altar”) stated here is the “incense altar” positioned in the sanctuary (cf. Exod. 40.5). The term *דָּקָה* (“fine” or “beaten”) signifies that the incense was in powdered form. This incense comprised spices and tree resins (including myrrh, a mollusk, galbanum and frankincense) put together by expert perfumers (see Exod. 30.34-38) not to be used for private perfume because of its holy nature but for religious rituals (Milgrom 1991:1030).

After entering the adytum, the high priest lights the incense in the censer before YHWH. The expression *הַקִּטְרֶת עָנָן* (lit. “the cloud of incense”) implies that the smoke produced by the incense “in the dark shrine would add to the awesomeness of Aaron’s work in the

annual blanket atonement for Israel's sins" (Harris 1990:590). In the opinion of Lindsey (1983:197), the smoke formed a screen that prevented the high priest from "gazing at the Shekinah glory of God's presence over the atonement cover, thus averting divine wrath on himself." Having offered incense, the high priest went back to the court so as to get the blood of the slaughtered offerings. The entire purification rite is to be performed in the presence of YHWH as indicated by the appearance of the cloud on the mercy seat (v. 13).

Verses 14-19 contain some blood-manipulation rites. A little background of blood sacrifice in the Old Testament is relevant for a good understanding of this text. Blood sacrifice formed an integral part of the religious set-up of Israel. It was a practice by which the death of the victim restored and/or maintained a right relationship with God. Allison (2016:48) observes that blood sacrifices were meant to achieve purposes such as "offering a gift, having communion, making propitiation, cleansing, averting evils or failures to providing nourishment for Yahweh, on the one hand, and as it affects man." In the process the offeror identifies him/herself with the victim, in a way, signifying a sign of surrender, dedication and substitution before it is slaughtered and the blood sprinkled to atone for the offeror's sin (Allison 2016:48). The Old Testament sacrificial system underlines the fact that God is holy and he requires that every sin be atoned for. The importance of blood in atonement is clearly taught in Leviticus 17:11 where the eating of blood is prohibited based on the close connection between an animal's blood and its life. Against this backdrop, one can consider the animal whose blood makes atonement for the worshipper as dying in the worshipper's stead.

The first blood-manipulation ritual is the atonement of the Holy of Holies. The דם ("blood") of the bull for both Aaron and his family is sprinkled once on the front of the כַּפֹּרֶת ("mercy-seat") and seven times before it. Aaron will do the same for the blood of the goat for the congregation's sin offering (Lev. 16,14-16a). The Israelites faced קִדְמָה (eastward) when talking about directions, therefore, the east side would be the front of the mercy seat and would be the same as before it. The sprinkling of the blood was probably done in the air immediately in front of the Ark of the Covenant, with some of the blood falling on the front side of the Box itself and some on the ground in front of it. The purpose of the blood

sprinkling is to cleanse the adytum of its impurities. The number seven signifies completeness and so the seven-time aspersion of the blood means the complete cleansing of the adytum.

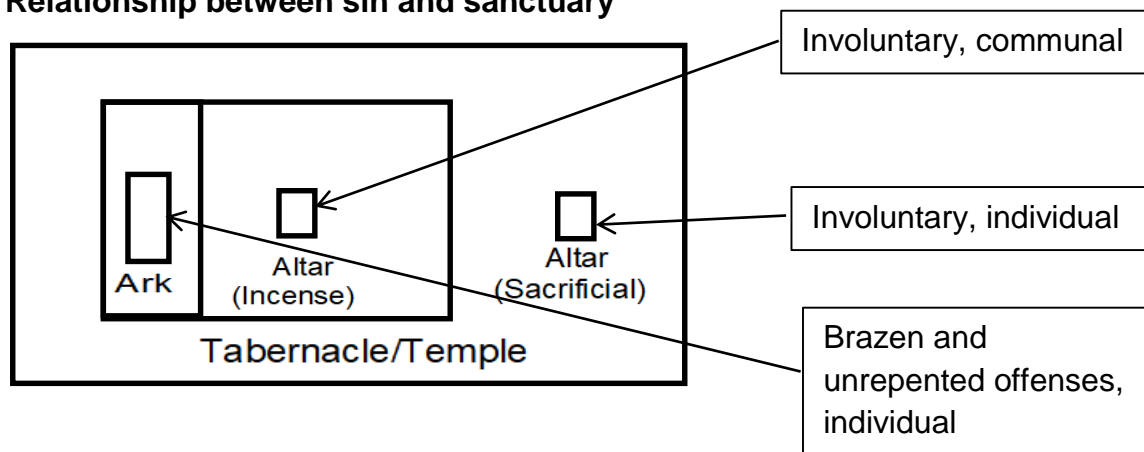
After this, Aaron now kills the goat designated for YHWH, enters the Holy of Holies the third time, and does with the blood of YHWH's goat as he did with the blood of the bull. There is no confession of sin or laying on of hands on the goat for YHWH. Consequently, its blood did not carry sin and hence did not defile but rather purified, making it suitable for cleansing the entire sanctuary. By the same procedure, Aaron effects the people's purification so that, when the sanctuary was purified from all the sins the community had committed throughout the year, the people themselves were cleansed too.

The same ritual is done with the blood of the goat designated for the atonement for the people— that is, through the sprinkling of blood seven times—before the altar and then smearing part of it on the horns of this altar (cf. Exod. 30:10). The sprinkling of the blood on the altar signifies reconciliation between God and the people: “human beings need not only and primarily to be purified, but to be reconciled with God which is symbolically represented by the blood rite, which takes place outside of them upon the altar” (Nicole 2004:49). The term *תִּקְחָה* (“uncleanness”) refers to “ritual impurities described in chapters 11-15 and the moral impurities generated by the violation of the prohibitive commandments”, *עֲוֹנוֹת* refers to “rebellion” or “transgressions” and *כָּל-עֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם* (“all their sins”) which together emphasize that all of Israel's sins, rather than their physical impurities alone, pollute the sanctuary (Milgrom 1991:1034).

Milgrom (1991:257) has established that the severity of sin and impurity varies directly with the depth of its penetration into the sanctuary. He identifies three ways in which the sanctuary gets polluted. First, the courtyard altars get polluted through a person's unintentional transgression or severe physical impurity and have to be purified by putting some blood of the sin offering on the horn of the altar and pouring the rest of the blood at the foot of the altar (Lev. 4:25, 30; 9:9). Second, the shrine is polluted by the unintentional transgressions of the priest or the whole community and has to be dealt with by the high priest through the sprinkling of the blood of the sin offering on the inner altar and the

curtain (פְּלִיָּקֶת) (4:5-7, 16-18). Third, the adytum (which houses the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat) is polluted by a malicious unrepented sin. Before the pollution in the adytum happens, the same sin would have polluted the outer altar, the shrine, and the veil behind which the adytum is located. Therefore, since there is no offering to deal with sin committed defiantly (Num. 15:27-31), the pollution it brings must await the yearly purgation of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. A diagrammatic depiction of this relationship, adopted from Milgrom (1991:258), is shown below.

Fig. 3.1: Relationship between sin and sanctuary



3.4.3.3 Second part of the ceremony: Purifying the community

3.4.3.2.1 The scapegoat rite (Lev. 16:20-22)

20. וְכָל־מִכְפָּר אֶת־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְהִקְרִיב אֶת־הַשְּׂעִיר הַחַיִּי:

וְסָמַךְ אֹהֶרֶן אֶת־שָׁתֵי יָדָיו**עַל רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר הַחַי וְהִתְנוּדָה עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־כָּל־

פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל־חַטָּאתָם וְנָתַן אֹתָם עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר וְשָׁלַח בְּיַד־אִישׁ עֵתִי הַמִּדְבָּרָה: 21.

וְנָשָׂא הַשְּׂעִיר עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתֵם אֶל־אֲרָץ גְּזֵרָה וְשָׁלַח אֶת־הַשְּׂעִיר בַּמִּדְבָּר: 22.

After atonement for the Most Holy Place comes the live-goat ritual which comprises three characteristic elements. In the first place, there is the laying on of hands (indicated by וְסָמַךְ). The practice of laying on of hands, specifically on a sacrificial victim, is found throughout the book of Leviticus (1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33; 16:21) as well as in other parts of the Pentateuch (Exod. 29:10, 15, 19, Num. 8:12). However, some unique

features of the Day of Atonement emerge here. Instead of the common practice of the imposition of a single hand (cf. 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 24, 29, 33), Aaron places his two hands upon the live goat (v. 21). Again, unlike the sacrificial procedures espoused in Leviticus 1–7, Aaron (the high priest), rather than the individual offeror, does the imposition of hands. Scurlock (2006:25) explains that in the present situation both hands are required, one for the transfer of the high priest's sin and the other for the transfer of the sin for the community. With regards to the second observation one must note that in the present context Aaron serves as a representative for the people, mediating for the entire community and so imposes his hands as a means of imposing the sins of the entire community on the animal (see discussions below).

The second element is the imputation of sin to the goat. The expression *וַיִּטֵּן* (“and he shall put”) signifies that the laying on of hands involved a transference of guilt from the person to the sacrificial victim. The principle of vicarious substitution is therefore clearly seen in this rite whereby the goat is received in place of the sinner, and the goat takes the penalty for the sinner's sin. Generally speaking, the laying on of hands was the means “by which sin (for the ‘sin’ offerings), guilt (for the ‘guilt’ offerings), illness, defeat, crop loss, or other disaster occasioned by YHWH's wrath (for the ‘peace’ offerings), or any or all of the above (for the holocaust)” was “safely transferred to the sacrificial animal” which subsequently retransferred it to the altar and sanctuary through its sacrificial blood (Scurlock 2006:20). According to the Mishnah, the following pronouncement was made while laying on of hands upon the live goat:

O God, thy people, the House of Israel, have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before thee. O God, forgive, I pray, the iniquities and transgressions and sins which thy people, the House of Israel, have committed and transgressed and sinned before thee; as it is written in the law of thy servant Moses, For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you: from all your sins shall ye be clean before YHWH (*Yoma* 6:2).

The third element is the sending of the live goat into the desert by a person appointed for this task (not Aaron himself) (Lev. 16:21). Since the previous verses completed the atonement for Aaron and the entire community as well as the purification of the entire sanctuary, the ensuing ritual with the live goat does not in any way affect the actual purification of the people and the sanctuary. As Musser (2015:158) puts it, "Through the blood of the purification offerings and the scapegoat, sin and its effects are completely removed from the entire community and the Tabernacle, in a moment of re-creation." The reason this goat is not slaughtered, probably, is to avoid any notion that the ritual was a sacrifice.

3.4.3.2.2 Conclusion of the ceremony (Lev. 16:23-28)

וּבֹא אֶהָרֶן אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּפָשַׁט אֶת־בְּגָדָיו הַבָּד אֲשֶׁר לְבַשׁ בָּבֹאוֹ אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהִנִּיחֵם שָׁם: 23.

וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם בְּמִקְוֹם קָדוֹשׁ וְלִבַּשׁ אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֵּצֵא וַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־עֲלֹתוֹ וְאֶת־עֲלֹת הָעֵם וְכִפֵּר בְּעֵדוֹ
וּבְעֵד הָעֵם: 24.

וְאֵת חֵלֶב הַחֹטָאת יִקְטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: 25.

וְהִמְשַׁלַּח אֶת־הַשְּׁעִיר לְעִזְאֲזֵל יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹא אֶל־הַמִּחְנָה: 26.

וְאֵת פֶּר הַחֹטָאת וְאֵת שְׁעִיר הַחֹטָאת אֲשֶׁר הוּבֵא אֶת־דָּמָם לְכַפֵּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ יוֹצִיא אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמִּחְנָה וְשָׂרְפוּ
בְּאֵשׁ אֶת־עֲרֹתָם וְאֶת־בְּשָׂרָם וְאֶת־פְּרָשָׁם: 27.

וְהִשְׂרִף אֹתָם יִכְבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹא אֶל־הַמִּחְנָה: 28.

Until now the high priest has been clothed in the plain white clothes of the ordinary priests (cf. v. 4), probably to signify the need for him to be humble and holy. Now that the ritual for atonement is formally over, the high priest removes his garments, bathes, put on his usual high priestly garments (v. 23) and offers burnt offerings of consecration, first for the priests, then for the people (v. 24). The ceremony started with a bathe and it is now ending with a bathe (vv. 4, 24). The word בְּגָד ("his garments") does not refer to his priestly garments again but to his usual clothing. It actually means "his own clothes" or "his other clothes."

Before returning to camp, the person who sent the live goat into the desert washes his clothes and takes a bath. Bathing with water, according to Lavatai (2016:222) is relevant in this exercise because of the cleansing power of water. The concluding burnt offering of a bull and a goat in a fire outside of the camp (vv. 27-28) is significant for the occasion because the animals that have been used for the atonement rituals will be consumed by fire outside the Tent of Meeting and not by the priest or the people.

3.5 Exegesis of Psalm 51:1-12

3.5.1 Historical context of Psalm 15:1-12

The English titles “Books of Psalms” and “Psalter” come from the Septuagint *Psalmoi* and *Psalterium*, meaning songs “accompanied with the pizzicato of stringed instruments” (Waltke and Yu 2007:870). According to White (2008:367-368), the Psalms grew over a long period of time starting with David and were complete by about 150 BCE. Psalms belong to the part of the Hebrew Bible referred to as the Writings and they are part of the poetic division of the Hebrew Writings. Choi (2019:1) asserts that Psalms are described as a microcosm of the Hebrew Bible because they contain almost all the significant contents of the Hebrew Scripture, including, God’s creation, Abrahamic, Sinaitic and Davidic covenants, the broken covenants and the exile and the hope of restoration based on the covenantal promise. Choi (2019:11) identifies the major genres in the Psalms as hymn, royal psalm, communal complaint song, individual complaint and individual song of thanksgiving, prophecy, among others. The diverse backgrounds of the individual Psalms make it virtually impossible to have common background information about the whole book of the Psalms. Contextual backgrounds can therefore only be studied effectively when restricted to the individual Psalms.

Different views have been expressed concerning the authorship of Psalm 51. Traditionally, David is considered the author of Psalm 51 based on the link that the superscription provides between this psalm and David’s confession after the Uriah-Bathsheba episode (2 Sam. 11:1-12:25). Contrary to this view, some modern scholars (including Terrien 2003:403 and Goldingay 2013:163) argue that the final two verses (18-19), which talk about the need to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, depict a post-Davidic era

because the walls of Jerusalem were intact during David's reign and only needed to be rebuilt after their destruction in 579 BCE.

One cannot deny the support that the heading gives to Davidic authorship. Also, most of the verses in this psalm fit David's situation after his encounter with Nathan as the heading suggests. Yet, the argument based on the last two verses of the psalm also seems valid. It is, therefore, safe to contend for Davidic authorship of part of the psalm and a post-Davidic-era addition (of the last two verses) to reach its present form. David wrote his part during his reign while the final part was added later (after 597 BCE) by a redactor when the psalm became integrated into Israel's corporate worship liturgy. Nonetheless, the discussions in this study will be done based on Davidic authorship.

Some background information can be deduced from the superscription of this psalm. This psalm was documented by David after prophet Nathan approached him after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba. A brief look at the Nathan-David encounter that resulted in the writing of Psalm 51 is therefore significant at this point. The story of the Ammonite-Armenian wars in 2 Samuel 10:1-10 and in 11:1 forms the historical context for the David-Bathsheba-Uriah narrative which is then followed by Nathan's visit to David. King David, in residence in Jerusalem, while his armies are battling the Ammonites, observes Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah (one of his military generals) bathing. The king sends for her, has sexual intercourse with her, and then engineers the murder of Uriah.

The situation prompted God to send Nathan, a prophet and a friend to David, to confront the king with the evil that he had committed. Nathan used a parable to draw the king's attention to his evil act. The sin of David and his reprimand by Nathan (2 Sam. 11-12) elicited his repentance based on which he confessed his sin (2 Sam 12:13a). Psalm 51 is therefore David's theological reflection on his sin, his confession and his assurance of forgiveness.

3.5.2 Literary context and structure of Psalm 51:1-12

The 150 Psalms in the Old Testament are divided into five books: Book I (Psalms 1-42); Book II (Psalms 42-72); Book III (Psalms 73-89); Book IV (Psalms 90-106), and Book V

(Psalms 107-150) (White 2008:368; Waltke and Yu 2007:884-886; Ho 2016:130ff). Psalm 51 belongs to the second division of the Psalter. VanGemeren (2008:433-434) traces how Psalms 51—66 form a collection of Davidic psalms with a common theme of the experience of evil; Psalm 51 deals with David's evil that was confessed and forgiven, but Psalms 52—64 lament the evil that David experienced from others (see also Ho 2016:350). Psalm 51 is one of the penitential Psalms (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143), a subdivision of the psalms of individual lament. The high emphases that Psalm 51 places on the issues of guilt, repentance, and awareness of God's punishment have earned it the description "The Great Penitential Psalm" (Brueggemann and Bellinger 2014:235).

After the superscription, Psalm 51 presents David's cry for mercy in the first two verses (vv. 1-2). Then comes David's confession of his sins (vv. 3-6) and his petition for cultic cleansing (vv. 7-12). Following the petition is a vow of praise and service where he enumerates some things he would do if forgiven. These are things he could not do until he was forgiven (vv. 13-17). The last two verses are a prayer asking God to rebuild Jerusalem in order that sacrifices may again be offered to him at the Temple (vv. 18-19).

The structure of the Psalm depicts a combination of both personal concern (vv. 1-17) and concern for the welfare of the community at large (vv.18-19). The following chiasmic structure proposed by VanGemeren (2008:np) is adopted by this research.

- A Prayer for Individual Restoration (vv.1-2)
- B Confession and Contrition (vv.3-6)
- C Prayer for Restoration (vv.7-12)
- B' Thanksgiving (vv.13-17)
- A' Prayer for National Restoration (vv.18-19)

Having given a brief background to the text, the study moves on to read it closely.

3.5.3 Close reading of Psalm 51:1-12

3.5.3.1 *The introductory cry (Psa. 51:1-2)*

1. חַנּוּנֵי אֱלֹהִים כְּחַסְדְּךָ כָּרַב רַחֲמֶיךָ מִחַה פְּשָׁעַי: .

2. הַרְבֵּה הָרַב כִּבְּסֵנִי מַעוֹנֵי וּמַחֲטָאֵתִי טַהַרְנִי: .

The Psalm is constructed in the form of a classical lament psalm, with the first two verses forming an “introductory cry” which gives the essence of the whole psalm (Ross 2013:178). Here, the psalmist addresses Israel’s covenant-keeping God by the generic title *אֱלֹהִים*, God, and not by his personal name, YHWH, perhaps because the so-called Elohistic Psalter (Psalms 42—83) demanded it (Waltke and Yu 2004:52). The psalmist’s petition for forgiveness is based on three divine attributes—namely, abundant mercy, steadfast love and kindness—which underline God’s character as a faithful, covenant-keeping God (see Exod. 34:6) who has a deep commitment to his people (Ross 2013:184; Brueggemann and Bellinger 2014:236; Greidanus 2016:257).

The verb *חַנּוּנֵי* (translated “have mercy”) is a *qal* imperative signifying a recurrent prayer request (cf. Psalms 4:1; 6:2; 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10; 31:9; 41:4,10; 56:1; 57:1 [twice] and others) to a gracious God, the same root (*חנן*) appearing also in the priestly blessing “and be gracious to you” (Num. 6:25) (VanGemeren 2008:379). The word for “mercy” signifies a sense of intense emotion, of deep-seated feelings, which one expresses toward a dear one. It underlines God’s compassionate feeling for the helpless and dependent just as a mother’s feeling for the child of her own womb. The word “mercy” and related terms like “grace” refer to undeserved or unmerited favor; therefore, the psalmist was expressing his desire for favorable and beneficent act from God (Greidanus 2016:257). David’s sins, namely, his adulterous act with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah could not be dealt with through the sin offering because the sin offering atoned for inadvertent sin but not for deliberate sins like David’s (cf. Lev. 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 20:10; 22:14; Num. 35:31-32). David’s intentional sins in this situation included lusting after another’s wife; making her commit adultery; lying to her husband who was a loyal soldier; conspiring to kill a person, and trying to cover the entire event up instead of repenting and

seeking forgiveness. At the same time, David could not make restitution to either Uriah or Bathsheba. There was no way David could bring Uriah back to life or restore Bathsheba's purity. He was therefore fully aware that it is only by God's mercy that he could be pardoned.

The psalmist gives a three-fold description of his separation from God. In the first place, he describes his condition using the term *מעשי* ("transgressions", v. 1b) which primarily means acts of disobedience, of rebellion; hence, in the present context, it signifies a "rebellion against God" (Ross 2013:181). The use of the plural form (*מעשי*) underscores that in the psalmist's situation sin was compounded upon sin (Ross 2013:181). The second term is *יג* ("iniquity", v. 2a) which carries the sense of guilt, fault, a thoughtful act of misconduct or deliberate, not accidental, sin. This word is linked with the verb "to go astray," and so "iniquity" refers to a departure from the standard (Ross 2013:181). The third word is *חט* (translated "sin", v. 2b) which is the most general word for sin used in the Old Testament with the basic idea of going astray or missing the mark. David had indeed crossed God's line for him by his adulterous act (that is, transgression); he had missed God's mark (that is, sin) and he had succumbed to his twisted nature (that is, iniquity) (Wiersbe 2007:935). By the use of all these three, the psalmist not only covers virtually all aspects of sin but also makes the theological point that a proper understanding of sin is the first step toward a meaningful confession.

Next, David makes a three-fold request toward spiritual renewal using three verbs. The first verb is *ח* (lit. "blot out") which means "to wipe out something" (for example, wiping a slate clean) without leaving traces, "to scrape off," "remove" or "to expunge" (Ross 2013:182). The verb "blot out" is a *qal* imperative (cf. Psa. 51:9) usually used in connection with the destruction of sinners (cf. Psalms 9:5; 69:28; 109:13) from life and the book of life (cf. Exod. 32:32-33). Walton, Matthews and Chavals (2000:531) observe that in the ancient Near East, human effort in dealing with sin was not meant to remove sin but to appease a deity. People became aware of their sins when they experienced calamities considered as the sentence of a deity. The goal then was to deal with the anger of the deity so that the punishment could be reversed (Walton, Matthews and Chavals 2000:531). Asking for sin to be removed, therefore, meant asking the deity to overlook

sin, put away anger and restore his favor. The rituals accompanying this kind of approach were meant to purify the sinner and pacify the deity (Walton, Matthews and Chavals 2000:531). The ritual gave the sinner the hope that his/her sins will be absolved by the deity. The Babylonians also use this metaphor blotting out sin when they speak of tablets on which sins are recorded, and they ask that these tablets be broken, to cancel their debt or criminal charges (Walton, Matthews and Chavals 2000:531). The code of Hammurabi also allows an illegal contract for the purchase of the land belonging to a soldier to be canceled by breaking the tablet on which it is documented (Walton, Matthews and Chavals 2000:531).

In the present context and elsewhere in the Old Testament, “blot out” suggests the removal of a record from a tablet (cf. Exod. 32:33; Num. 5:23; Isa. 43:25). This does not mean God literally keeps written records of sins and then wipes them off when he forgives them. Rather, “blot out” is a metaphorical picture of the Old Testament concept of forensic forgiveness or “the complete removal of sin” (Ross 2013:182). This terminology can also refer to “a debt that must be paid (Psa. 130:3; Isa. 43:25)” to imply that it is only God who can pay a person’s debt to free him or her (Weirsbe 2007:935).

The next verb is *נִבְּטַנִּי* (“wash me”), a *piel* imperative which depicts sin as a stain that has to be washed out (cf. Exod. 19:10). The psalmist metaphorically compares laundering with forgiveness, presupposing that “what dirt is to the body, sin is to the inner person” (Wiersbe 2007:935). Therefore, just as dirty clothes are beaten against rocks to remove the dirt out of them, so is the penitent asking God to clean him thoroughly of the dirt of sin (Ross 2013:182).

Thirdly, the psalmist uses the verb *טְהַרְנִי* (“cleanse me”), a *piel* imperative often used in the cultic sense to express the idea of purification according to the Levitical tradition. By use of this term, the writer pictures sin as a defilement which renders a person ritually unclean and which must be removed in order for the person to be pronounced clean to rejoin the society (Weirsbe 2007:935). Greidanus (2016:258) notes that the imagery employed here echoes cultic life, where one prays to be cleansed from sin as a “defiling uncleanness” which separated him/her from God and positioned him/her outside the

believing community. Like leprosy which makes a person ritually unclean to go into the presence of God, the psalmist needs to be cleansed so that he can be ritually fit to come before God.

After the purification rite, which involves washing with water followed by sanctifying with blood, one is deemed fit to be integrated into the community and to appear before God (Lev. 14:11). As such, the cleansing rite provides a person with a new beginning in life (Gen. 35:2; 41:14; 45:22; Exod. 19:10, 14). This tradition is not new to the African society, more so the Akan community of Ghana. Akan widowhood rites require widows to undergo certain rituals such as seclusion, prescribed codes of dress, walking barefooted, fasting for a specified period, among others (Asante 2014:39ff). When the period of widowhood officially comes to an end, the widow is sent to a river for a ritual bath and cleansing. After the bath, she puts on a new cloth (usually a white cloth to symbolize her purity and newness), eats a special meal and goes around the community, greeting people and receiving gifts as a way of integrating with the society. Therefore, from both Akan and Jewish perspectives, David is asking God to give him a new beginning, and he actually made this new start (2 Sam. 12:20).

3.5.3.2 Confession of sin (Psa. 51:3-4)

כִּי־פָשַׁעִי אָנִי אֲדַע וְחַטָּאתִי נִגְדִי תְּמִיד׃ 3.

לֵךְ לַבַּדְרָךְ / חַטָּאתִי וְהִרַע בְּעֵינַיִךְ עֲשִׂיתִי לְמַעַן תִּצְדַּק בְּדַבְרֶךָ תִּזְכֶּה בְּשִׁפְטֶךָ׃ 4.

This section opens with the psalmist's confession of his sin to God: כִּי־פָשַׁעִי אָנִי אֲדַע ("For I know my transgressions"). The text begins with the particle כִּי ("For") which signifies that the psalmist is about to supply the reason why he requested blotting out, washing and cleansing in the previous verse. His reason is that he knows his transgressions. Since the Hebrew word אֲדַע ("I know") is the simple (*qal*) imperfect tense and not the causative (*hiphil*) ("I make known, acknowledge"), it goes beyond head-knowledge to heart-knowledge—relational or experiential knowledge (Ross 2013:185). This means that the psalmist's sins are constantly (continually) before him and he knows their nature, extent and consequences. He is saying "I am constantly conscious of or aware of" my sins

(Greidanus 2016:260). The psalmist's theology of confession is in line with the proverbial truth that "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy" (Prov. 28:13 RSV). The theological import is that true confession is rooted in one's acknowledgment of his/her sin to God, grieving for the sin committed and developing a strong determination to overcome it if it comes his/her way again.

Next, the psalmist acknowledges that his sin, which hurt other human beings, is ultimately a sin against God saying, *לְךָ לְבַדָּךְ חָטָאתִי* ("against you alone I have sinned" cf. Psa. 41:5; Dan. 9:8). Putting *לְךָ* "against you" at the beginning of the statement, followed by *לְבַדָּךְ* "only you" in apposition, the psalmist states categorically that sin is committed against God and God alone. The psalmist's assertion that it is God alone he has sinned against prompts Goldingay (2013:162) to conclude that David did not have a proper understanding of repentance at the time of penning this psalm and he needs more teachings from God about the true meaning of sin and repentance. On the contrary, Terrien (2003:405) maintains that David's statement does not in any way indicate an oversight of the social harm of his sin but indicates his understanding that harming the human society through sin is ultimately contempt and blasphemy of God's holiness.

In the researcher's opinion, David is not denying that he has wronged other people such as Uriah and Bathsheba. Rather, he is making the point that, though he has sinned against others, his actions against others are sinful primarily because the actions violated God's Laws. Thus, God is the ultimate Judge and therefore the first step toward true penitence is to see sin as ultimately against God; sin is an affront against the holiness of God. This position finds support in his confession that he had "sinned against YHWH" (2 Sam. 12:13) after Nathan had asked, "Why have you despised the commandment of YHWH, to do evil in his sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife" (2 Sam. 12:9, NKJV). Nathan's comment emphasizes that David's sin against Uriah and his wife was a transgression of God's law, and this echoes John's definition for sin, "Whoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). Therefore, though sin may affect people, sin is ultimately against God, who created David for a purpose and called him to be king over

Israel. David's assertion that it is God alone he has sinned against must therefore be understood as implying that sin is not merely a moral, social, ethical or psychological problem but more importantly a theological one and a violation of one's relationship with God.

The connection between the two halves of verse 4 is exegetically challenging. The word *ממל* which connects them makes the message of the verse something like "I sinned against that you may be righteous" (Ross 2013:185). It seems as if David had to sin in order to prove the righteousness of God. This however is obviously not the case. To resolve the problem, one has to take the second part of the verse (that is, v. 4b) as the psalmist's explanation of his confession rather than the reason for which he sinned. Thus, *ממל* has to be understood as stressing purpose or result. This can be indicated by inserting a transition to have: "[I say this] that you may be just . . ." (Ross 2013:185). Thus, the psalmist is saying that he confessed his sin **so that** God will be seen as right and blameless in taking any decision concerning his case. By saying God's judgment is just, David has in mind 2 Samuel 12 where God announced his judgment for his defiant sinfulness.

3.5.3.3 Confession of moral impotence (Psa. 51:5-6)

הַן־בְּעוֹן חוֹלַלְתִּי וּבְחַטָּא יִחַמְתַּנִּי אֱמִי: 5.

הַן־אָמַת חִפְצָתָּ בְטַחוֹת וּבִסְתֵם חִכְמָה תוֹדִיעֵנִי: 6.

According to Ross (2013:186), the verb *חוללתי* ("brought forth") basically means "to writhe, twist as with birth pangs" while *יחמתני* ("conceived") signifies "an animal in heat." A key theological issue is how this verse relates to the doctrine of original sin. Literally, the psalmist is saying "Behold, in iniquity I was given birth, and in sin, my mother conceived me." Obviously, the psalmist is not saying that his mother sinned when she became pregnant (implying that either sexual intercourse is a sinful act or that his mother was guilty of fornication or adultery) and that at the moment of his birth he was already a sinner. To be sure, even though sexual intercourse, pregnancy and childbirth rendered

the persons involved ritually unclean according to the Levitical tradition (cf. Lev. 15:16-33), they were never judged to be sinful acts per se.

Scholars (like Spurgeon, Brueggemann and Bellinger) deduce the doctrine of original sin from this text. Spurgeon (2016:np) argues that “It is a wicked wresting of Scripture to deny that original sin and natural depravity are here taught.” Brueggemann and Bellinger (2014:235) maintain that “Indeed the speaker concedes that all of life is permeated with alienation and recalcitrance but, as is always the case in the Psalter, the only hope is to turn in need to the one to whom allegiance has already been given.” For Greidanus (2016:261) the text stresses that humans are born with sinful conditions inherited from their parents (Rom 5:19). Ross (2013:187) argues that the prepositions used in the verse signifies the situation in which he was born: *אֲחַת* (“in sin”) and *אֲחַת* (“in iniquity”) mean “in the state or condition of sin.” Therefore, the psalmist makes the point that “from the very beginning of his existence there had never been a time that he had not been in a sinful state—he was human after all” (Ross 2013:187). Hence, though a baby should not be regarded as a wicked sinner, every person is born with a sinful nature, which when unchecked, naturally leads to acts of sin.

On the contrary, Pratte (2019:175) contends that Psalm 51:5 has nothing to do with original sin because: (1) there is no mention of Adam, his sin or that David inherited Adam’s sin; (2) David describes the guilt of his mother in conceiving him and not his; (3) the fact that David was born in iniquity underscores the fact that he was surrounded by sin right from birth and not that he was born as a guilty person. He concludes, “So David’s point is, not that he was guilty of sin from his birth not inherited [guilt or sin], but he was born into the midst of a sinful **environment** and sinful **influences**” (Pratte 2019:175; emphasis original).

Considering both sides of the argument, the researcher maintains that Psalm 51:5 is, first of all, intended to contrast divine perfection with human weakness (cf. Job 4:17; Psa. 130:3; Jer. 17:9). Also, the text also gives a hint of the doctrine of original sin by noting that David has had a sinful nature as far back as he could think of. David makes the same point in Psalm 58:3, “The wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth,

speaking lies” (RSV). This idea of the imputation of Adam’s sin to all humanity is further developed in the New Testament, especially in the teaching of Paul (cf. Rom. 5:12-14).

Verse 6, like verse 5, begins with הִנֵּה (“behold”), the two verses forming a Hebrew parallelism. Here, the idea that the psalmist has always been in sin from birth (v. 5) is contrasted with the fact that God prepared him for truth (v. 6). The psalmist critically examines what God desires: אֱמֶת (truth or faithfulness) referring to that which is real, firm or dependable and חֵכְמָה (wisdom), “living skillfully and successfully according to God’s moral precepts” (Ross 2013:188). The point is that it takes only divine wisdom to bring a solution to the sinful condition of the heart. Indeed, God prizes truth and wisdom that wells up from deep within a godly soul (Greidanus 2016:263).

The terms תְּנוּחָה (“inward parts”) and סֵתֶר (“secret part”) are central to the interpretation of this text. Ross (2013:186) rightly points out that these words either refer figuratively to the psalmist’s spirit (in which case the psalmist will be saying “God wanted faithfulness and wisdom from him, but he acted in sin”) or the mother’s womb (which will imply that “just as he has been in a state of sin since conception, so has he been capable of truth and wisdom, for God made him that way”). One is however, not compelled to choose one over the other because either of them shows that God has given the psalmist the capacity for better things.

3.5.3.4 Petition for cleansing (Psa. 51:7-9)

תַּחֲטְאֵנִי בְּאֵזוֹב וְאֶטְהַר תִּכְבֹּסֵנִי וּמִשְׁלַג אֲלִבֵּינִי: 7.

תִּשְׂמְעֵנִי שִׁשׁוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה תִּגְלָנָה עֲצֻמוֹת דְּכִיתִי: 8.

תַּחֲטְאֵנִי בְּאֵזוֹב וְאֶטְהַר תִּכְבֹּסֵנִי וּמִשְׁלַג אֲלִבֵּינִי: 9.

Each of verses 7, 8 and 9 makes two requests; that of verse 7 pertains to cleansing, of 8 to rejoicing, and of 9 to forgiveness. In verse 7 the psalmist prays for forgiveness, saying “Purge me with אֵזוֹב (hyssop).” The verb “purge” is the intensive form of the verb “to sin,” and literally means “to de-sin” or “un-sin” and signifies deep cleansing that only God can do (Ross 2013:189; Greidanus 2016:263). The psalmist’s request for cleansing

reminisces the cultic ritual using hyssop (Lev. 14:1-7), the ritual sacrifice of the red heifer (Num. 19:1-8; cf. 16-21; Heb. 9:19) and the doorframes of the Israelites during the Passover (Exod. 12:1-30, especially v. 12). The Passover serves as the key to the Jewish sacrificial system and therefore, the psalmist's allusion to it is key to understanding the Jewish perspective of sin and atonement. What the psalmist requests here is not the literal sprinkling of blood using hyssop but a spiritual cleansing by God to cleanse him from his sins so that he can be accepted in the sanctuary.

In his second petition, he uses the parallel verb *תִּכְבֶּשֶׁנִי* ("wash me") indicating that this "washing" will make him "whiter than snow". The two images, "I shall be white" (*אֲלֵבֵן* cf. Isa. 1:18; Rev. 3:4-5; 4:4) and "snow" (*גֶּלֶף*), describe the psalmist's purification which he expects to go beyond the parallel verse 7a "I shall be clean" (RSV). The color white symbolizes purity and holiness (in contradistinction to the scarlet of sin, as in Isa. 1:18 and dark colors which are associated with mourning, state of impurity; see Psa. 35:13; Zech. 3:3-5) (Walton, Matthews and Chavals 2000:531). The object "snow" connotes "freshness, brilliance and purity" (Ross 2013:189). Therefore, the expression "whiter than the snow" is that though snow is pure, clean, and bright, after his purification, the sinner will be purer, cleaner, and brighter than snow. This signifies complete cleansing.

In verse 8 the verb *תִּשְׂמַעְנִי* ("Let me hear" or "Fill me with") together with its object *שִׂשְׂוֹן הַחֵדָּה* ("joy and gladness") produces a metonymy of effect, with the message that "if God tells him he is forgiven (the implied cause) then he will enter the sanctuary and hear the joy and gladness (the stated effect)" (Ross 2013:190). The expression "joy and gladness" probably refers to the activities in the temple (including praises) which the psalmist yearned to join but could not join at this time due to his sin. Therefore, all that he desires from God is to pronounce him forgiven and thereby enable him to hear the sounds of joy once again in the temple. As Ross (2013:190) puts it, the psalmist is saying something like: "Tell me I am forgiven so that I may enter the sanctuary again where I can hear the joy and gladness."

Verse 8b poses a challenge regarding whether the *עַצְמוֹתַי* ("bones") "which thou hast broken" (RSV) refers to physical illness or emotional distress. One can agree with Ross

(2013:190) that “Since the psalm does not elsewhere discuss physical suffering (and in the account of David’s sin there was no physical affliction) the bones signifies his spirit, and the verb “‘crushed’ is figurative (an implied comparison) for spiritual depression (as that described in Psalm 32).”

In verse 9 the psalmist repeats his request for forgiveness from 1–2. He asks God to “hide his face” from his sins, and then to blot out (as in v. 1b) his iniquities (same word as in v. 2a). Due to the strong parallelism between this verse and verses 1-2, it is most likely that the expression “hide your face” is the same as “blot out.”

3.5.3.5 Petition for renewal (Psa. 51:10-12)

לב טהור בָּרָא־לִי אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחַ נָכוֹן חֲדָשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי: 10.

אֶל־תְּשַׁלְּכֵנִי מִלִּפְנֵיךָ וְרוּחַ קִדְשְׁךָ אֶל־תִּקַּח מִמֶּנִּי: 11.

הַשִּׁיבָה לִי שִׁשׁוֹן יְשַׁעַךְ וְרוּחַ נְדִיבָה תִּסְמְכֵנִי: 12.

In this section, the psalmist asks for *לב טהור* (“a pure heart”) which probably refers to a heart free of impurity as a single-minded, wholehearted devotion to God’s will (cf. Matt. 5.8). The term *לב* (“heart”) refers not to the organ, but the intellectual and volitional aspect of a person, or the inner person (Weirsbe 2007:935; Ross 2013:191). The writer’s use of *בָּרָא* (“create”) highlights his belief that the kind of radical cleansing he needs can only come from God (see the use of *בָּרָא* Gen. 1:1). In the present text, *בָּרָא* refers to restoring or renovating the sinner’s heart, as indicated by the parallel verb *חֲדָשׁ* (renew; v. 10b) (Ross 2013:191). David is therefore not simply asking for the washing of his current heart but a more radical action involving a complete heart transplant, a spiritual renewal, a change of heart attitude, or way of doing things—a complete regeneration (similar to what is taught in Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The word *רוּחַ* (“spirit”) refers not to “spirit” as opposed to the body but to attitude, will, desire. The word “right” translates *נָכוֹן* which means steadfast, firm, faithful, and loyal. Here, “clean heart” parallels the “spirit of a faithful person” meaning David is saying that

he wants a spirit that will be totally devoted to God so that he can be a pure and reliable person (Ross 2013:92).

In verse 11, the psalmist advances his prayer with two parallel negative requests in that God would not take away his “presence” and the “Holy Spirit”. His prayer is that God should not abandon him because he has sinned. “God’s presence” and “his Holy Spirit” are the same. David prays that God should not take away his Spirit from him, a petition that might have been motivated by observing an unrepentant king (Saul) and his alienation from God. God’s breath-spirit is the source of all human life and vitality as seen from the creation of humankind (Gen 2:7; Psa. 104.29-30). The divine breath-spirit is the source of life in a higher sense, of a meaningful life, life in fellowship with and dependency upon God, a life that is dedicated solely to him.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God came upon people for a particular assignment and departed when the assignment was done. For example, the Spirit dwelt temporarily in theocratic leaders and administrators of Israel to help them in performing their duties. David had witnessed the presence of the Spirit with King Saul and his departure from the King when he disobeyed God (1 Sam. 16). The departure of the Spirit from Saul was an indication that God had rejected him as king over Israel. David was therefore praying that he would not be rejected as Saul had been. To have God’s presence removed was therefore the ultimate punishment imaginable. On a national level, it means the end of God’s covenantal relationship and the total destruction of his people (Jer. 23:39; Hos. 1:9). In the post-Pentecost era (after the pouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2), the Spirit enters the lives of believers and dwells permanently in them as a seal from God (cf. Eph. 1:13). When the New Testament believer sins, the Holy Spirit is not taken away from him/her; the Spirit is quenched, even though he still remains within. Therefore, David’s prayer that God should not remove him from service or communion applies to Christians in general (Ross 2013:194). The prayer also betrays David’s recognition of the ineffective attempt at leadership without God’s empowering presence.

In verse 12 David prays for a return of that joy that comes from being saved by God. He then requests from God a “supporting spirit of willing obedience” (cf. Jer. 24: 7; 31: 33;

Ezek. 36: 25f). The word *יוֹשֵׁשׁ* (“joy”) is the direct object of the imperative and can mean joy and gladness. Here, the word *יְשׁוּעָה* (“salvation”) refers to having a proper relationship with God (cf. Psa. 3:2; Ross 2013:194). Throughout the period of his guilt and depression, David had lost the joy that salvation brings, and now he is asking that this joy be restored. According to Ross (2013:194), “The word *נְדִיבָה* (“willing”) in the expression “willing spirit” is “a technical religious word used in the cultic laws for a freewill offering (Lev. 7); anyone who wanted to worship YHWH spontaneously could bring a peace offering that was called a freewill offering.” Here, the word *רוּחַ* (“spirit”) refers to the human spirit rather than God’s Spirit. Such a steadfast and willing spirit has a disposition, a willingness, to obey God, and therefore to remain pure and faithful to God at all times, the result being having an excellent relationship with God.

To sum up, Psalm 51:1-12 carries the message that “even the vilest offenders among God’s people can appeal to God for forgiveness from sin, for moral restitution, and for a joyful life of fellowship and service for God,” if they come “in humble self-surrender and base their appeal to God’s nature” of compassion and grace, “the praise that will resound to God, and the benefit of God’s theocratic program” (Ross 2013:178). In other words, God, because of his steadfast love and abundant mercy, will pardon even the most heinous sins if the sinner comes to him with a broken and a contrite heart.

3.6 Exegesis of Isaiah 52:13—53:12

3.6.1 Historical context of Isaiah 52:13—53:12

The book of Isaiah is key to Old Testament theology, especially because of its soteriological significance. It falls within the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. The book aims at reminding Israel of her covenant relationship with YHWH and assuring her of YHWH’s plans for restoring those in exile to their land. Pre-critical scholars held that the prophet Isaiah wrote the book of Isaiah (Baker 2003:489). However, critical biblical scholars of the eighteenth century questioned the Isaiahic authorship of Isaiah and proposed that the book of Isaiah is not the work of a single book but two (namely, proto/first Isaiah [chs. 1-39] and deutero/second Isaiah [chs 40-66]) or three (proto/first Isaiah [chs. 1-39], deutero/second Isaiah [chs. 40-55] and third/trito Isaiah [chs 56-66])

books (Lasor et. al 1996:281; Baker 2003:489). Reasons for the multiple authorship are related to differences in subject matter, context and theology, among the various divisions (Longman and Dillard 2006:303-304). For example, the tripartite division considers the various parts as reflecting different time settings—pre-exilic (chs. 1-39), exilic (chs. 40-55) and post-exilic (chs. 56-66). Suggested dates of composition for the different parts are as follows: chapters 1-39 (c. 739-700 BCE); chapters 40-55 (c. 545-535 BCE) and chapter 56-66 (c. 520-500 BCE).

The critical study of Isaiah though appealing is not without challenges. Childs (2011:324) draws attention to the problems of undue fragmentation that has seriously affected the unity of the book. Also, critical scholarship increases hypothetical assumption for the historical reconstruction of the book, and hence muddies the waters. The critical study tends to detach the book from its ancient near east context. One may deduce from Child's argument that the differences in style, theological themes and settings might be a deliberate choice of the author rather than evidence of multiple authorship.

Consequently, since the 1970s, Isaiahic scholarship has turned attention to the unity of the book rather than its atomization (Oswalt 1998:3-5). A strong case has been made for legitimately considering the book as coming from a single person. Brueggemann (cited in Oswalt 1998:4) for example, concludes that deutero-Isaiah derives its theology from proto-Isaiah. Oswalt (1998:4) also quotes Rendtorff as contending that the dependence of third-Isaiah on first- and second-Isaiah is so much that it can hardly be considered to have an independent existence. Childs (2011:325-330) argues that the redactors who gave the book its final form intentionally suppressed the historical contexts of chapters 40-55 and 56-66 to strengthen the theological unity of the composition.

Time and space limitations will not allow the researcher to delve deeper into the issue than the brief outline presented above. The study proceeds based on the assumption that Isaiah is the author of the initial material that went through a process of redaction until it reached its present form.

3.6.2 Literary context and structure of Isaiah 52:13—53:12

Isaiah 1-39 talks about the decline of Judah and their eventual expulsion from the land. Here, Isaiah gives a lot of judgment and salvation oracles. The next division is characterized by messages of salvation and hope (chs. 40-66). Central to these oracles of salvation and hope is a figure referred to as the servant of YHWH to whom four songs are dedicated—The First Servant Song (42:1-9), the Second Servant Song (49:1-13); the Third Servant Song (50:4-11) and the Fourth Servant Song (52:13–53:12). All these songs are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls referred to as the Great Isaiah Scroll. They all focus on the servant of YHWH and they have overlapping themes. In the first three Songs, the servant envisioned is the nation Israel who is described as blind, dead and rebellious (cf. 42:18-20). The servant was rejected (chaps. 49-50) and then the remnant exalted and glorified (51:1-52:12). The immediate context (51:1-52:12) calls upon Zion to respond. This text is introduced by three short paragraphs each of which has a command to pay attention (51:1, 4, 7). Several sub-sections are separated by double imperatives including “Awake, awake!” (51:9), “Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!” (51:17), “Awake, awake!” (52:1), and “Depart, depart!” (52:11).

In the Fourth Song, Isaiah shifts attention from the corporate view of the servant (Israel) to an individual who suffers in place of sinners to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation. The servant in this Song is obedient to YHWH’s will and purpose, unlike Israel who was disobedient to YHWH. This Song provides a solution to Israel’s sinfulness and their consequent separation from YHWH, their God.

The first strophe (Isa. 52:13-15) focuses on the servant’s appearance and humiliation, followed by his glorification and vindication. This is followed by his rejection by his own people due to the ordinary nature of the servant (Isa. 53:1-3). In the next strophe (53:4-6), Israel realizes that the servant’s sufferings are not due to his own sin, but theirs. The servant eventually dies as a punishment for the sins he carries (53:7-9). The final strophe (53:10-12) parallels the first and describes YHWH’s purpose for the servant’s life, the servant’s atoning work, his vindication and exaltation.

The Fourth Song is followed by Isaiah 54—57 which focuses on a New Covenant established through the servant's death. These chapters deal with the great salvation which will come both to Israel (chp. 54) and to proselytes (55:1ff). The condemnation which will come on evildoers is also dealt with (cf. 56:9-57:21). In the end, the servant will establish his millennial kingdom.

The entire passage (that is, 52:13—53:12) is a poem about YHWH's servant which can be structured as follows:

- (a) Exaltation of the servant (Isa. 52:13-15)
- (b) Rejection of the servant (Isa. 53:1-3)
- (c) Passion of the servant (Isa. 53:4-6)
- (d) Submission of the servant (Isa. 53:7-9)
- (e) Salvation of the servant (Isa. 53:10-12).

With this background, the study now continues to read the text closely.

3.6.3 Close reading of Isaiah 52:13—53:12

3.6.3.1 *Exaltation of the servant (Isa. 52:13-15)*

13. הִנֵּה יִשְׁכִּיל עַבְדֵי יְרוּם וְנָשָׂא וְנִגְבָּה מְאֹד:

14. כְּאִשֶּׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלָיָהּ רַבִּים כִּן־מִשְׁחַת מְאִישׁ מֵרְאֵהוּ וְתֹארוּ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:

15. כִּן יִזְהוּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מַלְכִים פִּיהֶם כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סֹפֵר לָהֶם רְאוּ וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבֹּנְנוּ:

The poem begins with the command הִנֵּה עַבְדֵי (“Behold, my servant...”) (cf. 42:1). YHWH’s use of עַבְדֵי (“my servant”) in 41:8 and 9; 42:1 and 19; 44:2; 45:4; and 49:3 makes it certain that he is the voice behind 52:12-15 and 53:11-12, where the same expression is used. Here, the interjection הִנֵּה signals both the beginning of the Fourth Song and the need to pay attention to what YHWH has to say about his servant (MacLeod 2019:18).

From the verb עבד (“to work” or “to serve”) the noun עבד (“servant”, “a bondman”, “a bondservant” or “manservant”) refers to a person who is under another person’s authority (Renn 2014:877). Biblical data attest to the use of the title הנה עבדי to designate a pious person who comes to God in faith to seek favor (Gen. 18:3, 5); Israel (Isa. 20:3, 41:8,9; 44:21; 49:3; 44:1,2; 45:4; Jer. 30:10 and Ezek. 37:25); a person who seeks refuge in YHWH (Psa. 32:22) and those who love him (Psa. 69:36); Jewish patriarchs (Gen. 18:35; 26:24; Exod. 32:13; Jer. 30:10; Ezek. 28:25) and other individuals like Job (1:8), Moses (Exod. 14:31; Josh. 1:1-2, 7, 13, 15), Job (1:8) and others. In the present context however, YHWH’s servant refers not to a human personality of Isaiah’s time but to one appointed to be the Savior of the world (Kaiser 2012:88).

This verse presents key positive statements about YHWH’s servant. The first is signified by the word יִשְׁכִּיל which primarily denotes ideas of insight, prudence, wisdom or effectiveness (cf. 1 Sam. 18:14-15; 2 Kings 18:7) and secondly, “to be prosperous or successful” (cf. Josh. 1:7-8; 2 Kings 18:7; Prov. 17:8; Jer. 10:21) (MacKay 2009:334). YHWH’s point, therefore, is that his servant will display a lot of wisdom, doing the right thing at the right time to ensure his ultimate triumph (Isa. 42:1; 49:2-3; 50:7-9) (Goldingay and Payne 2006:288; MacLeod 2019:19).

The combination יָרוּם (“high”) and נִשְׂאָה (“lifted up”) is used four times in Isaiah and in no other book in the Old Testament. In the other three occurrences, the combination describes God (6:1; 33:10; 57:15). In 52:13, it signifies divine dignity (cf. 6:1; 33:10; 57:15) in a way that makes the servant’s status equal to that of YHWH himself. The third term גָּבַהּ (“exalted”) is qualified by the intensificatory adverb מְאֹד (“greatly”) which underlines the culminating dimension of the word “exalted” (Mackay 2009:335). Paul (2012:399) asserts that the three verbs give ascending and cumulative assurance that YHWH’s servant will certainly succeed and be raised from humiliation to glory (cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31).

The relative marker כַּאֲשֶׁר (“just as”) at the beginning of verse 14 introduces a comparative clause שִׁמְמוּ עָלָיו רַבִּים (“many were astonished at him”). The word רַבִּים (“many”) refers to many people. The word שִׁמְמוּ (meaning “to be devastated, be desolated, to tremble, to be astonished, to stare at”) appears in Ezekiel 27:35 (and 28:19) to describe people’s

reaction to the destruction of the city of Tyre (MacLeod 2019:23). In the light of this, Young (1965:337) opines that “astonished” denotes “a disconcertment brought about by a disturbing and paralyzing astonishment.” In the present text, it means “to be filled or overcome with horror, consternation, fear, or dismay” (MacLeod 2019:23), a description of the disheartened reaction of those who witness the servant’s deep abasement and degradation (Kaiser 2012:99).

The word *מְרֵאָה* (“appearance”) refers to the physical form of the servant and most likely his facial features and *תַּאֲר* (“form”) to his whole physical body (MacLeod 2019:25). Since the servant’s appearance described in this verse comes in the context of his afflictions and death (cf. 49:4, 7; 50:6), it can be concluded that the appearance does not refer to his normal appearance throughout life but to his servant’s physical suffering.

The word *מִשְׁחָת* may mean “anointing” (if derived from the verb “to anoint”) or “ruining” (if derived from the verb “to ruin”) (Goldingay and Payne 2006:392ff). The first option is better attested by the Hebrew Scripture. In Exodus 30:30-33, it is a special anointing oil for a special occasion and by special people, which is used by the high priest to anoint other priests (Lev. 21:10) or to anoint the king (Psa. 45:8[7]). These parallel passages translate “an anointing beyond that of men” more natural than “a destruction beyond that of men.”

Ha (2009:45) argues in support of the second option. He observes that the MT pointed *מִשְׁחָת* (in Isa. 53:14) as a noun of the verb *תַּחַשׁ* “go to ruin” to give the meaning “disfigurement.” Also, it seems that the kind of amazement in Isaiah 52:14a is the result of the servant’s disfigurement in verse 14b rather than his anointing. Again, since a person’s body is what is anointed rather than his/her appearance the first view seems less plausible. Further, the idea of disfigurement is also supported by the LXX (which renders it “de-glorified or without glory”), the Vulgate, the Targum (which renders it “was wretched”), a Babylonian tradition of vocalization (which renders it “spoiled” or “ruined”) the Syriac version, Aquila’s, Symmachus’s, and Theodotion’s Greek versions.

The researcher takes the position that *מִשְׁחָת* comes from the verb *תַּחַשׁ* and refers to the disfigurement of the servant, rather than his anointing. The hyperbolic description of the

servant's disfigurement as being "beyond human semblance," and "beyond that of the sons of men" does not however mean that his disfigurement was unprecedented (as suggested by NASB, KJV) but rather that he was so disfigured that he no longer looked like a human being (MacLeod 2019:25).

The key exegetical issue in verse 15 is the meaning of the verb *הִזְיֶה*. According to Baker (2003:534), the verb *הִזְיֶה* may be translated "sprinkle", recalling the priestly context (eg. Lev. 5:9; 8:11, 30; 14:16;16:14) and finding support from the MT, the Vulgate and the Greek of Aquila and Theodotion. Ha (2009:63) outlines some objections to this position. First, the absence of a liquid (for instance, water, oil or blood) in the text as well as the absence of the preposition *עַל* ("upon") before "many nations" makes this interpretation unlikely. Second, this view neither gives a right contrast to verse 14 nor a parallel to verse 15a. Third, the idea of the servant being a priest and hence expiating or purifying through aspersion is out of context and so the idea of sprinkling is not required.

Another view considers *הִזְיֶה* as the cognate of the Arabic word which means "to leap, to spring up" (as in amazement) and translates it as "startle" (RSV). On this, Mackay (2009:337) argues that in Arabic this verb is not used in the sense of being emotionally startled. Another support for this reading comes from the immediate context which says when the earthly kings see the servant they will "shut their mouths because of him", because "that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand" (v.15; see also 1 Enoch 48 and 62) (Baker 2003:534; Kaiser 2012:99).

The first reading seems more plausible for the following reasons. Admittedly, in many cases there is a liquid to be sprinkled; yet, there are also situations where the text is silent about the liquid (Exod. 29:21; Lev. 14:7; Num. 19:19). There are also situations whereby the object or person sprinkled serves as the direct object of the verb "sprinkle" (Lev. 4:6, 17). The poetic nature of the present text makes it possible to omit the direct object marker before "many nations." The lack of the liquid to be sprinkled underscores the metaphorical use of the servant's action envisioned (MacLeod 2019:27). The researcher therefore agrees with MacLeod (2019:26) that the servant's sprinkling of many nations serves as a

metonymy of cause (sprinkling) for effect (purification and spiritual renewal) as well as “a great reversal” in the attitude of world leaders toward him. Therefore, the servant’s sprinkling is inextricably bound up with the priestly function of purifying and expiating on behalf of the Israelite people.

3.6.3.2 Rejection of the servant (Isa. 53:1-3)

1. מִי הָאֱמִין לְשִׁמְעַתְנוּ וְזָרוּעַ יְהוָה עַל-מִי נִגְלָתָהּ:

2. וַיַּעַל כִּי־זָנַק לְפָנָיו וְכִשְׁרַשׁ מֵאַרְצָ צִיָּה לֹא-תֵאָר לּוֹ וְלֹא הִדָּר וְנִרְאָהוּ וְלֹא-מִרְאָה וְנִחַמְדָּהוּ:

3. נִבְזָה וְחֻדַּל אִישִׁים אִישׁ מִקְּאֲבוֹת וַיְדוּעַ חֲלֵי וְכִמְסַתֵּר פָּנָיִם מִמֶּנּוּ נִבְזָה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנָהוּ:

The opening words of this strophe express the surprise of the speakers. The reference to the arm of YHWH in the third person singular (53:1) and the use of first-person plural (53:2) signifies that it is no longer YHWH who is speaking (as in 52:13-15). If so, then who is this new speaker? Key suggestions are that the speaker may signify Gentile nations of the previous verses, Israel or the prophets (Oswalt 1998:381). Oswalt considers the last suggestion valid for verse 1 but not for verses 3-6. He therefore accepts either of the other two views based on the author’s conclusion about the servant’s identity. MacLeod (2019:39) identifies the speakers with the end-time Israelites who look at the servant in retrospect and wonders that only a few of their people have believed his message of salvation. Paul expresses the same lament over his contemporary Jews who were refusing to believe the gospel (Rom. 9:1-5). A careful analysis of the above positions leads to the conclusion that none of the positions is conclusive.

What exactly constitutes *שְׁמוּעָה* (“what we have heard”) most likely refers to the message of 52:7-10 which is amplified in 53:1-11 (Goldingay and Payne 2006:297). One thing to note is that *שְׁמוּעָה* always refers to report received, not the one given (Goldingay and Payne 2006:297). The incredible message of the first stanza of the poem seems to suggest that the astonishing news refers to what the people have just heard from YHWH.

The second question (“And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” RSV) is a transition to the account of the servant’s life. The answer to this question when read in

the context of chapter 52 is that YHWH has revealed his holy arm to all nations (Isa. 52:10). The expression *וְזֶרְעוֹ יְהוָה* (“the arm of YHWH”) does not refer to military might (as in Isa. 51:9-10; 63:12) but a disclosure of YHWH’s salvific power as revealed in the works of the servant (cf. 40:10; 48:14; 51:5; 52:10; 63:12) (Mackay 2009:342; MacLeod 2019:40-41).

Verse 2 attributes the cause of the rejection of the servant to his ordinariness. Young (1965:341) rightly points out that the *waw* consecutive (“and” or “for”) should be understood as a prophetic perfect used to depict what is yet to happen as if it has happened already. In the expression “For he grew up before him”, the pronoun “he” points to the servant, while “him” refers to YHWH. According to Friesen (2009:333) the phrase “before *him*” stresses the spiritual formation of the servant in Israel’s religious tradition as well as his close association with YHWH. Young (1965:341) says “before him” shows that the servant’s entire life was lived in God’s presence and under God’s power.

The word *יִנְנֵק* (derived from the word *יָנַק* “suckling”) is used here in a horticultural sense to mean “young plant”—a shoot that sprouts from the roots of an established tree and derives its nutrients from the root and stem (Baker 2003:534; Goldingay and Payne 2006:299; Mackay 2009:342; MacLeod 2019:45). Normally, such a shoot (which is small and weak) is pruned away to enhance the growth of the main tree. The expression *מֵאַרְץ צְרִיבָה* (“out of dry ground”) uses an image that is familiar to those living in an arid climate like that of the ancient Near East. The new shoot would not naturally do well on dry land, especially because of the lack of water which is a necessity for plant growth. Definitely, the servant’s lowly origins and the hardship that he will go through, despite having YHWH’s favor, is in mind here.

The servant’s lack of *תְּאֵר* (“form”; that is, physical attractiveness cf. 52:14) and *קִדְרָה* (“splendor” or “majesty”) (v. 2b) suggests that his intrinsic beauty was veiled from the sight of the people because they perceived him from a human perspective (MacLeod 2019:48). This does not however mean that the servant was physically disfigured but that he was insignificant. This point is made explicit when the author’s comparison of the growth of the servant with a *שֹׁרֶשׁ* (“root”) is seen as reminiscing 1 Samuel 16:5-13, where

“a shoot from... Jesse” (cf. 11:1; Rev. 22:16), selected to be king was from human perspective easy to miss out but from the divine perspective, a king after God’s own heart.

That the servant was not only rejected but despised is made clear in verse 3. The verb *בָּזָה* (“despise”) does not mean hatred but “to consider something or someone to be worthless, unworthy of attention” (Oswalt 1998:383). The word occurs both at the beginning and the end of the verse “to emphasize the contemptible treatment this servant will receive” (Grisanti as cited in MacLeod 2019:51).

The expression *תִּדְּל אִישִׁים* may be rendered “a ceasing **from** men” implying that the servant turns away from men because they did not pay attention to him or “a ceasing **by** men” meaning people turned away from the servant because they considered him insignificant (Oswalt 1998:383). Goldingay and Payne (2006:301) are of the view that since the verb *תִּדְּל* (from which *תִּדְּל* derives) means “to refrain or cease from an act or from a person (cf. Exod. 14:12; Job 7:16; 19:14)” *תִּדְּל* most likely means “cessation from men.” The thought of humans turning away from the servant is found in both the first and last parts of the sentence. Therefore, the common translation “rejected by men [humans]” seems satisfactory.

The word *מִכָּאֵב* (“sorrows”) signifies great mental anguish and *תְּלִי* (“sufferings”), physical pain or ailment (Mackay 2009:344). Here, “sorrows” highlights the servant’s experience of deep mental anguish due to being spurned (cf. 65:14; Psa. 22:6; 38:17; 69:20; Jer. 30:15). Isaiah uses the verb *יָדַע* (“to know”) to emphasize that the servant was intimately acquainted (Deut. 1:13; 15) with sorrows and pains (Paul 2012:403). The finality of the servant’s rejection is signified by the people’s lack of respect and regard for him. The word *תִּשָּׁב* (“to esteem”) has the sense of giving value to something and it is preceded by *לֹא* (“not”) to mean the servant was regarded worthless.

3.6.3.3 Passion of the servant (Isa. 53:4-6)

4. אֶן תְּלִינִי הוּא נָשָׂא וּמִכָּאֵבֵינוּ סִבְלָם וְאִנְחָנוּ תִשְׁבְּרָנוּ נְגוּעַ מִכָּה אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲנָה:

5. וְהוּא מִחֲלָל מִפְּשַׁעֵנוּ מִדָּכָא מַעֲוֹנֵתֵנוּ מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו וּבְחִבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ:

6. כָּלֵנוּ כִצְאָן תַעֲיִנוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ וַיְהִי הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ אֶת עֵוֹן כָּלֵנוּ: 6.

Mackay (2009:347) notes that the adverb אַךְ (“surely”) at the beginning of verse 4 introduces a strong affirmation meant to contrast what the speakers originally thought and what they now realize about the servant’s suffering (“Notwithstanding, nevertheless, yet”). The use of personal pronouns like “our,” “we,” or “us” in this strophe signifies that these “sufferings” (or “sicknesses”) and “sorrows” belonged to the speakers but became the servant’s burden because YHWH laid them upon him and caused him to suffer for them.

The verbs נָשָׂא (“bear”) and נָחַץ (“carry”) depict the servant as carrying a heavy load, that is, our infirmities—the illness of our souls. The use of these verbs together with nouns like “transgressions” (vv. 5, 8); “iniquities” (vv. 5, 11); “wicked” (v. 9); “transgressors” (twice in v. 12) and “sin” (v. 12) attests to the salvific intention of the entire poem. In passages such as Exodus 28:43 and Leviticus 17:16, “to bear” means “bearing guilt.” In the present text, “to bear” combines the ideas of “taking on an obligation that was not [one’s] own” and “conveying that burden away and disposing of it” (Mackay 2009:347). “Carry” also signifies putting a burden on one’s shoulder (Isa. 46:4, 7; Lam. 5:7) (Mackay 2009:347). Therefore, the two verbs evoke the Levitical cultic tradition where the sacrificial victim carries the sin of the worshipper away through its substitutionary death, so that the worshipper bears them no more (5:1, 17; 10:17; 16:22; 17:16; 20:19; see also Num. 9:13; 14:34).

The second part of the verse highlights the servant’s sufferings through the use of three key Hebrew passive participles—נִגְוַע (“strike”), נָחַץ (“smite”), and עֲנָה (“afflict”)—all going with the phrase “by God.” Paul (2012:405) states that נִגְוַע means being afflicted with a skin disease like leprosy (Lev. 13-14; 2 Kings 15:5) or God’s “touching” someone with destructive consequences (such as Job’s case; see Job 19:21).

The verb נָחַץ may refer to hitting someone or hitting someone with a disease (cf. Deut. 28:22, 27, 35). According to Goldingay and Payne (2006:305) “smitten by God” signifies that God is the agent and such expressions sometimes suggest the superlative so that the phrase might imply “terribly smitten.” However, since the context suggests that what is new to the speakers is the cause and not the fact of the suffering and the references to

God's agency is used frequently (cf. vv. 1, 6, 10) the correct translation seems to be "smitten of God" (Goldingay and Payne 2006:305). The verb *ענה* ("afflict") highlights the pain involved in the carrying of the load (cf. Psa. 116:1; 119:67).

In verse 5 Isaiah shifts the effect of carrying human sin from illness and injury to the servant's death. The verse begins with *אולי* ("but he") in contrast with ("and we") and ("yet we") of verse 3 and 4 respectively. The verb *ללח* ("pierce through" or "wounded") refers to being mortally wounded (cf. 22:2; 51:9; 66:16; Job 26:13; Psa. 109:22) though not yet dead. The piercing of the servant was due to our *עשפ* ("transgressions," that is, deliberate rebellion against God), again bringing out the idea of vicarious suffering. The second word referring to the servant's physical suffering is *כאד* ("bruise") which, according to MacLeod (2019:68), means "to crush," "to break into pieces," or "to ground into dust." If used figuratively *כאד* may mean a "crushed heart" (Psa. 51:17) or a "crushed spirit" (Isa. 57:15). Therefore, it is possible that "bruise" also carries the idea of the emotional destruction of the sin-bearer. The reason why he was bruised is our *יג* ("iniquities", that is, twistedness, waywardness). The researcher deduces from the foregoing discussions that the servant's sufferings are both substitutionary and penal—substitutionary because he suffered for (in the stead of) those who actually committed the sins and penal because they were just retribution for sinful acts.

The idea that the suffering of the servant resulted in the well-being or wholeness of those who rejected him is reflected in the expression *מוקר שלומנו* ("the chastisement that made us whole"). The word *שלום* (translated "whole") embraces the enjoyment of good health (Psa. 38:3), longevity (Gen. 15:15), material wealth (Psa. 37:11), harmonious relationship with God, family (Gen. 13:8), nation (2 Sam. 17:3) and environment. God is the source of *שלום* and he gives it as a gift to humans (cf. Num. 6:26; Judg. 6:24; Isa. 45:7). In Jewish prophetic literature, *שלום* characterizes both the period of God's deliverance of Israel from their enemies (Isa. 52:7; 55:12; 57:19; Ezek. 34:25-30) and the coming age (Ezek. 34:25-28; Isa. 2:2-4; 65:25). According to Oswalt (1998:388), *מוקר* frequently means "punishment" (cf. Job 5:17; Prov. 22:15; 23:13) but it can also mean the parental discipline of a child, which is the meaning in this context.

The verse ends with the words, *בְּחַבְרֹתָיו נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ* “by his stripes we are healed.” The stripes (or scourging) may literally refer to the actual physical wounds left on the servant’s body after he was beaten (cf. Gen. 4:23; Exod. 21:25) or the spiritual afflictions of sin (Psa. 38:5; Isa. 1:6). The exact meaning of *רָפָא* (translated “healing”) is debatable. The word *רָפָא* literally means physical healing (Gen. 20:17). However, in all its five other appearances in Isaiah, it is used figuratively of healing from sin (6:10; 19:22; 30:26; 57:18; 57:19). In these contexts, the word gives a picture of people becoming desperately ill, with open sores and unbandaged wounds due to their rebellion against God. Human inability to atone for the past and cleanse the wound necessitates the servant’s role of taking the sickness and giving back health. The exclusive figurative use of *רָפָא* by Isaiah as well as the contextual considerations points in favor of the figurative understanding of healing rather than taking it literally as medical treatment. Therefore, the servant’s sufferings were meant to be both the penalty of the people’s transgressions and the remedy by which they are restored to spiritual health. When one is healed from sin, physical healing may follow. Therefore, while the primary intention is spiritual healing, physical healing may also be implied. Bible versions which render *רָפָא* as “healed” (including RSV, NRSV, NIV, ESV) need to issue a footnote to indicate the spiritual nature of the “healing,” else their readers may be misled.

Verse 6 begins and ends with the word *כָּלֵנוּ* (“all of us”) highlighting that none is excluded from being wayward and unresponsive in conduct, an idea Paul develops in Romans 3:23. Here, Isaiah depicts humans as sheep (*צֹאֵן*) with YHWH as their Shepherd (cf. Psa. 23:1). Paul (2012:406) suggests that *תָּעַה* (lit. “turn”) means “to wander about aimlessly” (Psa. 119:176) and get lost. The noun *דֶּרֶךְ* (“way”) refers to a person’s way of life. The simile of sheep going astray, therefore, depicts Israel’s disobedience to God (cf. Psa. 119:176; Jer. 50:6; 1 Pet. 2:25). It means the people have wandered from the path of virtue and piety and the true worship of YHWH (Psa. 58:4), each of them now following blindly his/her own path, his/her own selfish desires to destruction.

The second part depicts YHWH as laying the iniquities of the sheep, not on the sheep themselves but on the servant (who died in their place) as a means of saving the scattered and disoriented flock. Here, *יָשַׁע* (“iniquity”) refers to the punishment that the people

deserve for their sins. The text reminisces the Day of Atonement when the sins of the people are made to fall on Azazel through the imposition of hand on its head (Lev. 16). Just as Azazel takes the sins of the people away so the servant is pictured here as the lamb of God who takes sin away (John 1:29).

3.6.3.4 Submission of the servant (Isa. 53:7-9)

7. נגש והוא נענה ולא יפתח־פיו כשה לטבח יובל וכרחל לפני גזזיה נאלמה ולא יפתח פיו: .7

8. מעצר וממשפט לקח ואת־דורו מי ישוחח כי נגזר מארץ חיים מפשע עמי נגע למו: .8

9. ויתן את־רשעים קברו ואת־עשיר במתיו על לא־חמס עשה ולא מרמה בפיו: .9

This section has three main emphases: The servant's submissiveness, his innocence, and the unjust treatment he received. In verse 7 Isaiah draws on Israel's practice of leading sheep to the slaughter or leading them to the shearer to emphasize the quiet and gentle nature of the servant. The emphasis is that though the servant was oppressed or treated harshly (LXX: "abused") and afflicted, he did not retaliate but kept on submitting to affliction upon affliction.

The term *ש* ("lamb") signifies a cultic animal, usually a young male or female sheep or goat (cf. Exod. 12:5). The *ש* is used as a "burnt offering" (Gen. 22:7, 8; Lev. 12:8; Num. 15:11; Isa. 43:23; Ezek. 45:15), a "Passover sacrifice" (Exod. 12:3, 4, 5), a "well-being offering" (Num. 15:11 [cf. vv. 3, 5]; Ezek. 45:15; cf. Lev. 22:23), and "sin offering" (Lev. 5:7). The figure of a lamb is frequently used in the context of salvation; for example, a lamb each died for each Jewish household at the Passover in order to save them from death (Exod. 12). The word "slaughter" is a non-religious term referring to butcher rather than sacrifice, and "shearers" also relates to a non-religious context. Sheep shearers are people who remove the wool from the live sheep's skin using shears. The expression ("he opened not his mouth") underlines that the servant willingly submitted to the unfair treatment without protesting the injustice (see also Jer. 11:19; Paul 2012:406).

Verse 8 presents a number of exegetical difficulties. First, one has to determine the meaning of the preposition *מן* ("from") attached to *עצר* ("oppression") and *משפט*

(“judgment”, that is, the sentence of death) at the beginning of the sentence. Oswalt (1998:392-393) identifies three possibilities. The separative (local) view is that the servant was removed from oppression and judgment. The casual view holds that the servant was taken away because of (or by) oppression and judgment while the privative view suggests that the servant was taken away after he had been deprived of oppression and judgment. The third view seems less plausible because it imposes a strange meaning on the word נָצַח (Oswalt 1998:392-393). The intended idea is through, not out of, judgment and oppression. He was therefore taken away by death through the sufferings. One can therefore conclude that the local sense is not intended here. Therefore, though either the first or the second view is plausible it seems the casual view is intended here (Paul 2012:405; see Exod. 6:9; Lam. 4:13 for similar casual use of נָצַח).

The next difficulty has to do with the meaning of וְיָדָע . One position takes וְיָדָע as “contemporaries,” those of the servant’s own generation (cf. Jer. 2:31) meaning the servant’s death caused little comments on the part of his own generation (Mackay 2009:354). This interpretation correlates well with the point made in verses 1-3 that the servant’s contemporaries paid no attention to him because they considered him insignificant. A key challenge with this position is that it requires one to take לְפָנֶיךָ prefixed to וְיָדָע as an emphatic accusative of respect (so RSV “as for”) rather than a direct object marker and כִּי at the beginning of the second part as introducing an accusative noun clause “that” instead of a causal particle (“for”) (Oswalt 1998:394).

The second view is that וְיָדָע denotes “line” (in the sense of descendants) based on passages like Deuteronomy 32:19-20 and Psalm 73:15; 112:2. This would imply that the servant would have numerous spiritual offspring in spite of his premature death. Oswalt (1998:394) says, “Thus the sense is that no one has considered that the Servant was left without children in a culture where to die childless was to have lived an utterly futile existence.” This position not only accords “well with the first colon of the second bicolon” of the verse but also “fits in with the concern of the entire book for childbearing and childlessness as signs (respectively) of the presence and absence of God’s blessing (Isa. 29:23; 54:1-2; 51:18-20; 56:3)” (Oswalt 1998:394-395).

Goldingay and Payne (2006:314) offer two possible meanings of גָּזַר (lit. “cut off”): A life-threatening danger (e.g. Psa. 88:4-6) or being alive and yet “finished” (cf Ezek. 37:11; Lam 3:54). In addition, גָּזַר connotes both violence and abruptness (Isa. 9:20; Lam. 3:54) as well as social exclusion through imprisonment. In this text, it highlights not only the violent, premature death of the servant but also divine judgment upon him (cf. Gen. 9:11; Exod. 12:15) in addition to human oppression.

The final issue in verse 8 is the identity of עַמִּי (“my people”). The speaker may be YHWH himself (as in 51:4, 16; 52:4-6; 52:13; 53:11, 12) or the prophet who identifies himself with the people (cf. 3:12; 6:5; 22:4; 51:9). The third-person reference in verse 10 seems to make the former unlikely and so one is inclined to say that it is the prophet's own comment.

The servant's burial is described in verse 9. The text talks about one who appointed the grave but does not specify the person. The Dead Sea Scrolls have the plural verb and so it may be rendered generally as “they appointed his grave” or passively “his grave was appointed.” Here, one reads that the servant was assigned קֶבֶר (“a grave”) with common criminals but it turned out that he was given a rich burial. The adjective עֲשִׂיר (“a rich person”) refers to an honorable and noble rich one, or a proud and impious rich one. The LXX has the plural “the rich” while the Targum has “those who have become rich through robbery.” The parallelism between the wicked and the rich is found in prophetic literature (Mic. 6:12; Jer. 9:23; 17:11), wisdom literature (Prov. 11:16; 28:11) and the New Testament (Luke 6:24; 12:21; 16:19; Matt. 19:23). The parallelism between the first two lines of this verse may support the view that the rich man is equivalent to the wicked. Arguing in favor of this position Oswalt (1998:397) states that “Since the second colon has no verb, the verb in the first, *was assigned*, must govern both” (italics original).

On the contrary, Mackay argues that the close association between wickedness and wealth (for example, in Psa. 37:16; Prov. 28:20; Jer. 5:26-28) does not mean the word “rich” itself has negative connotations (cf. Deut. 6:10-12; Prov. 10:22; 14:24; 18:4). He opines that the text suggests a contrast between the intention of the enemies to bury him among criminals and God's intervention which resulted in his burial among the rich. If this

analysis is right then “the rich” must be understood as a noble person with material wealth. The researcher agrees with Grogan (1986:304) that the parallelism between “the wicked” and “the rich” is “not synonymous but antithetical, the first line indicating the human intention and the second the divinely ordained intervention and transference.”

The noun *מְרָמָה* (“deceit”) means treacherous or cunning deeds or words that seek to gain an advantage for the person using them. The statement *לֹא מְרָמָה בְּפִי* (“there was no deceit in his mouth”) signifies the servant’s innocence and guiltlessness; he never spoke deceitfully.

3.6.3.5 *Salvation brought by the servant (Isa. 53:10-12)*

10. *וַיְהִי הַחֵפֶץ דַּכָּאוֹ הַחֲלִי אִם־תִּשִׂים אֲשֶׁם נִפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יֶאֱרִיךְ יָמִים וְחִפְץ יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלַח:*

11. *מִעֲמַל נִפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יֹשֶׁבַע בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדֵי לְרַבִּים וְעוֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל:*

לְכֵן אֲחַלֵּק־לוֹ בְּרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יַחְלַק שְׁלָל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה לְמוֹת נִפְשׁוֹ וְאֶת־פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֲטָא־

רַבִּים נִשָּׂא וְלִפְשָׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ: 12.

The final strophe begins with a *waw* conjunction which contrasts the earth-bound perspective of the servant in the previous verses with the divine perspective of the servant’s sufferings. The first part of verse 10 makes it clear that the death of the servant is not accidental but for a divine purpose and in accordance with the will of the servant. By addressing YHWH in the third person Isaiah makes the point that YHWH is not the offeror but the receiver of the offering (cf. v. 12; Young 1965:354). YHWH’s desire (*חֵפֶץ*) refers to his permission for his servant to suffer to save people rather than his “reactive delight” in the suffering. Though the sufferings were afflicted by wicked humans, YHWH was still in control.

The word *דָּכָא* could mean literally “crush him” (as in v. 5) or figuratively “cleanse or purge him”, or “vindicate him” (Goldingay and Payne 2006:319). According to Goldingay and Payne (2006:319), the nature of the audience demands literal reading. “Crush him” expresses an intense emotional and spiritual attack. The word *חָלָה* (“grief”; lit. “sick”), like in verse 3, refers to both physical and spiritual sufferings.

Isaiah presents the servant's death as $\mu\psi\chi$ ("sin offering"). The guilt offering was a male or female animal without defect sacrificed to God as a means of expiating unintentional sins committed against another human being or God (see for example, Lev. 5:15-19). The offering in this text differs in some respects. First, this offering is never applied to a human being except in this text. Second, it is only here that it is presented by another person rather than the sinner. Further, it is only here that the Old Testament talks about "laying down" ($\mu\psi$) the victim on the altar (Gen. 17:3; 22:9); the worshipper normally "brings it" to the altar. It is also important to note that $\mu\psi\chi$ is "one of the two main exclusively expiatory sacrifices", the other being $\tau\alpha\theta\eta$ (Ha 2009:95).

The use of $\mu\psi\chi$ is significant because it indicates that a servant's life is given as a "guilt" or "reparation offering", not as a burnt or purification sacrifice. The guilt offering signifies compensation or restitution for failing to have faith in YHWH. Isaiah is therefore calling attention to the people's disloyalty to their covenant relationship with YHWH. Also, the offering provides satisfaction for all kinds of sin, be it intentional or unintentional. Therefore, it is sufficient to provide reconciliation and forgiveness (Mackay 2009:361).

The second part of the verse implies a long life for the servant and this raises questions about the reality of his death stated in verses 8-9. If one takes the servant's death in verse 8-9 as a metaphor for his sufferings then the problem is solved. However, if one takes his death as literal, the statement in the present verse may refer figuratively to the servant's disciples who will continue his work in the world, and thereby "prolong" his life. Another solution is to consider the present text as referring to his resurrection of the servant as the GECL renders it "he will be brought back to life and will have descendants."

While the expression "seeing one's grandchildren" implies long life (Gen. 50:23; Psa. 128:6; Job 42:16), "seeing one offspring/children" hardly means longevity. The noun $\nu\tau\tilde{\nu}$ ("offspring" or "seed") draws on both the promise in the *protoevangelium* (Gen. 3:15) and also the promise made to Abraham that his seed would inherit the land (Gen. 17:2-8). In the opinion of the researcher, the view that is consistent with the train of thought in the poem is the one that considers the offspring as the servant's spiritual descendants who benefit from his atoning work. That he will be alive to see these offspring though may not

teach the resurrection explicitly, surely points to “the reversal of the servant’s fortunes in which he personally participates” (Mackay 2009:361). This position seems to have support from the Targums which regard the offspring as a kingdom, precisely “the kingdom of their Anointed” (Goldingay and Payne 2006:321-322). The expression “he shall prolong his days” means he will live in all eternity. The message is that the servant’s sufferings will not be in vain.

Verse 11a concludes the assertion about the servant’s disciples. The noun *למל* (“fruit” or “travail”) means “the outcome or results of an action.” The servant’s *למל שפך* (“travail of his soul”) refers to his inner turmoil or anguish, that is, his life of suffering. The verb *וַיִּשְׂבַּח* (“and be satisfied”) describes the servant’s reaction to what he sees. The servant will be content with what he sees because he will feel that his work is complete.

The verb *קִיְיַדְוּ* is a *hiphil* form of the verb *קִיְדַ*. In the *hiphil* form, *קִיְיַדְוּ* means “do justly, declare or make righteous, justify, vindicate.” In the opinion of Young (1965:358), the people are declared righteous because they have received the servant’s righteousness so that God now accepts them as his own. This is made possible because the servant has carried the sins of the people and has suffered the required penalty. Therefore, the people’s sins are not counted against them.

Verse 11b-12 record YHWH’s comments about the servant’s achievements and the reward he will receive. The verb *עָרַע* (“pour out”) means laying something bare by removing contents (cf. Psa. 141:8) (Oswalt 1998:406). It may be used in connection with the pouring out of one’s lifeblood to imply death (Deut. 12:23; Lev. 17:14). In the present text “pouring out of the servant’s soul” means the servant died willingly or he died actually (Mackay 2009:365).

Verse 12 tells what YHWH will do to the servant because he (the servant) suffered for others. The use of the conjunction *לְכֵן* (“Therefore”), according to Oswalt (1998:405), is echoed in Philippians 2:9: In obedience to YHWH, the servant has descended to the lowest depths and he is now to be exalted to the greatest heights. The word *אֶחָדְלִי* (“I will divide him a portion”) means God will give him something good. To have a portion and divide the spoils recalls the ancient military practice of a war general sharing items

taken from the enemy (Psa. 68:18). But here, it is not used in the military sense; “the chapter is returning to the kingly imagery of 52:13-15” (Goldingay and Payne 2006:328).

The word *רַבִּים* (“the great” or “the many”) (see verse 11 and 52:14) may refer to greatness in number or important/powerful/influential people. The victorious army is strong or mighty (*מוֹצֵי*). The figurative nature of the first two lines is to guide exegetes and translators. According to Young (1965:359), “the many and the strong” refers to the servant’s spiritual seed mentioned in verse 10. Mackay (2009:364) also sees a possible connection between “the strong” and the kings of 52:15 who became speechless upon realizing what the servant had done and they are now conquered and treated as war booties to be disposed of according to the servant’s discretion. Whatever one’s position, it is clear that the offspring of the servant has a share in the spoils of his victory. The whole point is beautifully captured by GNB in a nonfigurative language: “And so I will give him a place of honor, a place among the great and powerful.”

The word *פֹּשְׁעִים* (“transgressors”) derives from the same root as the one rendered “transgressions” in verse 5; it means criminals who defy God’s law (cf. 53:5). The expression *וְנִמְנָה וְאֶת־פֹּשְׁעִים* (“and he was numbered among transgressors”) means the servant was treated in the same way as the wicked. According to Oswalt (1998:406) the word “transgressors” refers “God’s strongest term of condemnation for his people (cf. 1:2; 46:8; 48:8; 57:4; 59:12-13; 66:24).” Therefore, it is not praiseworthy to have died with them. The word *אֶשֶׁר* has the same meaning as in verse 4, “to carry.”

The statement *וְיִפְגַּע לְפֹשְׁעִים* (“and he will make intercession for transgressors”) underscores the mediatory role of the servant on behalf of the guilty. However, it goes beyond just praying for the transgressors to include the act of intervention on their behalf (as 59:16 makes clear) with his own perfect blood (Heb. 9:11-14).

The study of the fourth song cannot be complete without linking it to New Testament Christology. From the New Testament perspective, the most vivid picture of the servant portrayed in the passage is that of Jesus Christ who likewise suffered and eventually died for the salvation of humanity but was finally glorified and exalted (Phil. 2:5-11). Kaiser (2012:89ff) therefore rightly points out that Christ is indeed the servant of God who

accomplishes the redemptive task of the servant in Isaiah's fourth servant song (cf. Matt. 12:17-21; Acts 8:32-35; see allusions to Isa. 53 in Mark 10:45; 14:24). This point will be explored further when the study examines atonement from the New Testament perspective.

3.7 Conclusion

The key findings in this chapter could be summarized as follows. Humanity was created in God's image without sin. Humanity's initial holiness was however susceptible to compromise because humankind, as a moral being, was endowed with the ability to choose good or bad. Such a provision was necessary to make humans continue to live as free moral beings. Sin entered God's perfect universe through Lucifer both in the angelic world and in the human world. The greatest effect of the Fall is the universal sinful pollution it brought upon the human race.

The concept of sin is multifaceted—transgression, crookedness, missing the right mark and hitting the wrong one and so on. Though sin has a social dimension it ultimately affects God. Therefore, the sinner needs forgiveness not only from the human victim(s) of his/her sin but more importantly from God.

The study of three key passages in this chapter brought to the fore foreshadows of Jesus's death and resurrection. The *Yom Kippur* ritual (Lev. 16) foreshadows the death of Christ which expiates sin. Psalm 51 stresses that true repentance, confession and restoration is grounded in a true understanding of sin and its effect both on humanity and on God. YHWH's servant presented in Isaiah 52:13—53:12, prefigures the Christ who suffers according to God's will and purpose, and through his suffering redeems humanity from their sins. He bears human sins and dies in their stead. In the end, the servant, like Christ, is exalted to the highest position.

Having examined the Old Testament dimension of atonement, the study proceeds to examine the concept of atonement in the New Testament.

CHAPTER FOUR

ATONEMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

4.1 Introduction

The New Testament accounts for the early apostolic witness to God's salvific activity with key emphasis on the necessity of Christ's death, its sacrificial and vicarious nature, its reconciliatory and redemptive significance and its character as a fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system, among others. Therefore, having laid an Old Testament foundation for the concept of atonement in the previous chapter, the study now proceeds to examine Mark 14:12-26; Romans 3:21-26; 5:1-21, and Hebrews 9:11-14 as a way of exploring the contributions the New Testament makes to atonement theology. Before the exegetical reading of the selected texts, the researcher deems it necessary to consider briefly atonement theology in the Jewish intertestamental period because this period gives the immediate environment into which Christianity was born.

4.2 A brief look at atonement in the intertestamental period

The intertestamental period is the period between the last book of the Old Testament and the birth of Jesus Christ. This period was characterized by high religious zeal, intense nationalism and ethnic separation resulting from Nehemiah's reforms in the post-exilic era and the infiltration of foreign ideas into the Jewish society (Ekem 2005:30). Consequently, central Zoroastrian concepts like angelology, demonology and eschatology influenced Judaism as well as intertestamental literature. In addition, the Maccabean revolt of 166 BCE in reaction to Hellenistic tendencies of the rule of Alexander the Great also serves as background to intertestamental theology.

Intertestamental theology attributes atoning efficacy to suffering, especially when it leads to death. It was believed that a person wins God's favor through suffering no matter the source of the suffering (cf. Psalms of Solomon 10:1; 13:9). The Mishna encourages criminals to confess their sins before their death and if one does not know how to confess,

he/she was to say “Let my death be an atonement for all my transgressions” (Sanhedrin 6:2). Other means of atonement included prayers and fasting (cf. Psalms of Solomon 3:9); almsgiving (Ben Sirach 29:12), good deeds and piety (1QS 8:3; 9:3-5) praying for the dead to be forgiven (2 Macc. 12:43-45). In the last text, asserts Ekem (2005:33), one finds “attempts to spiritualize and give an eschatological flavor to the concept of sacrifice as a means of atonement by incorporating the ideas of faith, the resurrection of the dead, and the future rewards of the righteous.”

In addition, 2 and 4 Maccabees present martyrdom as having an atoning and salvific effect. It is in this light that the Maccabean martyrs prayed that their righteous deaths result in earthly expiation for their own people (4 Macc. 6:27–29; 17:21-22; 18:4; cf. 2 Macc. 7:37-38; 4 Macc. 1:11). According to DeSilva (2003:895) what atones for sin is not just the death of the martyrs but their obedience to God even to the point of death which turns aside God’s wrath. Again, the death of a prophet was perceived to have atoning significance (Sanhedrin 11:5). Ideas of martyrdom as an atoning sacrifice are relevant in the New Testament text which depicts Christ as a vicarious atoning sacrifice. As this chapter attempts to demonstrate, New Testament writers drew on these ideas from pre-Christian Judaism to interpret the Christ Event.

4.3 Exegesis of Mark 14:12-26

4.3.1 Historical context of Mark 14:12-26

The gospel of Mark is a very important document in Christianity. Yet, before the period of critical New Testament scholarship, Mark was neglected and considered as an abridged form of Matthew, which was considered as the first gospel account documented (France 2002:39; DeSilva 2018:174). Mark became a prominent book in Christian scholarship when critical scholars proved beyond doubt that it was written first among the gospels and was used as a source document for the gospels of Matthew and Luke (Ayegboyin 2015:65; DeSilva 2018:174).

Like the other gospels, Mark does not name its author. There are however strong reasons for attributing this gospel to John Mark. Church Fathers (including Justin Martyr,

Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, among others) agreed unanimously that John Mark authored the gospel of Mark (Ayegboyin 2015:65). Papias (ca. AD 110) was the first Father to attribute this gospel to John Mark (Grassmick 1983:95; Ayegboyin 2015:65; DeSilva 2018:174-175). These Church Fathers maintained that John Mark was an eye witness or follower of Jesus (though not a disciple himself) who accompanied Peter and witnessed his preaching, serving as Peter's interpreter, and reproducing Peter's sermons accurately, though not chronologically (France 2002:40-41; Ayegboyin 2015:67).

Internal evidence supporting John Mark's authorship of the gospel of Mark includes the fact that he came into contact with Peter (Acts 12:12). Also, the author was conversant with the geography of Palestine particularly Jerusalem (Mark 5:1; 6:53; 8:10; 11:1; 13:3), Aramaic which was the common language in first-century Palestine (Mark 5:41; 7:11, 34; 14:36) and Jewish traditions (Mark 1:21; 2:14, 16, 18; 7:2-4). His connection with Peter is attested by "the eyewitness vividness" in the account which suggests they were derived from the memories of "inner circle" apostolic eyewitness like Peter (cf. 1:16-20, 29-31, 35-38; 5:21-24, 35-43; 6:39, 53-54; 14:32-42). Furthermore, the author's use of Peter's word and works (cf. 8:29, 32-33; 9:5-6; 10:28-30; 14:29-31, 66-72) and the striking resemblance between the outline of Mark and Peter's sermon in Acts 10:34-43 favor John Mark's authorship (Grassmick 1983:96).

Most scholars believe that Mark was written in Rome for Gentile believers (France 2002:38; Gundry 2012:153). Testimonies in support of this argument include Jewish customs explained by the author (cf. 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42); the translation of Aramaic expressions into Greek (cf. 3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 9:43; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 24), the use of several Latin terms in preference to their Greek equivalents (cf. 5:9; 6:27; 12:15, 42; 15:16, 39), the use of Roman time system (cf. 6:48; 13:35); the fact that only Mark identifies Simon of Cyrene as Alexander's and Rufus' father (cf. 15:12; Rom. 16:23); the use of only a few Old Testament quotations and the writer's concern for "all the nations" (cf. 5:18-20; 7:24-8:10; 11:117; 13:10; 14:9) (Grassmick 1983:99).

No scholarly consensus has been reached concerning the date of writing of Mark and so different dates have been proposed. Irenaeus, for example, dates Mark after the

martyrdom of Peter (ca. AD 64-68) while both Clement and Origen believe that it was written while Peter was alive (Grassmick 1983:98; Ayegboyin 2015:73). The debate has yielded two major views, an earlier date of AD 40-50 (if it was written before the death of Peter) and a late date of AD 65-70 (if it was written after Peter's life) (Ayegboyin 2015:73). The nature of the debate points to the fact that the actual date for the writing of Mark cannot be determined with certainty.

The Gospel of Mark has various purposes, a summary of which is offered below (see Carson and Moo 2008:183-186; Gundry 2012:151-152). Mark's main purpose was evangelistic; thus, it was written to preach the gospel of Christ. It was also written for practical purpose in that this gospel gives practical guidance and support for believers based on Jesus's life and ministry. It was also meant to encourage persecuted Christians to stand firm. More so, Mark has apologetic and political purposes. Additionally, Mark was written for the catechetical and liturgical needs of the Church.

Identified sources for the composition of Mark include oral materials (transmitted over a long period after Jesus's ascension), Petrine source (particularly sections which can only be attributed to an "inner-circle" disciple of Christ such as Peter (cf. 1:16-20; 5:21-24; 9:2-8), Markan construction (portions which Mark himself constructed from oral traditions which are usually scanty, for example, 3:13-19; 6:6-13; 6:30-33) and pre-Markan material (Jewish sources which existed before Mark was written) (Ayegboyin 2015:75-76).

4.3.2 Literary context and structure of Mark 14:12-26

The Gospel according to Mark is the shortest of all the gospels because it includes fewer stories than any other gospel. Yet, it gives a fuller account of the same event recorded by any other gospel (Edwards 2002:10). Among the gospels, only Mark describes itself as "gospel" (1:1) and this underscores the fact that its main concern is to give an account of Jesus's life, ministry, passion and death. This does not mean that Mark is a biography of Jesus—that is, an organized historical account of Jesus, beginning with his family background, his birth, early childhood, education, marriage, career and so on. Rather, Mark like the other gospels is selective based on the needs of his addressees.

Mark shows a preference for Latin words when Greek words are equally available (Wessel 1984:612). There is also evidence of huge Aramaic influence on Mark's language, which makes his Greek rough, unrefined, redundant, repetitious and inferior to other New Testament writers (Wessel 1984:612; Ayegboyin 2015:79). Edwards (2002:11) describes Mark's style of writing as predominantly forceful, fresh and vigorous. Support for this claim can be adduced from Mark's numerous use of the historical present (that is, the use of the present tense to relate past event [151 times]) and his use of the adverb "immediately" or "straight-away" (41 times), which makes readers think they are reading "an on-the-spot" account (Wessel 1984:612; DeSilva 2018:179). Other literary features of Mark include direct addresses (cf. 2:10); indirect addresses (cf. 13:37) and rhetorical questions (cf. 4:14). Mark's gospel is chronologically arranged.

Another literary technique used by Mark is intercalation, that is, the insertion of a second, seemingly unrelated story into an ongoing story. Mark 11 has an example of intercalation (A-B-A): the cursing of the fig tree (11:12-14), the cleaning of the temple (11:15-19), and the withered fig tree (11:20-25) in which the withering of the fig tree is usually to be read symbolically as a prediction of the destruction of the temple.

Different scholars divide this Gospel differently depending on their focus. The researcher however finds the fourfold division of Mark presented by Gruenler (2008:766) as appropriate for the study: (1) Thematic prologue (1:1-15); (2) Jesus's preaching of the good news in the wilderness and the city (1:16-8:26); (3) Jesus's invasion of the hostile city of Jerusalem (8:27-15:47) and (4) Unfinished epilogue (16:1-8). According to this division, the text under consideration (that is, 14:12-26) falls within 8:27-15:47 which Gruenler (2008:766) divides further into Jesus's journey to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52), Jesus's confrontation with Jerusalem (11:1-13:37) and Jerusalem's opposition to Jesus (14:1-15:47).

Therefore, the immediate context for the pericope under study is 14:1-15:7 which deals with the various ways in which the city of Jerusalem showed opposition to Jesus. The section that immediately precedes the text under consideration (14:1-11) deals with the account of an unnamed woman who anointed Jesus as a way of highlighting Jesus's

nature as the anointed One and also to prepare him for his burial. In this account, the spiritual insight and generosity of this woman are contrasted with the high priests' (14:1-2) and Judas' spiritual blindness (14:10-11).

Then comes 14:12-26 which divides conveniently into three parts. The first section (14:12-16; cf. Matt. 26:16-19; Luke 22:7-13) deals basically with the preparations for the Passover meal including the time and setting (v. 12); Jesus sending two disciples to Jerusalem to go and secure the venue for the celebration (v. 13-15) and the preparation of the Passover meal itself (v. 16). This is followed by the initial phase of the meal with Jesus's prophecy about his betrayal by Judas (14:17-21; Matt. 26:20-25; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:21-30).

The last part is the institution of the Lord's Supper (14:22-26; cf. Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). Mathew's account shows great resemblance with the Markan account and the Lukan and Pauline accounts also have certain agreements. Commonalities among all the four accounts include the taking of bread, the blessing of the bread (or thanksgiving), the breaking of the bread, the saying "This is my body" and the taking of the cup. The command for the continual observance of this Sacrament is absent in Mark and Matthew. Mark believes that his audience is familiar with the details about the traditional blessings, prayers, and traditions related to the festival and so he does not include such details in his account (Beavis 2011:212-213).

Next, one reads of Jesus's prediction of his betrayal by Peter (14:27-31), Jesus's prayer and arrest (14:32-52) both of which move him closer to his death, and then his trials before the high priest (14:53-72), before Pilate (15:1-15) and eventually his crucifixion and death (15:16-15:47).

With the background given above, the study now moves on to read the text closely.

4.3.3 Close reading of Mark 14:12-26

4.3.3.1 *The preparations for the Passover meal (Mark 14:12-16)*

12 *Καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν ἀζύμων, ὅτε τὸ πάσχα ἔθουον, λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, Ποῦ θέλεις ἀπελθόντες ἐτοιμάσωμεν ἵνα φάγης τὸ πάσχα;*

13. *καὶ ἀποστέλλει δύο τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ὑπάγετε εἰς τὴν πόλιν, καὶ ἀπαντήσῃ ὑμῖν ἄνθρωπος κεράμιον ὕδατος βαστάζων· ἀκολουθήσατε αὐτῷ*

14. *καὶ ὅπου ἐὰν εἰσέλθῃ εἶπατε τῷ οἰκοδεσπότη ὅτι Ὁ διδάσκαλος λέγει, Ποῦ ἐστὶν τὸ κατάλυμά μου ὅπου τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου φάγω;*

15. *καὶ αὐτὸς ὑμῖν δεῖξει ἀνάγαιον μέγα ἐστρωμένον ἔτοιμον· καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐτοιμάσατε ἡμῖν.*

16. *καὶ ἐξῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ καὶ ἦλθον εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ εὔρον καθὼς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἠτοίμασαν τὸ πάσχα.*

This section begins with the temporal clause *τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν ἀζύμων* (“on the first day the Unleavened Bread”) which ordinarily would mean the 15th day of the month of Nisan (Friday), a day following the celebration of the Passover the previous evening (Wessel 1984:758; Stein 2008:645). However, the additional description that it was on this day that the Passover lambs were sacrificed means it is the fourteenth day of Nisan (Thursday) that the writer has in mind here (Wessel 1984:758). The word “lambs” (*αρνιά*) is not actually found explicitly in the Greek text but translators supply it because the context demands it (see Exod. 12:1-20; Lev. 23:5-8; Num. 28:16-25). Donahue and Harrington 2002:np) maintain that the imperfect verb *ἔθουον* (“were sacrificing”) connotes a customary action and should be understood as “when they customarily sacrificed.”

The expression *τὸ πάσχα* (“the Paschal lamb” or “the Passover lamb”) reminisces Exodus 12 where God asked each Israelite household to kill an unblemished young male lamb and paint their doorframes with the blood of the lamb to serve as a protection for them against the killing of firstborns by the angel of death. From the text one notes that the Last Supper which Jesus partook prior to his arrest, trial and crucifixion, is the Passover meal. Lane (1974:497) gives a number of reasons to substantiate this position. The first

evidence is the return to Jerusalem for the Supper (Mark 14:17; cf. John 12:12, 18, 20; 13:2; 18:1) in accordance with the stipulations in Deuteronomy 16:5–8 that the Passover meal can only be eaten within the walls of Jerusalem. Secondly, the practice of reclining at the table (14:18; cf. John 13:12, 23, 25, 28) satisfies a requirement of the Passover celebration in the first-century Greco-Roman world custom required everyone to recline for the festive and formal meal. More so, Jesus's act of breaking of the bread during the meals and after the serving of a dish (14:18-20, 20)— unlike the normal meal practice of breaking the bread before serving the dish— depicts the Passover meal in which the breaking of the bread was preceded by the eating of bitter herbs. Further, the use of wine was reserved for festivals like Passover rather than ordinary meals where water (instead of wine) was normally drunk. Moreover, the meal was eaten late at night (1 Cor. 11:23; John 13:30), unlike the normal supper which was taken in the late afternoon.

Granted that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, one can validly conclude that the day on which Jesus was arrested, condemned and crucified was Friday, 15th Nisan (reckoned from sundown to sundown). John's (18:28 cf. 19:14, 31, 42) account of the priests' concern to fast track Jesus's crucifixion in order not to be defiled with the effect of being disqualified to eat "the *pesach*" (suggesting that it was the day following Jesus's crucifixion that the Passover was celebrated) seems to oppose this position. In handling this challenge, Lane (1974:498) maintains that there were other "paschal sacrifices" referred to as *chagigah* (lambs, kids, bulls) which were offered throughout the festival week." Old Testament use of *pesach* to designate these paschal sacrifices (in Deut. 16:2 and 2 Chron. 35:7) makes it highly probable that "the *pesach*" of John 18:28 refers not to the paschal lamb (which would have been eaten on 14th Nisan during the Last Supper) but to one of the paschal sacrifices. It is also important to note that the Feast of the Unleavened Bread lasted seven days (Stein 2008:646) and according to Josephus (JW 2.1.3; 5.3.1; Ant. 14.2.1; 17.9.3; 18.2.2.; 20.5.3) it began on the fourteenth day of Nisan (see also France 2002:563-564).

Jesus's reference to *κεράμιον ὕδατος* ("a jar of water"; v.13), according to Edwards (2002:420), places "the meeting in the vicinity of the pool of Siloam on Mt. Zion, to which water was diverted by Hezekiah's tunnel from Jerusalem's only water source, the Gihon

spring.” Both Stein (2008:647) and Lane (1974:499) maintain that in Jewish culture, it was normally women who carried water and therefore a man carrying water was easy to be identified. Keener (2014:166) challenges this view and argues that wealthy families (as probably the case here) employed the services of male servants to carry water for them. The researcher opines that while one can be certain that the owner of the house was wealthy, (indicated by the description as a “large upper room” instead of a single storey peasant house), there is no certainty as to the location or identity of the owner of the house.

The expression *ὅπου ἐὰν εἰσέλθῃ* (“wherever he enters”; v.14) is used not in the generic or distributive sense as implying that the man was likely to enter a number of houses and that the disciples should inquire of each householder but to signify that the disciples should inquire of that house in which the man enters. After locating the house, the disciples were to find out from the owner of the household about the guest room reserved for Jesus and his disciples. Jesus’s request of *κατάλυμά* (“a lodging” or “a guest room”; v. 14) is in line with the Jewish requirement that residents of Jerusalem reserve room during this festive period to accommodate pilgrims who came from all over the country to celebrate the Passover. The title *Ὁ διδάσκαλος* (“The teacher”) underscores that the owner of the house knew Jesus (Edwards 2002:421).

Verse 15 describes the room which was provided for Jesus and his disciples as *ἀνάγειον μέγα ἐστρωμένον ἔτοιμον* (“a large upper room, furnished and ready”). The verb *ἐστρωμένον* (“furnished”) refers not primarily to furniture but to what is required for the occasion, such as rugs, a dining table and reclining couches (France 2002:565; Stein 2008:647). The possibility exists that the owner of the house had secured the necessary food items as well as the Passover lamb for the celebration and so all that the two disciples needed to do was to prepare the meal itself including roasted lamb, unleavened bread, a bowl of saltwater, a bowl of bitter herbs, fruit sauce, and wine (Taylor 1984:538).

All that Jesus told the disciples were fulfilled exactly (v.16). Both Cranfield (1959:422) and France (2002:564) argue that the close correspondence between Jesus’s instructions and their fulfillment suggests a pre-arranged sign than divine foreknowledge. However, one

can agree with Beavis (2011:211) that “in the context of the Passion Narrative, the incident contributes to the theme of Jesus’s prophetic foreknowledge of the events culminating in his death and resurrection.”

4.3.3.2 Jesus’s prophecy about his betrayal (Mark 14:17-21)

17. *Καὶ ὀψίας γενομένης ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν δώδεκα.*

18. *καὶ ἀνακειμένων αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσθιόντων ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἷς ἐξ ὑμῶν παραδώσει με ὁ ἐσθίων μετ’ ἐμοῦ.*

19. *ἤρξαντο λυπεῖσθαι καὶ λέγειν αὐτῷ εἷς κατὰ εἷς, Μήτι ἐγώ;*

20. *ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Εἷς τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος μετ’ ἐμοῦ εἰς τὸ τρίβλιον.*

21. *ὅτι ὁ μὲν υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑπάγει καθὼς γέγραπται περὶ αὐτοῦ, οὐαὶ δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ δι’ οὗ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται· καλὸν αὐτῷ εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος.*

Jesus arrives with the Twelve in the evening, referring to the beginning of the day of the Passover (15th Nisan) (Taylor 1984:540). Stein (2008:647) argues that *τῶν δώδεκα* (“the Twelve”) is used here conventionally to refer to the ten disciples who were not sent by Jesus. If Peter and John had joined their colleagues after the Passover preparation, then the disciples would be twelve in number and hence be described rightly as “the Twelve.” There is however no clue from the text to choose one position over the other.

The expression *ἀνάκειμαι* (“at table”) actually means “to recline” or “to be in a horizontal position.” The Passover meal was originally eaten while standing (Exod. 12:11). However, by Jesus’s time, the Jews had adopted the Greco-Roman culture of reclining on couches during festive and formal meals, “as a sign that the people were no longer slaves, but free men” (Taylor 1984:540).

In the course of the meal, Jesus revealed that one of his Twelve disciples will betray him (v. 18). The noun *παραδίδομι* (“betray”) literally means “to deliver” or “to hand over”. The word *Ἀμὴν* (“Truly” or “Amen”) underscores the trustworthiness of the statement that

follows. The explanatory expression *ὁ ἐσθίων μετ' ἐμοῦ* (“one who is eating with me”) alludes to Psalm 41:9 where the poor righteous sufferer cries that his close friend whom he trusted and who ate bread with him had “lifted his heel” against him (France 2002:566). Keener (2014:166) cites the example of two ancient warriors who stopped fighting each other simply because one learned that his father had hosted the other warrior’s father for a dinner to illustrate the importance attached to eating a meal together with another person. Against this backdrop, to betray a friend after dining with him/her was (and still is) very treacherous.

It is clear that Mark’s focus is not on Judas and so he neither records Judas’ question separately (Matt. 26:25) nor records the question which led to the identification of Judas as the culprit, and eventually made him leave the group to gather his gang to arrest Jesus at Gethsemane (John 13:23-30). Jesus’s prophecy about his betrayal filled the disciples with sorrow (indicated by the verb *λυπέω*, lit. meaning “to be distressed” or “grief”) and led to an active “soul-searching” by each participant (Edwards 2002:423; Taylor 1984:539). One by one, the disciples (including even Judas; cf. Matt. 26:25) sought to clear themselves using the interrogative *Μήτι ἐγώ* (lit. “It is not I, is it?”), which serves as a protest of loyalty rather than a request for information.

Jesus then narrows the identity of his betrayer to *Εἷς τῶν δώδεκα* (“one of the Twelve”), thereby exonerating the other participants at the meal (v.20). Here, the verb *ἐμβάπτω* signifies the dipping of the bread into a sauce, rather than a complete submersion of it. The noun *τρύβλιον* (“bowl”) refers to the dish placed in the center of the table containing the sauce into which bread was dipped for eating during the Passover meal (Cranfield 1959:424). The expression *ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος μετ' ἐμοῦ εἰς τὸ τρύβλιον* (“one who dips bread in the bowl with me”) is a metaphorical way of underscoring the depth of the treachery (Witherington 2001:373; Taylor 1984:541; see v.18).

The progression of dialogue in verses 18-20 suggests that there were other people at the meals apart from Jesus and the Twelve. After prophesying that one of those dining with him will hand him over (v.18); each of them sorrowfully asks, “Surely not I?” (v. 19); Jesus then specifies that it will be “one of the Twelve” (14:20), suggesting that the betrayer is

not part of the larger circle of disciples but of “the Twelve.” Certainly, the eating of Passover meal required familial setting including men, women and children (Exod. 12:3-4). Mark however might have omitted these details because it was part of the socio-religious background he shared with his audience.

The particle *ὅτι* (“for”) (at the beginning of v. 21) indicates that the reason for Jesus’s betrayal is about to be supplied. The verb *ὑπάγω* (lit. “go forward” or “goes away”) is used in John (7:35; 8:14; 16:5) to refer to the return of Christ to his Father. In the Markan account, the motif of returning to the Father is not explicit; yet, Mark makes it clear that Jesus is about to end his earthly life. The verb *γέγραπται* (“as it is written”, that is, “as the Scriptures say about him”) highlights that Jesus’s betrayal and suffering are following divine purpose or foreordination (Donahue and Harrington 2002:np). Edwards (2002:424) argues that these words by Jesus highlight “the paradox of the crucifixion and atonement” in that though the betrayal was the height of wickedness, it is a necessity to ensuring that God’s salvific plan is carried out (Acts 3:17–18; 4:27–28). Yet, Jesus states that the betrayer is not exonerated of guilt because he will act freely in betraying him (Jesus). Certainly, God’s sovereignty and human responsibility come to play in such a way that the former neither cancels human freedom nor relieves responsibility for one’s moral choices, hence the *ούαί* (“woe”) (Cranfield 1959:424).

Jesus’s reference to himself as *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* (“The Son of man”) is important to the present study. In the Old Testament, the title is used to signify “an individual” or humanity in general (Psa. 12:8; 80:17-19), the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:1; 3:17) or an individual who comes to the Ancient of days to receive everlasting dominion, glory and a kingdom (Dan. 7:13, 14, 26ff.). In Jewish apocalyptic literature, this title refers to a divine being who would manifest himself at the end of this age as the judge of all humans and complete finally God’s salvation for humanity (1 Enoch 47–71 and 4 Ezra 13).

In the gospels, the title “The Son of man” is used exclusively by Jesus himself about 82 times—Matthew (32x); Mark (14x); Luke (26x) and John (10x) (Nel 2017:1). There are five more New Testament references to this title (Acts 7:56; Heb. 2:6; Rev. 1:13–15 [2x] and 14:14). Jesus uses this title eight times in Mark in the context of his own suffering,

death, and resurrection (8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21a, 21b, 41) in a way similar to Daniel's use. In addition, "Son of man" has eschatological connotations (Mark 8:38; 13:26, 34; 14:6). The title also depicts Jesus as a human being who represents all humanity (Nel 2017:9). Jesus's preference for this title helps him not only to emphasize his mission as YHWH's suffering servant but also to avoid the political connotations associated with terms like Messiah.

4.3.3.3 The institution of the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-26)

22. *Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶπεν, Λάβετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου.*

23. *καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες.*

24. *καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.*

25. *ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ πίνω ἐκ τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ὅταν αὐτὸ πίνω καινὸν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.*

This section accounts for the institution of the Lord's Supper which took place at Jesus's last Passover celebration. The narrative portion of this verse has seven intransitive Greek verbs—*ἐσθίω* ("eat"); *λαμβάνω* ("take" or "grasp"); *εὐλογέω* ("bless"); *κλάω* ("break"); *δίδωμι* ("give"), *εἶπον* ("say") and *λαμβάνω* ("take" or "grasp")—all of which underline Jesus's gracious act on behalf of his disciples. These verbs echo the account of Jesus's miraculous feedings of the five thousand (Mark 6:41 [31–44]) and four thousand (Mark 8:6 [1–9]).

According to France (2002:563), the Passover meal was a symbolic one that needed to be interpreted from generation to generation. Accordingly, the Passover liturgy required the youngest child to ask about the origin and reason for the celebration (Exod. 12:25–27) and the family head or the host (in this case Jesus Christ) to answer him by recounting the biblical account of the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage (see also Deut. 26:5-9) (France 2002:563). It was in fulfillment of this liturgical requirement that

Jesus (after blessing the bread, and having broken and distributed it to his disciples) made the statement *τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου* (“this is my body”).

There is a debate as to whether this statement is to be read literally or figuratively. The literal interpretation holds that the bread that Jesus gave to his disciples was his actual body and so when the priest blesses the bread it transforms into the actual body of Christ. The literal interpretation is not plausible because it does not even agree with the standard Jewish interpretation of the Passover bread. Keener (2014:166-167) asserts that when Jews say “This is the bread of affliction our ancestors ate when they came from Egypt” they do not mean that what they are now eating is the same as the one their ancestors ate so many centuries ago but rather that, what they have in their hands today represents what they ancestors ate in Egypt. In addition, the literal interpretation also seems to promote cannibalism. Evans (2001:390) maintains that the verb *ἐστιν* is used here in a translational value of “signifies” or “represents,” so that the bread becomes a symbol of Jesus’s body rather than the literal body.

The researcher adopts the figurative interpretation. The starting point of the journey to making meaning out of the debate is to recognize that the Aramaic language (which Jesus spoke) has no specific verb for the English verb “to be” in this kind of construction and so what Jesus said in Aramaic would be “This, my body” (Donahue and Harrington 2002:np). Therefore, the verb *ἐστιν* (“is”) was introduced by the gospel writer(s) who reported what Jesus said in Greek. Edwards (2002:425) argues strongly that the verb *ἐστιν* (“is”) should neither be understood as “represents”, “stands for” or “symbolizes” (because such understanding “weakens the relationship between Jesus and the bread to a figurative or symbolic likeness”) nor as literally equating the bread with Jesus’s body (because such understanding cannot be valid in this context when Jesus is still alive). Rather, it should be understood metaphorically as “means” or “conveys” to make Jesus’s statement “This bread *means* or *conveys* my body” (Edwards 2002:425). That is, Jesus was about to leave the disciples; but henceforth the breaking of the bread was to signify his personal presence with them.

Next, Jesus then took the cup and after giving thanks, gave it to the disciples to drink (v. 23). Though the text does not mention “wine”, the cup (*ποτήριον*) must be understood as a metonymy representing its content (in this case, wine). This was the third cup of wine which, like the other cups, is drunk after the family head *εὐχαριστέω* (“returns thanks”). The writer uses the expression *ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς* (“gave it to them”) in both this and the previous verse to highlight Jesus’s act of self-giving. The expression *ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες* “all drank of it” presumably indicates a single cup.

In verse 24 Jesus interprets the cup. The noun *διαθήκης* (“covenant” used only here in Mark) corresponds to the Hebrew *תּוֹרָה* and refers not to an agreement between co-equals but to (*συνθήκη*) but to God’s covenant with Israel, which Israel may accept or reject but cannot alter (Grassmick 1983:178). Donahue and Harrington (2002:np) maintain that the oldest manuscripts such as Vaticanus and Sinaiticus do not have the word *καινός* (“new”) qualifying the word “covenant” and therefore, it is likely that its addition here is due to Pauline (1 Cor. 11:25) influences.

Jesus’s last interpretative remarks concerning the blood is that it is poured out *ὑπὲρ πολλῶν* (“in behalf of many” or “for many”), signifying the vicarious nature of his sacrifice for humanity (Grassmick 1983:177). This statement alludes to a pre-Markan tradition in which the death of Christ is always considered as “for” others (Rom. 5:8; 8:32; 1 Cor. 11:24; Gal. 1:4; 2:20). In Mark, it echoes the statement “For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45 RSV) and ultimately alludes to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 whose soul is “poured out” for the lives of many (Evans 2001:392–394; France 2002:570). In English the word “many” usually means “not all”; however, in Aramaic and Hebrew “many” can be used in the inclusive sense to mean “all” (Donahue and Harrington 2002:np). If the inclusive use is intended here, then Mark is saying that the Christ Event is for the benefit of all humans. If on the other hand, the writer used “many” in the limited sense, then Christ died for those eternally selected to be saved. Deciding which position is valid in this passage lies beyond the scope of this research.

The expression τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον (used only here in Mark) means “the (blood) poured out” which is the shedding of Jesus’s own blood on the cross rather than the pouring of blood from a container. The Old Testament attests to the use of wine as a symbol of blood (see Gen 49:11; Deut. 32:14; Isa 49:26). Since blood symbolizes life (Lev. 17:11) the pouring out of Jesus’s blood metaphorically underlines the expression for his death on the cross (see Isa. 59:7 and Psa. 13:3). Here too Christ’s word must be taken as figurative so that one does not consider the wine in the cup as his actual blood. The expression “blood of the covenant” occurs many times in the ratification of God’s covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai through the sprinkling of blood on the people (cf. Exod. 24:1-8). In this passage, Moses tells Israel the laws he had received from God after which the people responded: “all which the Lord said we will do and we will obey” (LXX Exod. 24:3). Moses then prepares a sacrifice, reads the law of the Lord to the people who after hearing the law reply as before (v. 7). Moses then takes the blood of the prepared sacrifice and sprinkles it upon the Israelites, saying: “behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord made with you concerning all these words” (LXX Exod. 24:8). In the light of this text, one may consider Mark as identifying Jesus’s blood with the blood of Israel’s covenant to obedience. The text also echoes Zechariah 9:11, where YHWH speaks to the daughter of Zion (or Jerusalem), promising to redeem her captives “the blood of my covenant with you” (RSV).

The Passover ritual never interpreted the cup as blood because of the prohibition of drinking animal blood in the Law (Keener 2014:167). Thus, Jesus’s bloodshed on the cross inaugurates the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) in the same way that the sacrificial blood ratified the Old Covenant at Sinai (Exod. 24:6-8) (Edwards 2002:426). The sprinkling of the blood on the people in Exodus 24 corresponds to the drinking of the blood at the Last Supper (Cranfield 1959:272). By reinterpreting the bread as his body, Jesus identifies himself with the sacrificial lamb that is eaten at the celebration and his blood with the blood of the sacrificial victim that saved Israel (Evans 2001:386). No wonder Paul says “Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7 RSV). Therefore, France (2002:570) is right to note that “as God first rescued his people from Egypt and made his covenant with them at Sinai, so now there is a new beginning for the

people of God, and it finds its focus not on the ritual of animal sacrifice but through the imminent death of Jesus.”

Verse 25 focuses on the eschatological dimension of the Last Supper highlighted by Jesus’s final solemn prophetic declaration that he will not drink again of the fruit of the vine in this festive manner until the dawn of the Messianic kingdom (14:25; cf. Matt. 8:11–12; 22:1–10; Luke 13:28–29; 22:16; Rev. 2:7; 19:9; see also Isa. 25:6; 1 Enoch 72:14). This assertion echoes the Qumran community’s belief about an eschatological banquet which they will partake together with “an anointed priest and the Messiah of Israel” (1QSa 2; 1QS 2) (Witherington 2001:375). This vow by Jesus signifies that his death will serve as the basis for forming a redeemed community with which he will drink the vine again in God’s kingdom. The expression *γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου* (“fruit of the vine”) is a semiticism for the wine used for the Passover feast (Donahue and Harrington 2002:np).

The hymn referred to in verse 26 is probably the last part of the Hallel (Psa. 115-118) which was usually chanted antiphonally to end the Passover meal (Keener 2014:167; see Lane 1984:509). Afterward, Jesus and his disciples (without Judas) crossed the Kidron valley (cf. John 18:1) to the western side of the Mount of Olives before arrival in Gethsemane to be arrested and crucified in Jerusalem (Grassmick 1983:178).

4.4 Exegesis of Romans 3:21-26

4.4.1 Historical context of Romans 3:21-26

The book of Romans may be considered as a corpus of all Christian theology because it touches on almost all major doctrines of Christianity. New Testament scholars generally identify the Apostle Paul as the author of the epistle to the Romans (1:1). The book reflects Paul’s literary, historical, and theological style. Paul wrote the letter with the help of Tertius (see 16:22). The use of scribes for composing letters was not uncommon in the first-century Greco-Roman world. The early Church and Church Fathers also support Pauline authorship (Uzodimma 2018:32).

The Roman church was not established by Paul; it might have been formed by Palestinian and Syrian converts (cf. Acts 2:10) (Fitzmyer 2011:830). Whether the Roman church was

Jewish or Gentile in nature has been debated. However, Paul's emphasis on the Jewish nation (chs. 9-11), his references to Abraham (the father of the Jewish nation [ch. 4]), his direct references and allusions to the Jewish Scripture, and his defense of some Jewish traditions (2:17-3:8; 3:21-31; 6:1-7:6; 14:1-15:3) are used to argue for Jewish audience (Gundry 2012:432). Arguments for Gentile audience include Paul's assertions like "I am speaking to you Gentiles" (11:13 RSV); "among all the Gentiles...among whom you also are" (1:5-6 RSV), and that the recipients of the letter have received mercy because of the unbelief of the Jews (11:28-31), among others (Gundry 2012:432). The researcher opines that Paul's audience consisted of both Jews and Gentiles.

Like many other books of the Bible, the date of the writing of Romans cannot be known with certainty. However, most scholars date the book around the latter part of 57AD or the early part of 58 AD (Powell 2009:258). Paul probably wrote this letter immediately before he visited Jerusalem (15:23) (Fitzmyer 2011:830). If that is the case then Romans is one of the earliest epistles of the New Testament and this will explain why writers like Peter and James allude greatly to some texts in this epistle.

It appears Paul composed the letter from Corinth getting to the end of his third missionary journey (see Acts 18:23-21:15, especially 20:2-3; Gruenler 2008:924). Corinthian origin is supported by the fact that Gaius the Corinthian is hosting Paul at the time of writing this letter (16:3; cf. 1 Cor. 1:14); Paul's mention of Erastus, a city treasurer (16:23); Paul's praise of Phoebe of Cenchrea (the port city of Corinth; 16:1).

Romans was written for at least three reasons (Powell 2009:259; Fitzmyer 2011:830; Gundry 2012:433-434). First, it was written to resolve Jewish-Gentile tension in the Roman church (cf. Rom. 3:20-31; 11:17-32). It is because of this that Paul asked the Gentile Churches to support the Jerusalem Church which was in financial distress (see 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9). Paul's explanation of the basic tenets of the Christian gospel to the Romans betrays a missionary purpose of his letter (see 1:16; 3:8 and 9:1-2). Furthermore, Paul wrote the letter to win the financial support of his audience for his planned mission to Spain after visiting Rome (15:24, 28).

4.4.2 Literary context and structure of Romans 3:21-26

There is no doubt that Romans is an epistle, though scholars do not agree with the kind of epistle it is (Moo 1996:13). Suggested types include ambassadorial letter (Jewett 2007:5-20), protreptic letter, memorandum (Haacker cited in Moo 1996:15), tractate (a series theological arguments) (Carson and Moo 2008:402), to mention but a few. While there are traces of each of these features in the letter, it seems that on a whole, Romans is more of a tractate, consisting of a series of theological reflections on God's salvific plan and its realization in the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Paul begins his letter with traditional greetings (1:1) and continues to lay the foundation for his theology of salvation through faith, arguing that all humans, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under God's wrath because of sin and that it is impossible to be saved through the Law (1:18—3:20). Paul makes it clear that on the Day of Judgment all mouths will be shut because there is not even one who is righteous (3:19-20). This does not however mean that humans are incapable of doing any good. Paul states clearly that even those who are not under the law may be prompted by their conscience to do good (2:15). Yet, such good cannot take away God's wrath against humanity which is the result of sin.

He then comes to the text under consideration where he deals with Christ's atonement as a solution to the problem of God's wrath toward humanity. Paul explains how God's salvific plan was executed in the death and resurrection of Christ. He contends that as the God of all people, YHWH justifies everyone based on the same criteria (Gabrielson 2016:278). The main concern of this passage is how God justifies the sinner— whether a Jew or a Gentile. Themes like righteousness, justification, sanctification, and expiation are treated in this passage.

The passage is followed by Romans 3:27-31 which focuses on the implications of justification. This section stresses what verses 21-26 espouse but develops the argument further by demonstrating that “when faith is properly understood, it simultaneously enforces grace (Rom. 3:24) and provides the mechanism by which Jews and Gentiles alike may be justified” (Carson 2004:138-139). This faith excludes boasting (v. 27),

preserves grace (v. 28), is a necessity for all regardless of race (vv. 29-30) and does not nullify the law (v. 31).

The researcher adapts MacArthur's (1991:201) seven-fold division of the text with slight modification.⁵

- a. Righteousness apart from legalism (v. 21a)
- a. Righteousness built on revelation (v. 21b)
- b. Righteousness acquired by faith (v. 22a)
- c. Righteousness provided for all (v. 22b-23)
- d. Righteousness given freely through grace (v. 24a)
- e. Righteousness accomplished by redemption (v. 24b)
- f. Righteousness paid for through atoning sacrifice (v. 25a)
- g. Righteousness demonstrated by divine forbearance (vv. 25b-26)

The study proceeds to consider the text closely against the background outlined above

4.4.3 Close reading of Romans 2:21-26

4.4.3.1 Righteousness apart from legalism (Rom. 3:21a)

21a. *Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται*

Paul begins this unit with the expression *Νυνὶ δὲ* ("But now") which may signify a logical transition (moving to the next step in the argument; that is, "But as it is...") or a temporal transition (moving to the next point in time; that is, "But at the present ..."). Against the background of Paul's discussions on life under the old era of Law (characterized by sin) in Romans 1:18-3:20, the researcher subscribes to the idea that Paul uses *νυνὶ δὲ* as a

⁵ This eighth part was added by the researcher.

temporal transition to mark a redemptive shift (as in 6:22, 7:6, 1 Cor. 15:20, Eph. 2:13, and Col. 1:22) from the pre-Christ era characterized by sin's domination to a post-Christ era characterized by righteousness. In this sense, the word "Now" refers to everything that is contingent upon the death of Christ. Or as Cranfield (2006:201) puts it "But now" represents "a contrast between the impossibility of justification by works, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the *fact* that in the recent past a decisive event has taken place, by which a justification which is God's free gift *πεφανερωται*, and is now *πεφανερωμενη*" (emphasis original).

The expression *χωρις νόμου* ("apart from the law" or "without the law") may be connected with *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* (to yield "But now a righteousness from God apart from the law, has been made known") or with *πεφανερωται* (to yield "But now a righteousness from God has been made known apart from the law"). Carson (2004:123) argues that the first interpretation, though popular, is problematic because it implies that the righteousness of God was once obtained with the contribution of the law, a position Paul both opposes in Romans 2:1-3:20 (when he argues that the law failed to justify the Jews) and rules out in Romans 4 (where he argues that justification has always been by faith without the works of the law). The second interpretation, Carson (2004:123) contends, removes the challenges of the first view by shifting attention from "the reception of the righteousness since it has been made known apart from law" to its disclosure, "since it has been made known apart from the law". Accordingly, Paul does not mean that the Law is now useless (cf. 3:31) but that in the new era, one does not live hopelessly under the Law's radical demands (cf. Matt. 5:21-48).

Though the word *νόμου* ("law") can be the shortened form of "works of Law" (cf. v. 20), one can agree with both Moo (1996:223) and Carson (2004:123) in the present context where Paul emphasizes "the law as a system, as a stage in God's unfolding plan," rather than "the law as something for humans to do", "law" most likely refers to the temporal administration of the "Mosaic covenant." Moo (1996:222) argues further that "Paul's purpose is to announce how God's righteousness has been manifest rather than to contrast two kinds of righteousness." Therefore, the expression "apart from the law" means the Old Testament law system (marked by traditions of circumcision, the Sabbath,

clean and unclean food, among others) does not contribute to the justification of the sinner. It is important to note that while Paul might have taken this position as a polemic against the Jews in the Roman church who taught that the works of the law had some significant role to play in their salvation, he (Paul) does not in any way intend to render Old Testament legal system useless in God's salvific plan.

The expression *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* ("righteousness of God") is used four times (vv. 21, 22, 25, 26), the cognate adjective *δικαιος* "just" appears once (v. 26) and *δίκαιον* "to justify" twice (vv. 24,26) in the passage under consideration. According to Knox (1956:472) the possible meanings of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* include (a) God's own righteousness; (b) God's forensic declaration that someone is righteous or God's eschatological justifying act (as in Rom. 1:16-17) and (c) the state which God's justifying act confers. Arguing from the immediate context (vv. 20-22), Knox (1956:428) suggests that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* means "the status of approvedness, the character of being declared righteous, of being acquitted, which God alone can confer." he notes further that the use of *προφητῶν* ("manifest" or "made to appear") instead of *ἀποκαλύπτεται* ("revealed"; 1:16-17) stresses that the verb *δικαιοσύνη* is a state, rather than an action; therefore, options (a) and (c) are likely. Option (a) is also eliminated for the reason that God's own righteousness would not depend on one's faith. The only valid option, therefore, is that the expression *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* means God's way of putting the sinner right, that is, a state of being that is acceptable to God (cf. Rom. 1:17). Since this divine saving act is rooted in God's covenant faithfulness to Israel despite their failure to obey the Law (cf. 3:3-9; 9:1-29), it is also possible to consider that this righteousness is a fulfillment of his covenant promises as Israel's God and King in delivering, saving and vindicating them. The researcher concludes with Porter and Land (2019:140) that the designation as "God's righteousness" stresses that it is based on nothing more than God's grace and mercy; it is God-given and God-adjudicated.

4.4.3.2 Righteousness built on revelation (Rom. 3:21b)

21b. *μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν*

The phrase *νομου και των προφητων* ("Law and the Prophets") refers to the whole of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 5:17; 7:12). Paul's point then is that the new means of

justification occurs outside the Old Testament legal system, though this new activity is predicted by the Old Testament (Moo 1996:223). In support of the idea that the gospel of Christ is veiled in the Jewish Scriptures but fully revealed in the New Testament, Wiersbe (2007:417) states, “Beginning at Genesis 3:15, and continuing through the entire Old Testament, witness is given to salvation by faith in Christ. The Old Testament sacrifices, the prophecies, the types, and the great ‘Gospel Scriptures’ (such as Isa. 53) all bore witness to this truth. The Law could witness to God’s righteousness, but it could not provide it for sinful man. Only Jesus could do that.” Therefore, the text suggests both the continuity and discontinuity in God’s salvific history in that “God’s justifying activity in the new age takes place outside the confines of the Old Testament, but at the same time Scripture as whole anticipates and predicts God’s new work in Christ” (Porter and Lan 2019:139).

4.4.3.3 Righteousness acquired by faith (Rom. 3:22a)

22a. *δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας.*

Paul now directs himself to the human side, telling his audience what humans ought to do for God to put them into a right relationship with him. He answers that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* (“righteousness of God”) comes through faith (not works) *εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας* (“to all who believe”). The emphasis on *πάντας* (“all”) who believe in Christ being recipients of God’s saving activity (v. 22a) parallels the emphasis on “all” have sinned (v. 23a), and this agrees with Paul’s argument of 1:18–3:20. Paul uses the present text to clarify that salvation is not universal, but for only those who express faith in Christ.

Whether the expression *πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* is a subjective genitive (“faithfulness of Jesus Christ” [NET]) or an objective genitive (“faith in Jesus Christ” [NRSV]) is a subject of debate (Keener 2009:57). The first interpretation—which emphasizes Christ’s faithfulness toward God throughout his earthly life and ministry, especially in his passion and death—is favored by Paul’s view on the centrality of Jesus’s work in Romans 3:24–25 and the obvious meaning of *πίστεως* as “faithfulness” in Romans 3:3 (Keener 2009:57). Arguing for this position, Gorman (2004:351) asserts “Paul’s melding of faith and obedience in 1:5 has prepared the reader to understand Christ’s death as his act of

faith (3:25-26) as well as obedience (5:19).” Furthermore, this interpretation has linguistic support because it endeavors to avoid the tautology of asserting the importance of faith twice: “faith in Jesus Christ,” and “for all who believe” (Carson 2004:126).

Nonetheless, it is argued that the most consistent reading of this expression in Romans and Galatians (Rom. 1:5, 8, 12; 3:27, 28, 30, 31; 4:5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20; 5:1, 2; 9:30, 32; 10:6, 8, 17; 11:20; 14:23; 16:26; Gal. 2:20; 3:2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 26; 5:5, 6) supports the objective genitive position. Outside the Pauline literature, Mark (11:22) uses the expression “πίστεως of God” to imply “faith in God.” The case of Galatians 2:16 where the identical phrase “through faith of Jesus Christ” is followed by the explanatory statement, “we believed in Christ Jesus” also supports this position (Harrison 1976:41). Furthermore, it seems “faith in Christ” is more likely in a book like Romans where Paul’s major argument is that salvation comes through no other means than faith in Christ. Finally, there is no other text where Paul speaks of the “faith of Christ,” making it unlikely this would be his only mention of it.

Considering both sides of the debate, the researcher supports the objective genitive position (“faith in Jesus Christ”). The problem of the seeming tautology of “faith in Jesus Christ,” and “for all who believe” is solved if it is rendered in somewhat a paraphrastic way, “this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ—to all who have faith in him” (Carson 2004:126). This rendering not only takes the expressions “righteousness” and “faith” in their most natural senses but also provides an important link with the preceding text (Rom. 1:18-3:20) and prepares the reader’s mind for Paul’s emphasis on faith in Romans 3:27-31 (Carson 2004:127).

4.4.3.4 Righteousness provided for all (Rom. 3:22b-23)

22b. οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή,

23. πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ

In verse 22b Paul makes the point that the righteousness of God shows no *διαστολή* (“**distinction**”) between Gentiles and Jews. The reason for this assertion is supplied in verse 23 signaled by *γὰρ* (“For”). The expression *πάντες ἥμαρτον* (“All have sinned”)

summarizes the human predicament, refers to 1:18-3:20 and shares the thought of first-century Jews as evident in 4 Ezra (7:46 8:35). The verb *ἀμαρτάνω* (“have sinned”) is an aorist which may be interpreted as a historical summary of all that Paul has described earlier regarding the unrighteousness of humanity—indeed, all humans have sinned. It may also be considered as relating to the imputation of Adam’s sin as the natural representative of the human race (as in Rom. 5:12-21). Whichever way one looks at it, the message is that all humans are sinners and thus, cannot achieve right standing before God without God’s mercy.

The consequence of the universal sinfulness of humanity is that all *ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ* (“fall short of the glory of God”). The Greek verb *υστερουνται* (“fall short”) literally means “to be behind”, “to lack”, “to want”, “to be destitute of” (cf. Matt. 19:20; Luke 15:14; 1 Cor. 1:7; 8:8; Phil. 4:12) (Murray 1997:112), “come too late”, “miss through one’s own fault”; hence, “lack, fall short of” (Fitzmyer 2011:840). The use of *υστερουνται* in the present tense indicates condition rather than an action, though the condition may be the result of lack of an action; therefore, humans keep on falling short of divine glory.

Commentators differ regarding what the *δόξα* (“glory”) of God constitute. Murray (1997:112) identifies four views: (1) the glory humans are to give to God (cf. Luke 17:18; Acts 12:23; Rom. 4:20); (2) the glory, or honor God bestows on humans (cf. John 5:41, 44; 8:50; Rom. 2:7); (3) the image of God in humans (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7; 2 Cor. 3:18; 8:23); (4) the state of future glory (cf. Rom. 5:2; 8:18, 21; 1 Cor. 2:7). Option 1 does not seem to fit the context where the sinful nature of humanity is said to be the cause of the lack of divine glory. Option 4 seems unlikely because humans can hardly be blamed for lacking a future thing. Option 2 may be supported by Israel’s possession of divine glory at the time of their redemption from exile (Isa. 35:2) and the departure of the divine glory from them due to their rebellion against God (1 Sam. 4:21; Ezek. 11:22-23). In support of option 3 is the first-century Greco-Roman Jewish thought that “all humans were sharing in the divine glory before Adam, that in Adam all fell away from that glory (Gen. Rab. 12:5; 3 Bar. 4:16; Apoc. Mos. 2:16), and that the same glory will be restored in the eschatological future (Rom. 5:2; 8:18, 21, 30)” (Porter and Land 2019:141, italics original). Since this divine glory is communicated to those who draw near to God (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6) and

alienation from God due to sin makes one lose it, it is most likely that it refers to the glory God bestows on humans.

4.4.3.5 Righteousness given freely through grace (Rom. 3:24a)

24a. *δικαιούμενοι δωρεάν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι*

Paul uses two images to explain what God has done for the repentant sinner through Jesus's death. The first image is justification which is grounded in the imagery of the law court (v. 24a). The particle *δικαιούμενοι* ("being justified"; lit. "to set right" or "put right with") refers to the "alls" of the previous two verses—that is, **all** those who have believed (v. 22), of whom **all** were sinful (v. 23). Paul uses this legal term to denote the legal declaration that someone is righteous, without implying the ethical sense ("to make righteous") which is sanctification (Moo 1996:227). Here, it means God's action in acquitting believers from all charges that could be leveled against them because of sin, and then imputing the righteousness of Christ to them based on their faith in Christ.

The use of the passive form *δικαιούμενοι* emphasizes that humans are passive in obtaining God's righteousness. Paul makes this explicit by using of the term *δωρεάν* ("gift") which signifies that humans make no contribution toward being justified (Moo 1996:228). God's greatest gift to humanity is the salvation he gives through His Son, given totally out of his divine grace.

4.4.3.6 Righteousness accomplished by redemption (Rom. 3:24b)

24b. *διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*

The second word Paul uses to explain God's justifying grace is *ἀπολύτρωσις* ("redemption") which appears 10 times in the New Testament (including Luke 21:28; Rom. 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15) with the basic sense of "deliverance" or "acquittal" especially through the payment of a price (Moo 1996:229). According to Fitzmyer (2011:840) both the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds used "redemption" to denote the ransoming of prisoners of war, slaves, and condemned criminals. Talbert (2002:109) adds that the LXX uses *ἀπολύτρωσις* in connection with

God's deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian (Exod. 6:6; Psa. 110:9), Assyrian (Psa. 129:7-8) and Babylonian (Isa. 51:10-11; 52:3-9) bondages with the basic meaning of "liberation from enslavement." Therefore, by use of this term, Paul is saying that sin has not only placed some legal guilt on humans; it has also enslaved them.

The concept of redemption relates closely with the payment of a "ransom" ("λύτρον"). In the case of the redemption of humanity from sin's enslavement, the "ransom" was the death of Christ. The noun "ransom" appears five times in the NRSV, as the translation of three similar Greek words: *λύτρον* in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45, *ἀντίλυτρον* in 1 Timothy 2:6 and *λυτρόω* in 1 Peter 1:18. There is no significant difference in the meanings of *λύτρον* and *ἀντίλυτρον*. 1 Peter contains the verb that corresponds to *λύτρον*. McGrath (2020:168) identifies three aspects of "ransom", namely, the liberation of a captured person, payment for the release of a captive and someone to whom the ransom is paid, usually the person holding another in captivity. The New Testament contains ideas of humanity's liberation through Jesus's death and resurrection include imageries such as Jesus giving ransom for many (Mark 10:45), believers being bought at a price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23), believers being redeemed from sinfulness (1 Pet. 1:18; Tit. 2:14; Rom. 3:24), believers being freed from captivity to sin and the fear of death (see Rom. 8:21; Heb. 2:15) and redeemed from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13).

The theological question of who received the ransom is a complex one. While the text does not give an answer one can agree with Moo (1996:230), based on verse 25, that "God, the judge who must render just verdicts, is the recipient of the ransom." The strength of this position lies in its dealing with the moral problem associated with the thought that Satan was the recipient of the ransom and its agreement with the biblical teaching that God is the source of the liberating process.

4.4.3.7 Righteousness paid for through atoning sacrifice (Rom. 3:25a)

25a. ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι

One key issue to consider in this text is the translation of the verb *ἱλαστήριον*. Over the years three key positions have emerged. One view translates *ἱλαστήριον* as "mercy seat",

that is, the cover over the Ark of the Covenant on which the blood of the sin offering was aspersed on the Day of Atonement to make atonement (Lev. 16:2, 16-17). This is the dominant meaning in LXX (in 21 out of its 27 occurrences; for instance, Exod. 25:17; 31:7; 35:11-12; 38:5-8), and the meaning it has in Hebrew 9:5, which is the only other usage in the New Testament (Talbert 2002:113; Carson 2004:129). If this is Paul's intended meaning, he depicts Christ as the ultimate "place of atonement," and, derivatively, the ultimate atonement sacrifice (Talbert 2002:113; Carson 2004:129). Since the mercy seat was the place where God manifested himself to his people (LXX Exod. 25:22; Lev. 16:2; Num. 7:89) this view considers Christ not only as an atoning sacrifice but also as the "locus of divine presence and revelation" (Talbert 2002:113). Thus, just as at the mercy seat of the Old Covenant, divinity intersects with humanity, so at the mercy seat of the New Covenant (Christ) divinity takes on humanity through the incarnation (John 1:14) to make Christ God's presence in human flesh.

Another view considers *ἱλαστήριον* as a propitiation—the act of appeasing a deity through a sacrifice in order to change the disposition of the deity toward humans (Talbert 2002:110). The propitiatory use of the verb *ἰλάσκεσθαι* (from which *ἱλαστήριον* derives) and its variants in the LXX (cf. 4 Kings 5:18; Daniel 9:19) and in other literature (Homer, *Iliad* 1.386; Strabo, *Geography* 4.4.6; Josephus, *JW* 5.19) support this view (Talbert 2002:111). If this position is right, then Paul considers Christ's death as appeasement or satisfaction of God's wrath so that God can now favor humanity.

According to the third view, *ἱλαστήριον* means expiation—that is, the act that takes away the guilt of sin. A study of the verb *ἰλάσκεσθαι* and its cognates in the LXX shows that *ἱλαστήριον* can mean "to propitiate" or "to expiate" depending on the context. Dodd (cited in Longenecker 2016:428) traces the root of *ἱλαστήριον* to a verb which is used in pagan literature to mean: "(a) 'to placate' a [person] or a god; (b) 'to expiate' a sin, i.e. to perform an act (such as the payment of a fine or the offering of a sacrifice) by which its guilt is annulled." Dodd (cited in Longenecker 2016:428) further argues that "In accordance with biblical usage, therefore, the substantive (*ἱλαστήριον*) would mean, not propitiation, but 'a means by which guilt is annulled': if a man is an agent, the meaning would be 'a means of expiation': if God, 'a means by which sin is forgiven.'"

By way of assessment, the LXX's adoption of *ἱλαστήριον* for mercy seat carries weight but that should not be the deciding factor in the present context where Paul's non-literal use of *ἱλαστήριον* seems clear. The writer of Hebrews (9:5) uses *ἱλαστήριον* with the article *ho* to mean "the cover of the ark." Paul omission of the definite article before *ἱλαστήριον* indicates that he is not referring to the object itself but to what happened in the ritual at the Ark and afterward. Ekem (2005:42) notes that the literal reading makes an illogical comparison between Christ and a piece of the inanimate mercy seat. Though the Jews held the mercy seat in high esteem it is unlikely that Paul would make such a comparison. Finally, the public display of Christ and the hiddenness of the mercy seat makes their comparison a weak one.

The idea of propitiation sounds good. Christ's death satisfied the righteous wrath and anger of God toward those who believe. The cross not only did something for humans, but it also did something for the Father. Paul's contention that God's wrath is upon all humanity due to sin (Rom. 1:18-3:20) just before coming to the present section, makes this position plausible. However, it has the tendency of presenting God as one of the pagan gods with capricious anger and so has to be constantly appeased, the only difference being that it is God (not human) who in this case is said to have presented the sacrifice. To recall, propitiation deals with God's wrath while expiation deals with the guilt of sin. God's wrath is necessitated by sin and its guilt. In biblical tradition, God never appears as the one who is placated, though he does appear as the one who expiates (forgives) sins.

Therefore, what needs to be dealt with primarily is the cultic defilement that results from sin that hinders the communion of the sinner with God. That being the case, Christ's death must deal with the root, the guilt of sin. Until sin, that justly triggers God's wrath is expiated, propitiation cannot be effective. This view is strongly supported by the fact that it is God who provides and presents the *ἱλαστήριον*. Thus, Christ was *προέθετο* ("put forward") as the mercy seat of the new age, as a means of wiping away sins that have alienated humans from God. It is important to note that expiation brings about propitiation in that the former is the root and the latter is the fruit so that when the root is no more existing the fruit cannot exist too. Expiation can therefore not be done without

implying propitiation because the reconciliation between God and humanity is only possible when both God's wrath and the guilt of sin are dealt with. One cannot be done without implying the other. Going by this view *ἱλαστήριον* means "expiation that effects propitiation", yielding the translation: "whom God displayed publicly as a sacrifice by which sin is forgiven and thereby turns away God's wrath" or simply put "whom God displayed publicly as a sacrifice of atonement"—atonement being the consequence of expiation that effects propitiation. This proposition is not foreign to the Old Testament cultic tradition which serves to "wipe away" the guilt of sin at the same time as— and indeed, because—the wrath of God is being stayed (Moo 1996:234).

In the phrase *διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι* ("through faith in his blood") *αἵματι* ("his blood") is used figuratively to signify Christ's atoning sacrifice, the shedding of his blood, his sacrificial death which provides atonement for the lost world. Paul parallels the terms "blood" and "death" in Romans 5:9-10 in such a way that makes them almost synonymous. The crucifixion of Christ and other people in the Greco-Roman world involved the gushing out of blood (cf. John 19:34). The blood was the means which he expiated, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, redemption, or reconciliation (cf. Heb. 9:22). This echoes Jesus's words at the Lord's Supper that his death is pouring out his blood for many (Mark 14:24; cf. Isa. 53).

4.4.3.8 Righteousness demonstrated by divine forbearance (Rom. 3:25b-26)

25b. *εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων*

26. *ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.*

This section treats divine forbearance as a demonstration of God's righteousness. The verb *πάρεσιν*, used only here in the entire Greek Bible, could mean "passing over", "letting go unpunished" or "forgiveness," and so it signifies "to pass over of sins"—that is, the temporary remission of debt—which is quite different from "to put away sins" or "forgiveness" (*ἄφεσις*) (Matera 2010:95). MacArthur (2011:218) avers that God withheld the full penalty of human sins because of his *ἀνοχῆ* ("forbearance" or "patience"), that is,

“a temporary passing over sin and of withholding judgment on it for a certain period of time.” This means God patiently bore human sins committed under the Old Covenant, looking forward to the new Day of atonement when Christ will pay the ultimate ransom (Fitzmyer 2011:841) but not that he paid no attention to sins or was completely unaware of or condoned human sins. Again, divine forbearance does not mean that forgiveness of sins was impossible prior to the time of Christ (cf. Rom. 4). Rather, it means “God ‘postponed’ the full penalty due to sins in the Old Covenant, allowing sinners to stand before him without their having provided an adequate ‘satisfaction’ of the demands of his holy justice (cf. Heb. 10:4)” (Moo 1996:240). Finally, God’s forbearance does not make him unjust; it is a sign of his patience and grace by which he wishes that all come to him in repentance and not perish (2 Pet. 3:9; cf. Psa. 78:38) (MacArthur 1991:217).

The use of *προγεγονότων* (“before now,” “up until now,” or “in years that are gone”) is meant to contrast the generations gone by when God “allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways”, “the times of ignorance” with the present time when God no more overlooks sin but commands all people everywhere to come to the cross to experience his pardoning grace (cf. Acts 14:16; 17:30). The *προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων* (“former sins”) therefore refers to sins committed before the new era, not just sins committed before conversion (Moo 1996:240).

Paul also says that the atoning death of Christ was a demonstration (*ἔνδειξις*) of God’s righteousness and a proof that in justifying the one who has faith in Christ, God’s holiness and justice are not compromised (v. 26). God could not have maintained his justice—“his impartiality and fairness, or his acting in accordance with his own character and for his own glory” (Moo 1996:237)—and holiness if he let sin go unpunished or if he accepted people without dealing with their sins. God dealt with the situation by putting the full penalty of sin on his Son out of his love for humanity and the need to show his supreme justice (MacArthur 2011:219). Having borne the full penalty of human sin, Christ had some credit which could be accounted to anyone who expresses faith in him. The incarnation comes to play in this regard. Christ could pay the price for human redemption because by his divine nature he is capable of paying the highest price for the redemption of humanity. His human nature qualifies him to represent humanity on the cross—this is

why Paul refers to him as the Second Adam, who unlike the first Adam obeyed every command of God (Rom. 5:12-21).

4.5 Exegesis of Romans 5

This section examines Romans 5 to ascertain its contribution to atonement theology. Issues of the historical background of Romans examined earlier apply to this text and so the study will deal only with issues pertaining to the literary context of the text.

4.5.1 Literary context and structure of Romans 5

There is no scholarly consensus regarding how Romans 5 relates to the rest of the book. Fitzmyer (2011:843) identifies some key positions as follows: (1) it is a conclusion to Paul's argument outlined in 1:18—4:25; (2) it introduces the unit 5:1—8:39; (3) 5:1-11 concludes 1:18—4:25, while 5:12-21 introduces 5:12-8:39; and (4) it is an isolated unit. While each view has its own merits, the following reasons make the second position the most plausible: (a) key terminologies that are found in 5:1-11 (love, glory, hope, save, justify, and endurance) appear in 8:18-39; (b) Jews and Gentiles feature prominently in 1:16—4:25 but they are not mentioned at all in 5:1-8:39; (c) God's righteousness dominates the discussions in 1:16—4:25 but his love is more prominent in 5:1—8:39 (cf. 5:5,8; 8:28, 35, 37, 39); (d) there are variations of the same concluding formula indicating various sections of 5:1—8:39; (e) the dominant tone in 1:18—4:25 is judicial whereas that of 5:1-8:39 is ethical (Fitzmyer 2011:843-844); (f) chapter 5 prepares the reader for the discussion of sin and law in chapters 6–8.

Structurally, Romans 5 has two divisions: the first section (5:1-11) focuses on the assurance of the believer's future glory by explaining what the believer's justification and reconciliation with God have in store for him/her. It has three sub-divisions, namely, benefits of justification (vv. 1-5); Christ's death as a demonstration of God's love for humanity (vv. 6-8) and Christ's role in effecting justification, reconciliation, and salvation (vv. 5:9-11).

The second section (5:12-21) deals with the two different eras, each one inaugurated by Adam and Christ. The main sub-units are Adam and the reign of death (vv. 12-14), Christ

and the reign of life (vv. 15-20) and sin and grace (vv. 20-21). The main thesis of this part is that the curses that resulted from Adam's sin have been reversed by Christ through his obedience to God which was climaxed in his death on the cross.

This is followed by chapter 6 which deals basically with the problem of sin, chapter 7 which focuses on the problem of the law and finally, chapter 8 which deals with the spiritual dimension of the believer's life (vv. 1-17) and the assurance of future glory (vv. 18-39).

What follows is a close reading of the text based on the contextual issues outlined above.

4.5.2 Close reading of Romans 5

4.5.2.1 The believer's justification (Rom. 5:1-11)

4.5.2.1.1 The benefits of justification (Rom. 5:1-5)

1. Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
2. δι' οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν [τῇ πίστει] εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ᾗ ἐστήκαμεν καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ.
3. οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν, εἰδότες ὅτι ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται,
4. ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμὴν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα.
5. ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ κατασχύνει, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν.

The first five verses of this chapter focus on the benefits/consequences of the believer's justification. Paul's use of the inferential conjunction οὖν, ("therefore") in verse 1 suggests an immediate connection with 1:16-4:25, where he explains the concept of justification by faith (Uzodimma 2018:40). The phrase εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ("we have peace with God") properly means, "God is at peace with us"—his οργή (wrath) toward us is

removed. Some manuscripts read imperatively *ἔχωμεν* (“let us have peace with God”) while others read indicatively *ἔχομεν* (“we have peace with God”). The indicative reading seems more plausible here because with the possible exception of two subjunctive forms in verses 2 and 3, all verbs in the entire section (vv. 1-11) are in the indicative. Again, in verse 10 the peace spoken about in verse 1 is closely connected with reconciliation described in 5:10-11. Since reconciliation originates from God (for human benefit) and does not originate from humans, the indicative reading must be preferred.

In the LXX, *εἰρήνην* translates the *δῖλψ* which actually means peace, denoting both physical and spiritual well-being. In the Greco-Roman world peace was simply the absence of war and therefore one had to overcome his/her enemy in a war to have peace. Paul shows to his Roman audience a different system of peace and justice that God has provided for humanity whose root is in the atoning sacrifice of Christ rather than military might (Uzodimma 2018:43). Like the Jewish concept of peace, Paul sees peace as a situation in which there is no longer hostility between God and those who have faith in Christ. In Ephesians 2:14-17, this peace is synonymous with the salvation that Christ’s death brings; therefore, it is a gift from God. The believer’s peace with God must also inform his/her relationship with the environment, especially in ensuring social justice in society.

The second result of justification is stated in verse 2 as the believer’s access to God’s presence. The noun *προσαγωγήν* (“access” or “privilege of entrance”) appears four times in the New Testament (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:18) all in reference to human’s access to God’s presence with Christ serving as the Mediator in all instances except Ephesians 2:18 where the Holy Spirit is the Mediator of this divine access. Uzodimma (2018:44) observes that the LXX uses *προσαγωγήν* in reference to one’s approach to the altar of God with a sacrifice (Lev. 4:14; 16:11-19) and in the Greco-Roman world to signify a person’s approach to a king. Secular literature attests to its use in reference to the “privilege of approach” to a high-ranked person, such as a king or an emperor (Witmer 1983:456).

The perfect tense verbs *ἔσχήκαμεν* (“we have”) and *ἑστήκαμεν* (lit. “stand” in contrast to “fall” in 11:20; 14:4), in the opinion of Matera (2010:132), underline an ongoing experience of divine grace and continually living in divine grace. By use of this metaphor, Paul portrays God’s grace as a room to which Jesus gives believers access, not only to enter but to stand in it continually. The noun *χάρις* (“grace”) in this context does not refer to God’s activity on behalf of unmerited sinners, but to his unfailing love. Paul puts these thoughts together to highlight that Christ has ushered believers into God’s grace by faith. It is purely by grace (and not human effort) that God takes the initiative to offer himself and his salvation freely to humans.

Therefore, Christians *καυχώμεθα* (“rejoice,” “exult” or “boast”) (Witmer 1983:456) in their hope of sharing God’s glory (v. 2b). The noun *ἐλπίδι* (“hope”) is not to be understood as something that one wants to happen and yet he/she is not sure that it is going to happen but as one’s confidence that something which will surely happen, though it has not yet taken place. Matera (2010:132) maintains that *ἐλπίδι* is “the eschatological hope mentioned in 5:2 and which is developed further in chapter 8 (see 8:20, 24). The expression *τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ* (“glory of God”) may refer to the nature of God, his own character (cf. Rom. 1:23); but here it refers to God’s majesty and greatness.

Paul moves on to teach his audience that human suffering promotes ethical and spiritual progression (vv. 3b-4; see also 2 Cor. 1:4; 2:4; 4:17; 7:4; 8:2). The ancient world considered suffering as either a divine disciplinary and corrective measure for those who go astray (Prov. 3:11-12; Judith 8:27; Sirach 18:13; 2 Macc. 6:12; Psalms of Solomon 10:1-2; 16:11; Plato in *Republic* 380a-b) or a means of training someone for virtue (a view held by Stoic philosophers) (Talbert 2002:134). Paul’s awareness and use of both views of suffering are attested to by his writings. He portrays suffering as God’s means of correcting “human misdirection” when he says to the Corinthian Church that those who took the Eucharist in an unworthy manner have died as a result, to effect repentance in the living (1 Cor. 11:17-34; especially v. 32) (Talbert 2002:135-136).

The other line of thought is what he uses in Romans 5:3-5. Paul’s shift from glory in verse 2 to suffering in verse 3 was relevant to his Jewish audience who were facing persecution

and many other sufferings because of their faith in Christ. Afflictions, which were considered as the consequence of God's displeasure, are now considered as the manifestations of God's love for human benefits and a means of developing steadfast endurance (cf. James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). Hence, tribulations may not be joyous presently, but in the end, they will become (to the believer) a matter of joy.

The *θλίψεσιν* ("sufferings" or "hardships") include not only afflictions brought about by external circumstances (cf. 2 Cor. 1:4, 8; 2:4; 6:4; 7:4; 8:2; Phil. 1:17; 4:14; 1 Thess. 1:6; 3:3) but also the distress of the end time (cf. 1 Cor. 7:28; 2 Cor. 4:17) (Talbert 2002:136). Paul is not encouraging self-boasting (for example, boasting about one's wealth) which characterizes the foolish and ungodly (Psalms 52:1; 74:4); and which he (Paul) describes as self-reliance over-against God (Phil. 3:7-10; Rom. 3:27; 4:1-2) and trust in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). He rather commends boasting in God, that is, trusting and rejoicing in Christ (Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:14) and God (Rom. 5:11) (see Matera 2020:132). Paul's point, as Talbert (2002:136) rightly points out, is that every "suffering experienced between conversion and consummation is not meaningless" but has the purpose of educating and strengthening the believer.

Jewett (2007:354) reveals that the noun *δοκιμήν*, appearing here (v.4) for the only time in Romans and nowhere else in the entirety of Greek literature before the Pauline letters, has been translated variously as "character" "confirmation", "authentication", "proof", "trial", "test" or "ordeal." In this verse, Paul drives home the point that believers rejoice in difficulties, glory and exalt in them because trouble produces perseverance which in turn produces a tried and matured Christian character (experience). People of such spiritual stability are inevitably those with increasing hope because spirituality and hope are intimately related.

Paul climaxes his list of virtues with hope (v. 5). The Christian can "rejoice in afflictions" because he/she "knows" that affliction "produces endurance" which after producing "a tested or proven character" produces hope which *οὐ κατασχύνει* ("does not disappoint") because the love of God been poured into the believer's hearts through the Holy Spirit.

The hope of true believers is based on God and such hope never disappoints them (cf. LXX Psa. 21:5-6; 22:5-6; 25:3, 20; Isa. 28:16; Jer. 31:13).

The expression *ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ* may be rendered either “our love for God” or “God’s love for us” (Moo 1996:305). Paul’s reference to God’s love for humanity in verse 8 makes the latter more plausible. Paul’s use of *ἐκκέχυται* (“pour out”) reminiscences God’s promise to pour out his Spirit to his people (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-32) which was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17; see also 2:18, 33; 10:45; Tit. 3.6). The pouring of the Holy Spirit is connected to the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) which internalizes what was externalized under the Old, writing of the Law on people’s hearts rather than on stones (Moo 1996:305). The Holy Spirit then is not only the proof but also the divine agent for pouring out God’s love to the believer (8:15-17; Gal. 4:6) (Fitzmyer 2011:844). Witmer’s (1983:456) conclusion is apt, “the reality of God’s love in the believer’s heart gives assurance, even the guarantee, that the believer’s hope in God and His promise of glory is not misplaced and will not fail.”

4.5.2.1.2 Christ’s death as a demonstration of God’s love (Rom. 5:6-8)

6. *ἔτι γὰρ Χριστὸς ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν ἔτι κατὰ καιρὸν ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν.*

7. *μόλις γὰρ ὑπὲρ δικαίου τις ἀποθανεῖται· ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τάχα τις καὶ τολμᾷ ἀποθανεῖν·*

8. *συνίστησιν δὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς ὁ θεός, ὅτι ἔτι ἀμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν.*

This section makes the point that God’s love for the believer is reliable. It begins with a three-fold description of how God has demonstrated his love for humanity (v. 6). First of all, God’s love for humanity was shown amid human powerlessness. Uzodimma (2018:47) argues that the word *ἀσθενῶν* (“helpless”) carries the idea of “weakness” or “powerless”, but in this verse, it is used in reference to human inability to work spiritual results—“the human person from Paul’s perspective was incapable of liberating himself/herself from the captivity of sin (cf. 7:7-25).” For Paul then one of the consequences of Adam’s fall is the weakening of the human will to seek righteousness.

This human inability to do good in the sight of God (Rom. 7:19) stands in sharp contrast with the transforming power a person experiences after salvation. Sin imprisoned humans such that without God coming to their aid, they could not in any way go to God for reconciliation. Paul places the word *ἔτι* (“still”) at the beginning of verse 6 to indicate that humans were **still** powerlessly and hopelessly trapped in sin at the time God provided the means for reconciliation.

Secondly, God’s love was demonstrated at the *κατὰ καιρὸν* (“right time”, that is, “time as to its character rather than as to duration”) (Harrison 1976:59). Matera (2010:133) asserts that the “right time” can be taken with the preceding text to mean the right time was when humans were still weak or with what follows to mean Christ died at God’s appointed time in fulfillment of Scripture and God’s will. The researcher prefers the latter reading because it agrees with Paul’s argument elsewhere (cf. Gal. 4:4; Rom. 3:26; 13:11) that the salvific work of Christ happened in the fullness of time. Thus, the death of Christ happened at God’s appointed or decisive time without any delay or rush.

Thirdly, in showing his love for humanity, God had to let a righteous person die for the ungodly. The word *ἀπέθανεν* refers to the natural death of a person involving the separation between the soul and the body—thus, Christ died; he was not in a coma as the swoon theory contends. The word *ὑπὲρ* which means “in behalf of” (Vincent 2009:60) underscores the substitutionary nature of the death of Christ; it highlights the vicarious death of the servant of YHWH (in Isa. 53). Christ died for the *ἀσεβῶν* (“ungodly”)—a person who has no fear for God and acts contrary to God’s commands, the wicked who has no respect for the sacred and against whom God has revealed his wrath (Rom. 1:18; cf. 4:5; 1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 4:18; 2 Pet. 2:5, 6; Jude 4, 15). For God to justify such a person by providing Christ as a substitute required the highest demonstration of love and devotion.

In verse 7 Paul contrasts human occasional sacrificial love for the godly with God’s enduring love for even the wicked. Paul uses both *δίκαιος* (“righteous”) and *ἀγαθός* (“good”) to make his point. Here, “good” is characterized by kindness, benevolence, generosity, or any action governed by love while “righteous” refers not to a person who is

put right with God but to one who does what the law or justice demands, an upright person (Vincent 2009:60). The just or righteous person commands respect while the good person evokes affection (Moo 1996:308). Paul's point is that it is difficult to imagine why someone would be willing to die in the place of a merely righteous person, though for the good person, someone might possibly be willing to die in his/her place. That being the case, it is unimaginable for anybody to die for humans who are sinners, ungodly and enemies of God.

In verse 8, Paul contends for the superiority of God's love in that he sent his Son to die, neither for the good nor for the righteous person, but for sinners who deserve divine retribution instead of mercy and love. God did not wait for humans to clean up themselves; he came to human aid when they were still acting in opposition to his will and purpose and hence were his enemies.

4.5.2.1.3 Christ's role in effecting justification, reconciliation, and salvation (Rom. 5:9-11)

9. πολλῶ οὐκ ἄλλοι δικαιωθέντες νῦν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ σωθησόμεθα δι' αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς.

10. εἰ γὰρ ἐχθροὶ ὄντες καταλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, πολλῶ ἄλλοι καταλαγνέμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ.

11. οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δι' οὗ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν.

Having established God's love for the sinner in verses 6-8, Paul proceeds to elaborate on the Christological basis of justification, reconciliation, and salvation. His argument from the greater to lesser (indicated by "how much more") is a rhetoric effect he uses to make his audience confident that they can trust God to complete the work of salvation that he has already begun in them. This is how the argument goes: If God has done the most difficult thing of justifying and reconciling the ungodly, he will certainly perform the comparatively "easier" task of saving the justified from his eschatological wrath (1:18; cf. 12:19; 1 Thess. 1:10).

To be *δικαιωθέντες* (“justified”) which Paul previously said comes by grace (3:24) and by faith (3:28), is now said to come “through Christ’s blood”, that is, his sacrificial death. Here, like Romans 3:25, “the blood of Christ” is used figuratively for his violent death. Paul brings the expiatory and propitiatory values of blood to the fore when he speaks of blood as effecting justification/reconciliation.

Paul contends that humans enslaved by sin are *ἐχθρός* (“enemies”) to God (v. 10; see also Rom. 1:18-23, 7:28; Phil. 3:18; Col. 1:21). “Enemies” describes not only the moral character of humans but also their position as objects of God’s displeasure. One of the key terms in verse 10 is *κατηλλάγημεν* (“reconciliation”) which denotes the process of changing the hostile relationship between two parties into a peaceful one—making of peace after a quarrel (Vincent 2009:61). Complete reconciliation involves a movement from God toward the sinner to break the hostility, a response from humankind, which is a corresponding movement toward God in faith, repentance and confession, a change in the character of the repentant sinner, and a corresponding action on God’s part in taking his wrath away, in such a way that ends hostility and begins a new relationship characterized by love and friendship (Vincent 2009:61).

In verse 11 Paul comes back to the concept of “boasting in God” though not based on justification (as in vv. 1-5) but based on having been reconciled with God. The final relative clause *δι’ οὗ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν* (“through whom we have now received reconciliation”) identifies Christ as the agent of the process of restoring the divine-human relationship.

4.5.2.2 Freedom from death and sin (Rom. 5:12-21)

4.5.2.2.1 Adam and the reign of death (Rom. 5:12-14)

12. *Διὰ τοῦτο ὡσπερ δι’ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον·*

13. *ἄχρι γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία ἦν ἐν κόσμῳ, ἁμαρτία δὲ οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται μὴ ὄντος νόμου,*

14. ἀλλὰ ἐβασίλευσεν ὁ θάνατος ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ μέχρι Μωϋσέως καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς μὴ ἀμαρτήσαντας ἐπὶ τῷ ὁμοιώματι τῆς παραβάσεως Ἀδὰμ ὅς ἐστιν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος

In this section Paul shifts from first person plural in the previous section (v.1 [2x], v.2 [3x], v.3 [1x], v.5 [2x], v.6 [1x], v.8 [3x], verse 9 [2x], verse 10 [3x], and verse 11 [2x]) to the third-person singular as he draws a comparison between the effects of Adam's transgression and Christ's obedience. The passage begins with *Διὰ τοῦτο* ("therefore", "because of this" or "for this reason") which serves as a signpost that a conclusion is about to be drawn from the preceding text (5:1-11). Paul makes two important points—first, as a consequence of Adam's sin all humans were engulfed by sin and second, death has spread to all humans because all persons sinned. Here, Paul personifies sin as a great force which used Adam as the means of spreading and brought disaster and death into the human world of people, the human race (*κόσμος*, cf. John 3:16) (Moo 1996:319). "Death" in Pauline literature may refer to physical death (Rom. 5:10; 6:3; 1 Cor. 11:26), a life full of anguish (1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 6:9), or spiritual death (Rom. 7:9-10). Here, death encompasses all these aspects (Talbert 2002:150).

The question of how humans inevitably participate in Adam's sin has been answered in four ways (see Talbert 2002:148-149). The first position (held by Augustine) holds that Adam's sin is transmitted hereditarily. In the second view, Adam is considered as providing an example to his posterity through his sin (Pelagius). Humans are therefore born morally neutral and it is only by following bad examples that they go wayward. One however sees a contrast with Paul's teaching that humans are in sin's grip.

The third view considers Adam as the federal head (the representative) of all humans whose act of sin was considered by God as the act of all his descendants who therefore participate in Adam's judicial penalty of death (Moo 1996:327). The final view perceives Adam as the natural head who together with all his posterity, presents seminally or physically in his body, sinned. Paul's use of the aorist tense ("because all sinned") rather than the perfect tense ("because all have sinned") together with the argument from Hebrews that Levi paid to Melchizedek through Abraham because Levi was in Abraham's body when he (Abraham) paid a tithe to Melchizedek (Gen. 14 cf. Heb. 7:9-10), seems to

lend support to the last interpretation. Adam, therefore, committed the rest of humanity to a certain kind of action. People are born with the pollution of sin which makes them tend to act in a certain way. This view echoes David's assertion in Psalm 51:5 that his mother conceived him in sin.

Paul's claim in verse 12 is elaborated in verses 13-14. Two crucial points are made in verse 13. In the first place, the world was dominated by the power of sin (brought about by Adam's transgression) before the Mosaic Law was given. Secondly, in the period from Adam to Moses when the Law had not been given, the sin that was present in the world was not put to account because *ἀμαρτία δὲ οὐκ ἔλλογεῖται μὴ ὄντος νόμου* ("sin is not counted where there is no Law"). The verb *ἐλλογεῖται* is a business terminology referring to the entering of accounts into a ledger, depicting God as recording sin in a book (Witmer 1983:458). Paul is not saying sin does not exist in the absence of Law; rather he is making the point that sin does not have the character of being a transgression or "a sin is not listed as a sin" unless a law is put in place (Witmer 1983:458).

Now, since death is the result of sin, and those living from Adam's time to Moses's time had no sins charged against them due to the nonexistence of the Law, and yet in spite of that, died (v. 14), it is logical to conclude that their death was the result of Adam's sin and that they sinned in Adam, who is their natural head. Since the people who lived after Adam did not repeat what Adam did, one has to explain how the sins of these people were different from Adam's own. Two major views were found in the existing literature. One view holds that a person who lived after Adam but before the Law committed sin (*ἀμαρτία*) but the one who lived after the Law, committed transgression (*παραβάσεως*) and their act of disobedience after the Law had been given was a violation of a law or commandment (see Hong 2010:48). Another position is that the expression "those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam" simply emphasizes the characteristic of people who lived between Adam and Moses (Moo 1996:333). The researcher is of the opinion that Paul is saying that those who lived after Adam did not sin in the same way as Adam did by eating the forbidden fruit; their sin was in other ways.

The last part of verse 14 describes Adam as *τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος* (“a type of the one who was to come”, that is, Christ). The term *τύπος* is used in Pauline corpus to stand for “example”, “pattern,” and “model” (6:17; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:9), and carries an idea of similarity between the original form and the model (Hong 2010:52). One however wonders why Paul would say Adam is a type of Christ when there are many dissimilarities in themselves and their impacts on human history. A close look at the text shows that the typology consists in the fact that both Adam and Christ pass to the people they represent what belonged to them (Adam and Christ).

4.5.2.2.3 Christ and the reign of life (Rom. 5:15-19)

15. Ἄλλ' οὐχ ὡς τὸ παράπτωμα, οὕτως καὶ τὸ χάρισμα· εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι οἱ πολλοὶ ἀπέθανον, πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἢ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι τῆ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπερίσσευσεν.

16. καὶ οὐχ ὡς δι' ἐνὸς ἀμαρτήσαντος τὸ δῶρημα· τὸ μὲν γὰρ κρίμα ἐξ ἐνὸς εἰς κατάκριμα, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα ἐκ πολλῶν παραπτωμάτων εἰς δικαίωμα.

17. εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν διὰ τοῦ ἐνός, πολλῶ μᾶλλον οἱ τὴν περισσείαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες ἐν ζωῆ βασιλεύσουσιν διὰ τοῦ ἐνός Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

18. Ἄρα οὖν ὡς δι' ἐνὸς παραπτώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς κατάκριμα, οὕτως καὶ δι' ἐνὸς δικαιώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς·

19. ὥσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἐνός ἀνθρώπου ἀμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἐνός δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί.

Beginning from verse 15, Paul presents Christ as an antitype of Adam using an ancient rhetorical device called *synkrisis*, that is, the comparative juxtaposition of two figures which end up praising one (in this case Christ) and blaming the other (Adam) (Talbert 2002:150). Paul presents Christ's work of redemption as superior in every respect to Adam's work of trespass using the formula “how much more.” Whereas Adam's sin resulted in death, God's grace has brought the free gift of life for the many. Paul's use

of *παράπτωμα* (“trespass” or “false step”) perhaps is meant to create a phonetic parallel with *χάρισμα* “free gift”, that is, “God’s gift” (Moo 1996:333). One sees a clear imbalance in the “judicial result” of Adam’s disobedience (leading to condemnation) and Christ’s obedience (leading to righteousness and life). Adam’s action brought life to an end whereas Christ’s opened up new possibilities.

The word *πολλῶν* (“many”) when compared to its use in verse 12 (“the many”) seems to signify “all people” (“death came to all people” and “the many died”). The idea is that what one person did (whether Adam or Christ) affected not only one person but many. Paul makes the point that Adam is a type of Christ but the resemblance does not hold in all respects because they differ both in their actions and in the effects of the acts (Lard 2007:175).

Paul presents a second contrasting parallelism in verse 16, that is, Adam’s act brought condemnation but Christ’s brought righteousness. Here, Paul argues that Adam’s reign of death is surpassed and overturned by the new reign of those receiving grace and righteousness in Christ (Jewett 2007:383). The first contrast in this verse has to do with source. Out of the source of Adam’s sin divine judgment came upon all humans. Amid many transgressions, God displayed his grace and gave his free gift of salvation to humanity. The second contrast sets the one trespass over against many trespasses: “the number of sins taken into account — the judicial verdict associated with Adam was based on one sin” but “the decree of justification that came through Christ came after an untold number of sins” (Moo 1996:338).

Verse 17 takes up the thought of verse 14, the reign of death through one person’s trespass and through that person and at the same time expounds the difference between the “condemnation” and the “justification” that began in verse 16. Paul gives another imbalance between Adam and Christ in terms of the two reigns. Here too, Paul argues from the lesser to the greater (on the superiority of the “second Man”; cf. 1 Cor. 15:45–47). Contrary to death reigning through Adam’s transgression, righteousness (that leads to acquittal and life) reigns in those who are in Christ (5:17). Life in this context may refer to “life of the age to come” (see 2:7; 4:17; 5:10; 6:10, 22–23; 8:11, 13).

Here again, “righteousness” is said to be a “gift”, meaning that Paul is referring to the initial experience of salvation in which a person is put into the right relation with God. It is a righteousness that is connected with the impartation of spiritual life. This righteousness (in itself) is solely forensic and does not give spiritual life nor change one’s character.

In verse 18, Paul returns to complete the comparison between Adam and Christ that he began in verse 12 but digressed—this is indicated by the expression Ἄρα οὖν (“so therefore”) which shows a logical sequence. He mentions again that Adam’s trespass led everyone to condemnation but Christ’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all persons. δικαιοσύνης refers to “a righteous act or deed,” here, that righteous act of Christ in satisfying all that the Law requires which humans failed to satisfy. “Justification” is how God declares those in Christ innocent.

γὰρ introduces verse 19 as a statement that “explains” Paul’s statement in verse 18. Paul then declares that just as one man’s disobedience made many sinners, so the obedience of one man makes many righteous. The word παραπτώματος (“trespass”) describes the nature of Adam’s first act of sin, the one act that made the entirety of humanity sinful. Traditionally, the Greek word κατεστάθησαν is rendered “constituted.” Such a rendition seems inaccurate because the disobedience of one did not constitute the many either as subject or agent. It was the means through which or reason why they were constituted by another.

4.5.2.2.3 Sin and grace (Rom. 5:20-21)

20. νόμος δὲ παρεισήληθεν, ἵνα πλεονάσῃ τὸ παράπτωμα· οὗ δὲ ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις,

21. ἵνα ὡσπερ ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ, οὕτως καὶ ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

After ending the comparison between Adam and Christ, Paul comes back to the question of the position and office of the law which he introduced in verses 14-15. The conjunction δὲ indicates a transition from Paul’s statements in Romans 5:12-19 to his statement in

Romans 5:20. He argues that “Law came in” (*παρεισέρχονται*, cf. Gal. 2:4, lit. “enter in alongside”) (Moo 1996:346) “to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom. 5:20 RSV), an argument which is better understood if read together with the next chapters (particularly ch. 7). Based on Paul’s earlier discussions (cf. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13), one could say that the reason why the law increases trespass is that the law throws light on trespass and at the same time triggers sinful desires into new activity (Knox 1986:469). The Law therefore does not reverse Adam’s act but reveals the “significance” of Adam’s sin more clearly (Moo 1996:347). Said differently, “the appearance of the Law made God’s will known [to all], and for the first time, people violated specific commandments of God’s law, just as Adam did. Thus, sin increased” (Matera 2010:140).

This idea that there were many forbidden activities or many commandments by God right from the Fall which made sin attractive to humans and led to an increase in sin as a consequence, cannot be supported by Scripture (Moo 1996:347). Neither is the view that an understanding of the Law makes a sinner realize his/her sin and feel condemned supported by the immediate context where “the increase of the trespass is juxtaposed with an increase in grace (v. 20b)” (Moo 1996:347). Considering Paul’s argument in 5:14 (see also 4:15) the researcher is inclined to conclude that the Law was given to Israel to increase the gravity of sin, be it Adam’s or anybody else’s (cf. Rom. 7:13; Gal. 3:19). Paul again opposes any Jewish tendency to think of obedience to the Law as a means to salvation. Yet, the Law remains (7:12). By showing the seriousness of sin (Rom. 7:13) without transforming the sinner, the Law reveals the doom of humanity apart from grace.

God then comes in and freely gives every repentant sinner (who expresses faith in Christ) the gift of salvation, no more counting his/her sins against him/her. This is grace at work not works of the law. The verb *ὑπερπερισσεύω* means: “an extraordinary degree, involving a considerable excess over what would be expected – ‘extreme, extremely, in an extreme degree, to a very great degree’” (Louw and Nida in Snyman 2016:5) or “to be over and above a certain number or measure” (Vincent 2009:). By using the aorist verbs increased (*ἐπλεόνασεν*), and superabounded (*ὑπερπερίσσευσεν*) Paul alludes

to the actuality of the events (Snyman 2016:5). Paul's point is that God's grace always stretches beyond human sin and does not have any elastic limit.

Finally, Paul concludes that grace is supplied in superabundance so that (*ἵνα* is used to express "purpose," and not simply "result") it might rule like a king through righteousness, leading to eternal life which the believing sinner experiences through the atonement of Christ (v. 21).

4.6 Exegesis of Hebrews 9:11-14

4.6.1 Historical context of Hebrews 9:11-14

The last text examined in this chapter comes from the epistle to the Hebrews (9:11-14). The book of Hebrews is a very stimulating New Testament book that contributes immensely to the New Testament concept of atonement. Hebrews reinterprets the Old Testament sacrificial system in the light of the Christ Event, arguing that the "New Covenant" supersedes the Old (8:7). Scholarly attempts to determine the author of Hebrews have been fruitless and so up till now, no one knows the author of Hebrews (DeSilva 2016:625; Thompson 2008:4).

The author's references to the Levitical sacrifices as still functioning (for instance, Heb. 10:2-3) suggest that Hebrews was written before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70 (DeSilva 2016:626). No one is certain as to where the book was written. The statement "Those from Italy send you greetings" (13:24, NRSV) is the only explicit internal clue relating to the origin of the book. This statement is however ambiguous because it can refer to some Italian believers who left their native land and are now sending greeting home, meaning the epistle is sent to Italy, or it may refer to some believers in Italy, meaning the author is writing from Italy (Carson and Moo 2005:604).

The identity of the first recipients of Hebrews is also ambiguous. However, one can agree with the position that the epistle was written to Hellenistic Jews or Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora. The writer's use of both the Greek Scriptures (the LXX), language and culture on the one hand and Jesus Scriptures, customs, events, and theology and the experiences of the Hebrew patriarchs (ch. 11) on the other hand, stresses that he was

addressing a mixed audience. It seems clear from the book that the author considers Judaism (or aspects of it) as becoming an obstacle to the addressees' adherence to Christian beliefs and practices (Powell 2009:431). It follows therefore that the addressees are predominantly Jews or people who had greatly been influenced by the Jewish religion.

The key reason for writing the book was to caution the audience to desist from any belief and practices that are contrary to Christianity, particularly those beliefs that stem from Judaism (Powell 2009:431). In other words, the book is meant to appeal to the addressees not to return to Jewish traditions or embrace these traditions as a means of salvation. The author does this by consistently stressing the superiority of Christ to the Old Testament priestly institutions and traditions.

4.6.2 Literary context and structure of Hebrews 9:11-14

Hebrews opens as a well-crafted oration (DeSilva 2016:625). The book begins without key features of New Testament epistles (such as salutation, name of author and identity of the audience) but ends in a typically epistolary manner, with a benediction, personal remarks, and a final farewell (13:18-25). Hebrews may therefore be considered as "a sermon preached from afar and sent through the mail to those who needed to hear it" (Powell 2009:429). If considered this way, then chapters 1—12 constitute the main sermon and chapter 13 is simply a personal note added to the sermon when it was sent to the church for which it was written (Powell 2009:250).

The author exhibits a high rhetorical skill that can only be obtained through formal rhetorical education up to at least the elementary level. The author uses complex periodic sentences (1:1–4; 2:2–4; 5:7–10; 7:26–28), alliteration (cf. 1:1), internal rhyme (5:8), metaphors taken from the law courts (cf. 6:16; 7:7), athletics (12:1–2), education (5:11–14) and anaphora (11:3–39).

One of the key themes developed in the book is the unqualified supremacy of Christ, in relation to his revelation, his (priestly) ministry and ultimately his atoning sacrifice. The book opens with a presentation of God's Son as the definitive revelation of God (1:1-3). The author then asserts the superiority of Christ to angels (1:4-14) and Moses (3:1-6).

Launching into an elaborate exposition on Christ's priestly role (4:14—10:39), the author establishes the superiority of Christ's priesthood (one that is in the order of Melchizedek [7:1-28]) to the Levitical Priesthood, as well as the superiority of the covenant he establishes (through his superior sacrifice [9:1—10:18]) over the old covenant (8:1-13). With the superior sacrifice of Christ as a springboard, the author then exhorts his audience to respond appropriately (10:19-39) in order to be partakers of the heavenly gift of salvation.

Of the many Christological themes covered in Hebrews, the present study focuses on the priestly Christology (as presented in 9:11-14). Just before this text, the author demonstrates that the Old Covenant anticipated a better Covenant (8:7-13). He contends that the relationship between the Old and New Covenants is that of a copy to pattern, shadow to reality, or type to antitype. There is therefore a principle of continuity between these two covenants because the earthly sanctuary foreshadows the heavenly one; the sacrifices made in the Old foreshadows the sacrifice made in the New.

With his argument in chapter 8 as the foundation, the author then moves on to discuss "the ministry of Christ as high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, interlacing covenant, sanctuary, priest, and sacrifice, with the accent on the sacrifice of Christ" in chapter 9 (Purdy 1955:684). In the first part of chapter 9 (vv. 1-10), the author argues that the New Covenant and all its regulations antedate the First Covenant and that the priestly ritual of the Old Covenant, performed in an "earthly sanctuary", attested to its own inadequacy. He describes the earthly priesthood and where it functions (vv. 1-5), the activities of earthly priests and how they approached God (vv. 6-7), the offering made by earthly priests and the worth of the whole earthly priesthood (vv. 8-10). The author's argument that the Old Covenant failed to give worshippers access to God (in vv. 1-10) prepares the reader for the contrast with the entrance of Christ into the heavenly Most Holy Place God dwells forever (vv. 11–14). The author demonstrates the superiority of Christ's service as the Mediator of the New Covenant. He also compares the Levitical High Priest (going through the curtain into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, cf. Lev. 16) with Christ, who by his sacrificing himself, and passing into heaven, takes up the highest and holiest "place" beside God.

The researcher proposes the following structure for the unit under consideration.

- i. The place where Christ functions as a priest (v. 11)
- i. The means by which Christ enters the sanctuary (v. 12)
- i. The inferiority of animal sacrifice (v. 13)
- ii. The superiority of Christ's sacrifice (v. 14)

Having dealt with key contextual issues relevant to the present text, the study now continues to read the text (Heb. 9:11-14) closely.

4.6.3 Close reading of Hebrews 9:11-14

4.6.3.1 The place where Christ functions as a priest (Heb. 9:11)

11. *Χριστὸς δὲ παραγενόμενος ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειότερας σκηνῆς οὐ χειροποιήτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως,*

After describing the repetitious sacrifices of the Old Covenant that failed to provide access to God, the writer now turns to discuss what Christ has achieved through his priestly ministry. The entire section presents a balance between the precedents of redemption (discussed in the preceding text) with the description of redemption itself in the present text. The opening expression *Χριστὸς δὲ* ("But Christ") signals that what follows contrasts what immediately precedes it (vv. 1-10) (Cockerill 2012:387; see also Allen 2010:468). The adversative particle *δὲ* may therefore be rendered "But on the other hand" to signal a shift from the preceding discussions (Lane 1991:159).

Manuscripts are divided on whether one should read *τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν* ("the good things that are already⁶ here") or *τῶν μέλλοντων ἀγαθῶν* ("the good things that are to come") (Omanson 2012:460). The first option means Christ is the high priest of the good things that have come. The second option has two possible interpretations: (a) Christ is the high priest of all the blessings that were to come from the perspective of those who

⁶ The word "already" is not found in the Greek but it is implied.

lived in the Old Testament era or (b) Christ is the good things that lie in the future for believers during the *Parousia* (Omanson 2012:460). Morris (1981:85) supports the reading “the good things that are already here” on the ground that “scribes would be tempted to alter the past into the future, but scarcely the reverse.” Purdy (1955:691) agrees with Morris and maintains that “the author is here speaking not of the future as contrasted with present goods, but of goods which Christ’s priesthood ensures as compared with the ‘good’ promised by earthly priests.” Obviously, the variant reading will spoil the intended contrast between what was anticipated and what has come (Lane 1991). Schreiner (2015:266) argues that in the priesthood of Christ eschatological good things have arrived, but they will not be realized fully until the Kingdom is fully established in the age to come (see also Cockerill 2012:390). The researcher agrees with Morris, Purdy and Schreiner and further notes that the presence of the expression *μέλλοντων ἀγαθῶν* in 10:1 could have influenced scribes to have *τῶν μέλλοντων ἀγαθῶν* in 9:11.

What constitutes the *μέλλοντων ἀγαθῶν* (“good things”) is not made explicit by the author. However, Morris (1981:85) considers the “good things” as the cross and all the benefits it brings to the believer. The “good things” reminisces the promised eschatological blessings given in Isaiah 52:7. Ekem (2005:100) notes that in rabbinic literature, the “good things” may refer to the messianic age, and so what the author of Hebrew might be saying is that Christ’s atonement has ushered in the messianic age. Hagner (2011:np) considers the “good things that have come” as “the degree of eschatological fulfillment that has already come to those who through Christ have become participants in the new covenant.”

This new situation occurs when Christ comes as the high priest. By referring to Christ as *ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν* (“high priest of the good things that are already here”), the author of Hebrews portrays Christ as the one who executes God’s salvific plan in the best way. Therefore, the expression *Χριστὸς παραγενόμενος* (“Christ has appeared”) refers neither to Christ’s condescension to earth nor to his arrival in heaven after his ascension. It rather refers to his “appearing” or “being shown” as High Priest (cf. v. 26). The aorist participle *παραγενόμενος* is an intensified form of the writer’s more customary word *γενόμενος* (derived from *γίνομαι*, “become”) used in connection with Christ’s

exaltation above angels (1:4) and his superiority over other high priests (2:17; 5:9; 6:20; 7:22, 26; see Thompson 2008:186). Christ, the exalted high priest, has passed through the greater and more perfect tent to give believers access to God which they previously did not have (9:8). Therefore, believers now have “access to the heavenly sanctuary because the high priest has gone through the curtain (10:19–20) that separates heaven and earth” and can “now draw near to God because their pioneer (2:10) and forerunner has entered behind the curtain, becoming the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (6:20) and the source of eternal salvation (5:9)” (Thompson 2008:186). The use of aorist participle *παραγενόμενος* is meant to signify the qualitative nature of the redemption that Christ brings (Ekem 2005:99).

The imperfect nature of the old priestly order, the mortality and sinfulness of the priests of the old order, the repetitive nature of the sacrifice made by Old Testament priests and the unsuitability of animals to die in the stead of human are some of the reasons for which a new priest was needed (Craigie 2001:953). Christ qualified as a high priest (a) “by his human experience ensuring sympathy with man’s temptations and sufferings (2:14-18; 4:15ff; 5:1-3)”, (b) “by being called of God to this ministry (5:4ff.)”, (c) “by his adequate offering (9:12, 14, 22; 2:17; 8:3)”, and (d) “by bearing this offering through the curtain into the Holy of Holies (9:12; 10:19-20)” (Purdy 1995:690). The installation of Christ as the high priest signifies the dawning of “the time of reformation” (v. 10).

The next exegetical issue to consider is the meaning of *τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς* (“greater and more perfect tent [or tabernacle]”) and how the particle *διὰ* (“through”) relates to *σκηνῆς* (“tabernacle”). This “greater and more perfect tabernacle” belongs not to this physical and passing world (cf. 1:10–12; 8:13) but to the one that is both invisible (11:1) and unshakable (12:27) and “made by God” (9:11). Bourke (2011:936) outlines two scholarly opinions concerning the identity of the *σκηνῆς* (“tent”). The first position identifies the *σκηνῆς* with “the risen body of Christ” and argues that it cannot be just Christ’s incarnate body because until his resurrection Christ’s mortal body could not be said to be “not of this creation.” It is the resurrection that made Christ’s body a heavenly one (cf. 1 Cor. 15:46-47). This position, which interprets *σκηνῆς* metaphorically, takes the preposition *διὰ* in the instrumental sense. Taking *διὰ* in the local

sense, the second position considers the *σκηνη* (“tabernacle”) as referring to the actual “heavenly regions, the heavenly counterpart of the earthly outer tabernacle, through which Jesus passed (4:14) into the highest heaven, the abode of God (9:24), the counterpart of the inner tabernacle, the Holy of Holies” (Bourke 2011:936; see also Lane 1991:172ff; Cockerill 2012:393).

The key objection to the second view is that it fails to explain why the preposition *διὰ* is to be taken in the local sense (in this text) whereas the same preposition is used instrumentally in two other places in the same verse when in all three cases the noun governed by the prepositions is the same (genitive). Lane (1991:160) argues for the local sense of *διὰ* which he defends by his contextual analysis. He contends that the writer of Hebrews uses *διὰ* in both instrumental and local sense for rhetorical reasons (Lane 1991:160).

A study of the context reveals that the author is here employing the *Yom Kippur* imagery of the Levitical high-priestly ritual (LXX Lev. 16:2) which involves the movement into the inner sanctuary through the curtain to the mercy seat to develop a transience-permanence motif. While *σκηνη* is to be understood as the actual heavenly region through which Christ (being the High Priest) passes to enter the Holy Sanctuary, one must not consider this region as the visible heavens, because the latter is created and perishable (Heb. 1:11) while *σκηνη* is neither created nor perishable (9:11). Thus, Schreiner (2015:266) is right to conclude that “Strictly speaking, there isn’t a tabernacle at all in the heavenly realm. The heavenly tabernacle becomes a vehicle for describing the indescribable, for depicting the presence of God.” Again, in the New Testament, there is no need for a heavenly Holy Place because Christ brings to believers the very presence of God. In addition to its spatial dimension, *σκηνη* also has an eschatological reality, namely, in the last days, Christ (through his death, resurrection and exaltation) has given believers access to the perfect and heavenly tabernacle (Schreiner 2015:266).

4.6.3.2 The means by which Christ enters the sanctuary (Heb. 9:12)

12. οὐδὲ δι’ αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσῆλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν εὐράμενος.

The author continues to say that Christ *εἰσῆλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια* (“entered once for all into the Holy Place”). The expression *ἐφάπαξ* (“once for all”) means “one time for all times,” not “one time for all people” and it highlights the ultimate effectiveness of Christ’s blood. Christ’s superiority is attested by the way he replaces the repetitious sacrifices of the Old Covenant with his one-time sacrifice on the cross (Cockerill 2012:394). Here, *ἐφάπαξ* must be considered as an emphatic particle underscoring the decisive nature of the death of Christ (Morris 1981:86) or the finality of Christ’s atonement.

The author goes on to say that *οὐδὲ δι’ αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος* (“he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood”). The blood of animals could not attain redemption, but the blood of Christ accomplished salvation to the fullest. The necessity of offering blood is highlighted in 9:18 and 22. The word *διὰ* does not mean passing “through” something (as it does in verse 11) but “through” in the sense of “by means of”, that is, it is by means of Christ’s own blood that he entered the Most Holy Place. This assertion draws on the Old Testament practice where the priest after shedding the blood on the altar, carried it into the Most Holy Place (Lev. 16). In both Old and New Testaments, “blood” often signifies “life,” especially “life violently destroyed,” therefore involving “death” (as in 12.4). Therefore, the reference to Jesus’s blood in this verse (and in v. 14) alludes to his death on the cross (Hughes 1987:336). The shedding of blood is the offering of one’s life because blood carries a person’s life (cf. Lev. 17:11).

Christ’s approach was different from that of his predecessors in that unlike his predecessors who entered the sanctuary with the blood of animals, he entered the Holy Place by means of his own blood, referring to his death on the cross, which is the sacrifice of the New Covenant equivalent to the animal sacrifices offered under the Old Covenant. Christ therefore becomes both the offeror and the offering, the sinless and perfect high priest (4:15; 7:26) and the spotless sacrifice in the New Covenant. The suggestion that Christ offered his own blood on the heavenly altar in the heavenly sanctuary should not be understood as Christ going to some heavenly sanctuary with his blood after his death and offering it to God because Jesus actually completed his atoning work (through the shedding of his blood) at the cross (Morris 1981:86; Thompson 2008:186; Cockerill

2012:394). As stated earlier, he did not enter “with” his blood but “by means of” (*διὰ*) his blood. Christ’s session at the right hand of God not only underlines the effectiveness of his blood (10:11-14) but also represents the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat in the case of Old Testament priesthood (Cockerill 2012:394). Those who argue that Christ literally carried his blood and presented it to God in the Most Holy Place (because that is what the Old Testament priests did with the blood of the sacrificial animal), according to Hughes (1987:329), fail to recognize that “biblical analogies cannot be pressed into correspondence at every point; and, indeed, the particular analogy on which [they] wish to insist here is hardly favorable to [their] hypothesis” because even though it is a fact that the Levitical high priest entered the Most Holy Place with the blood of the sacrificial animal “in separation from himself, his own blood was at the same time freely flowing within his body—that is to say, he himself was not at all in a bloodless state.” Hughes (1987:329-330) argues further that “If analogy is enforced at one point it cannot be enforced at another, and it is clear that on this basis those who maintain that Christ’s blood was restored to his risen body can equally well claim the support of analogy.” In the gospels and the epistles, one realizes that what Christ did on the cross was final and needed nothing more to be done to complete it. It is in this light that the researcher concurs with Thompson (2008:186) that *αἷμα* (“blood”) is “a metaphor for Jesus’s sacrifice of himself” rather than that it is “a substance that the exalted Christ brings into the sanctuary.”

The superiority of Christ’s sacrifice is seen in the fact that it purchased *λύτρωσιν* *εὐράμενος* (“an eternal redemption”). The word *λύτρωσιν* (“eternal”) carries two main ideas— “not needing to be repeated” (as in 7.27) and “transcending this world” (cf. v. 11b). The word *λύτρωσις* (“redemption”) refers to the act of setting one free through the payment of a price (cf. Rom. 3:25). The author depicts sin as having oppressive power from which one has to be redeemed. In this text, the author contrasts the death of Christ with the provisional nature of what the Old Covenant sacrificial system accomplished through the blood of animals. The eternal redemption attainable by the once and for all characterizes Christ’s sacrifice. A perfect ransom has been paid for human redemption through Christ’s death and because it does not need to be paid again and again, the redemption obtained is said to be eternal (Lane 1991:169; Hodges 1983:801). Therefore, “The superiority of Christ’s accomplishment is thus both qualitative (intrinsic) and

temporal (time-transcending)” (Hagner 2011:np). Clearly, the value of Christ’s sacrifice far outweighs the value of animal sacrifice in the Levitical tradition.

4.6.3.3 The inferiority of animal sacrifice (Heb. 9:13)

13. εἰ γὰρ τὸ αἷμα τράγων καὶ ταύρων καὶ σποδὸς δαμάλεως ραντίζουσα τοὺς κεκοινωμένους ἀγιάζει πρὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα

Verses 13 and 14 form one sentence in Greek with verse 13 providing an “if” clause and verse 14 a “how much more” clause. Here, the writer presents a *fortiori* argument to prove the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice as he once again returns to the Levitical system to provide the lens for interpretation. The ταῦρος (“bull”) recalls the “young (male) bullock” which Aaron had to offer as a sin offering for himself and his family (Lev 16.3). The main argument in verse 13 is that the Old Testament ritual, involving the τὸ αἷμα τράγων καὶ ταύρων (“the blood of goats and bulls” cf. Lev. 16:15-16) and the aspersion of sinners with σποδὸς δαμάλεως (“ashes of a heifer”)—which were mixed with water to make “the water of cleansing ... for the purification from sin” (Num. 19:9, 14-21)—achieved purification for the Israelites only at the external level. In other words, the aspersion with the blood of the sacrifices and the lustral water only achieved external purity for the defiled, not moral purity. The Old Testament sprinkling ritual was meant to put people back into a state in which they could once again legally partake the temple worship (Cockerill 2012:396). Strictly speaking, this practice could not take away sin (cf. Heb. 10:4).

4.6.3.4 The superiority of Christ’s sacrifice (Heb. 9:14)

14. πόσω μᾶλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἄμωμον τῷ θεῷ, καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι.

The expression πόσω μᾶλλον (“how much more”) at the beginning of verse 14 is a familiar argument in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 6:30; 7:1; Rom. 5:9, 10, 15, 17, 2 Cor. 3:9-11). In the present verse, it highlights the incomparable greatness of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross. The πνεύματος αἰωνίου (“eternal spirit/Spirit”) may refer to the Holy Spirit

who energizes Christ to accomplish his (Christ's) salvific task (Isa. 42:1; Mark 1:10; Luke 1:35; 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21) or Christ's own "eternal and spiritual life, by reason of which his sacrifice and priesthood are of everlasting value and effect (Heb. 7:16, 24)." Both Hagner (2011:np) and Rayburn (2008:1142) prefer the former reading. Hagner (2011:np) sees a connection between the "eternal spirit" and the ministry of Israel's "servant of YHWH" (Isa. 42:1; 53:5-6, 10, 12). Similarly, both the RSV and the JB and TNT identify *πνεύματος* as either "the Holy Spirit" or "the divine nature of Christ" and so spell "Spirit" with a capital "S".

Bourke (2011:936), on the other hand, argues that the spirit mentioned here has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit or Christ's divinity. He opines that "eternal spirit" corresponds to "indestructible life" (of 7:16). Concerning 7:16, Bourke (2011:936) notes that

the emphasis is on Jesus's eternal priesthood (eternal not in the sense that it had no beginning, but because it will never end) in contrast to the transitory Old Testament priesthood; here the emphasis is on the eternity of Jesus's one and only sacrifice, in contrast to the annually repeated sacrifices of the Jewish high priest on the Day of Atonement (v. 25). Therefore, Jesus's "indestructible life" is the same as his "eternal spirit."

The fact that "eternal spirit" lacks the definite article "the" also favors this position. Both the PHPS and NAB spell "spirit" with small "s" and have "in the eternal spirit" probably to suggest Christ's unique but human spirit. Considering both sides of the argument, the present researcher agrees with Cockerill (2012:398) that the author uses the expression "in reference to the Holy Spirit, but without diminution of all that he has said about the Son's eternal being. References to the Holy Spirit in 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; and 9:8 (cf. 10:15) prepare readers to hear 'eternal Spirit' as a description of the same reality."

The writer of Hebrews describes Christ's sacrifice as ἄμωμος ("without blemish" or "perfect"). This alludes to Numbers 19.2 (cf. 1 Pet. 1.19) where "perfect" signifies that the

sacrificial victim must have no defect, else it cannot be used as a sacrifice. Christ was perfect, unblemished and without sin.

The last part of the verse focuses on the reality that incomparably superior *αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ* (“blood of Christ”) brings to humanity which the Old Testament religious cleansing tradition only foreshadowed, namely, the purification of human *συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι* (“conscience from dead works to serve the living God”). The blood of Christ signifies his sacrificial death on the cross (Allen 2010:473). The word *συνείδησις* (“conscience”) signifies the heart or the innermost part of a person (Schreiner 2015:272; see also Lane 1991:175-176). The human conscience is the point at which someone confronts God’s holiness. As such, one becomes disqualified from serving God when his/her conscience is defiled. The author’s point is that the power of Christ’s blood has qualified those who were disqualified by their defiled conscience to serve God. In other words, through cleansing by Jesus’s blood, believers have had their consciences purified from all that defiles humanity and liberated from the past life of sin’s dominion to a new life characterized by spirit-rule (Lane 1991:176). The author says in 9:9-10 that the Old Testament ceremonial laws “cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper”, but merely dealt with food, ceremonial washings, and other regulations that were imposed on the body while looking forward to the time of a new order. The author now sees the new order in the ministry of Christ. The cleansing of the conscience frees the worshiper from the guilt of his/her past sins. Therefore, Luther (cited in Allen 2010:473) is right to assert that in the new order a person “is not bitten by the recollection of his sins and is not disquieted by the fear of future punishment” because Christ’s sacrifice offers expiation, in cleansing sinners from their sins and their consciences from dead works.

The expression *νεκρῶν ἔργων* (“dead works”) refers to all forms of works that do not give eternal life or works done by spiritually dead people (Allen 2010:473). The researcher agrees with Allen (2010:473) that the former interpretation is more plausible. The *African Bible Commentary* appropriately reminds its African readers that “our redemption by Christ is not based on our performing ineffective ceremonies but on Christ’s great sacrifice” (Adeyemo 2006:1501).

To sum up, Hebrews 9:11-14 makes the point that Christ came as the eternal and perfect high priest to provide what the Old Testament priest failed to provide for God's people, namely, access to God, cleansing of conscience, eternal salvation and others.

4.7 Summary of biblical data on sin and atonement

This section summarizes the biblical data on sin and atonement based on the exegetical reading of selected texts in chapters three and four of the study. This summary provides the main biblical ideas to feature in the formulation of atonement theology for Akan Christians in chapter 6 of this study.

4.7.1 The biblical account of sin

It is important, first of all, to note that God the Creator of the universe and everything that exists in it. In the creation account, the study found that humanity was the last to be created, and yet, humans are the most important of God's creation. The fact that humans were created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27) makes humanity different from any other creation of God. Spirituality, creativity, morality, and others were found to be aspects of God's image borne by humanity. The creation of the first humans (Adam and Eve) was followed by God's blessing upon them to be fruitful and multiply, and the divine mandate that they should take dominion of the earth (Gen. 1:28).

The fact that sin was not part of God's creation is evident in God's declaration that everything he created was very good (Gen. 1:31). This declaration and the fact of God's holiness underline that God is not the origin of sin. The origin of sin in the human world is traced to Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve are said to have disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit. This act of disobedience was engineered by Satan who, acting through the serpent, deceived Adam and Eve to disbelieve God and act contrary to God's will by eating the forbidden fruit. This event (referred to as the Fall of humanity) had negative consequences on the entire universe. The Fall broke the divine-human, human-human and human-environment relationships (Gen. 3:8-10, 12, 17-19). It also led to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from their initial residence, the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23-24). Death came into the human world through the Fall (cf. Rom. 5:12-14). More

importantly, the Fall affected all the descendants of Adam (that is the entire human race) such that all human beings who came after Adam (except Jesus Christ) became polluted by sinful nature.

The biblical data examined in the study so far also show that the concept of sin is linguistically articulated in many different ways in the Bible. Sin means “to fall short of” or “to miss the mark” (Judg. 20:16; Prov. 8:35ff; Job 5:24), an offense against either God or human (Gen. 31:36; Lev. 4:14). It is “wickedness” or “guilty” that comes as a result of one’s departure from the right and approved path (cf. Exod. 9:27; Isa. 57:20-21; Jer. 5:26). Sin is that which is “bad”, “evil” or sin that is hurtful (1 Sam. 30:22; Esth. 7:6; Job 35:12; cf. Psa. 10:15), “iniquity; vanity; sorrow” (see Psa. 90:10; Prov. 22:8); “violating God’s laws” (Matt. 1:21; Mark 1:5; 1 Tim. 5:24); “trespass” (cf. Matt. 6:14-15) and ungodliness (Rom. 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:9). Sin has a social dimension; yet, it ultimately affects God and for this reason, the sinner needs forgiveness not only from its human victim(s) but also from God (Psa. 51:4).

4.7.2 The biblical account of atonement

The need for atonement became evident right from the time of the Fall. In Genesis 3:15 God predicted the birth of Christ who would destroy the works of Satan (and this definitely includes sin). God said in this prophecy that the serpent will strike the heel of the seed of the woman to highlight the fact that the redemptive victory of the promised Messiah would be accomplished through suffering. God alluded to the fact that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb. 9:22 RSV) when he killed an animal to obtain its leather to cover the shame and nakedness of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). The search for a way of atoning for human sin resulted in the Old Testament sacrificial system which God put in place as a temporal way of dealing with sin until the ultimate sacrifice of his Son on the cross occurred on Good Friday.

The study of three key Old Testament passages on atonement in chapter three brings some principles to the fore. First, every sin (whether committed knowingly or unknowingly) needs to be atoned for. Therefore, on the Day of atonement (Lev. 16) the high priest made sacrifices for every sin committed by his people and by himself. This means that in

the biblical perspective, being ignorant about one's sin does not set the sinner free from guilt and penalty of sin. Second, atonement for sin requires the death of a perfect victim. Whether the Passover sacrifice, the *Yom Kippur* sacrificial victim or any other, it is required that atonement be made with a victim without defect. Though the animals which died in place of humans could not best represent the worshipper, their non-defected nature symbolically signified their holy status. In other words, an unblemished animal used for the sacrifice signifies the concept of moral perfection on the part of the sacrificial victim. This fact is key in the New Testament perspective of atonement which presents Jesus as the sinless being who atoned for human sins. Third, the need for the shedding of blood to restore and/or maintain a right relationship with God is evident in the Old Testament sacrificial system. The significance of the blood in atonement is based on the close connection between an animal's blood and its life (Lev. 17:11). The fourth principle is the substitutionary nature of Israel's sacrificial system (Isa. 53:1-12). The animal whose blood makes atonement for the worshipper dies in the stead of the worshipper. Life, in the form of blood, is taken from the animal to allow the worshipper to continue to enjoy life which should have been taken from him/her because death is the wage for sin (Rom. 6:23a). In the atonement ritual performed during the *Yom Kippur*, the transfer of the penalty of sin to the substitute was achieved symbolically by the the high priest's act of laying his hands on the animal's head (Lev. 16:20-22). Fifth, atonement for sin involved propitiation and expiation which lead to the restoration of the divine-human relationship.

The New Testament perspective of atonement makes it clear that the Old Testament sacrificial system could not achieve atonement in the strict sense of the word. These sacrifices only served as a foreshadow of what the Messiah was to accomplish on the cross. This discovery is not surprising because in the Old Covenant, while the Levitical sacrificial system was still in place, Israel received many prophecies about the Messiah who was to suffer for the sins of humanity (cf. Isa. 53). The promise of a New Covenant which unlike the Old, has God's Law inscribed on the hearts of his people rather than on stones (Jer. 31:31-33; cf. Heb. 8:6-13, 10:16) meant that God was one day going to abrogate the Old Covenant and its system of atonement.

It is against this background that the New Testament opens in a way that makes the reader appreciate that Christ is the Messiah the Old Testament promised. As God in human flesh, Christ serves as a perfect representation of humanity for whom he dies and at the same time offers the highest price needed to purchase humanity from slavery to sin. Thus, the salvific accomplishment of Christ is founded on his dual personality, being God and human at the same time (cf. John 1:1, 14). The salvific purpose of Christ's First Advent is attested by his name Jesus (which signifies that he will "save his people from their sins") (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31), and John the Baptist's declaration that Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), among others.

In his life and ministry, Jesus makes it clear that he knows his identity as the Savior of the world. In this light, he declares himself as the Son of Man who has come to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). In these passages, Jesus applies to himself Isaiah's description of the suffering servant (see Isa. 53:10-12) and hence underscores the vicarious nature of his death. The concept of ransom means by his death, Christ purchased humanity from slavery. Christ mentions his salvific agenda in Luke 4:18-20 where he alludes to both spiritual and physical dimensions of Christian soteriology. The institution of the Eucharist explicitly makes the point that Jesus's death involved substitutionary atonement. Jesus's assertion that his blood is "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24 RSV) underlines the fact that his death was the fulfillment of God's promise to establish a New Covenant with his people (cf. Jer. 31:31-33). At the same time, Jesus underscores the need for the shedding of blood to achieve atonement.

Paul gives important teachings about the New Testament concept of atonement. He understands Christ's death in vicarious terms and so he declares "Christ died **for** our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3 RSV, emphasis mine). In Romans 3:21-26, Paul highlights the inability of humanity to achieve a righteous status on their own. He maintains that righteousness comes from God apart from the works of the Law and it is appropriated through faith. According to Paul, this righteousness that comes from God apart from legalism and was predicted by the Old Testament and accomplished through the death of Christ which God provided as atonement (achieving expiation and propitiation) for humanity at his (God's)

own right time. This idea links beautifully with Romans 5:1-21 where Paul describes how the death of Christ reversed the curse that Adam's sin placed on the entire human race. The cross, therefore, signifies Christ's experience of human curse in order to set humanity free from the curse that resulted from sin (Gal. 3:13). Through the death of Christ, repentant sinners are justified and reconciled with God so that believers have continual access to God. Paul considers the Christ Event as a victory over Satan and his hosts (Col. 2:15).

In the epistle to the Hebrews, the writer presents a priestly Christology that underlines the finality of Christ's death as God's ordained means of atoning for human sin. The superiority of Christ's priesthood is established in 4:14—5:10 and 7:1-28. The writer then moves on to argue that Jesus's singular self-sacrifice on the cross supersedes the repeated sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests (9:11-14). In the light of Christ's sacrifice, the sacrifices made on the Day of Atonement effected only ceremonial cleansing and failed to purge the conscience of the worshipper. It is not possible for the blood of animals to take away sin (9:9; cf. 10:4) and so the Levitical sacrificial tradition was given to foreshadow what Christ was to achieve on the cross. The main point is that after Christ has achieved atonement for sin once for all, no other sacrifice is needed to atone for sin.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has considered atonement from the New Testament perspectives. The cross is central to the message of the New Testament. It was discovered that Christ's death and resurrection is a fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system. What the Old Testament foreshadowed became a reality in the person and ministry of Jesus, the Christ. However, it was also noted that each book of the New Testament emphasizes different aspects of the Christ Event. For example, Mark presents the atoning as the fulfillment of what Isaiah (ch. 53) predicted about YHWH's Servant, and Hebrews expresses the atoning sacrifice of Christ in relation to Christ's high priestly office. Each writer interprets the Christ Event in light of the Old Testament ritual imagery to show how superior Christ's blood is to the sacrificial blood associated with the Old Covenant. The high level of

continuity between the Old Testament and New Testament concepts of atonement is key to the holistic understanding of the Christian doctrine of atonement.

The study now proceeds to explore the doctrine of atonement within the Akan religious-cultural context.

CHAPTER FIVE

ATONEMENT IN AKAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the Akan community of Ghana in terms of its religious, social, political and cultural contexts. Emphasis is placed on sin, atonement, salvation, and priesthood in Akan/African Traditional Religion, among others. Highlights of areas of continuity and discontinuity between the biblical and Akan/African traditional views on these themes are also given. The chapter also accounts for Christianity in the Akan community and the use of imprecatory prayers among Akan Christians.

5.2 Akan historical, social, economic and political backgrounds

5.2.1 Akan historical background

Cultural anthropologists classify the indigenous people of Ghana into five major ethnic groups—namely, Guan, Ga-Dangme, Akan, Ewe and Mole-Dagbani—based on language and culture (Ghana Statistics Service 2013:61-62). This study focuses on the Akan ethnolinguistic group which comprises many autonomous sub-groups with closely linked economic, political, social, religious, and cultural institutions. Historians trace the root of the Akan to the Sahel from where they migrated to establish the Bonoman kingdom around the 12th century, with Bono Manso as its capital (Ankrah 2018:59).

Anane-Agyei (2012:2) traces the Twi language of the Akan group to an ancient Bono king, called Nana Twi (Tsi) of Takyiman whose language was referred to as Twi's language (*Twi kasa*). Agyekum (2006:206) lists Asante, Akuapem, Akwamu, Fante, Akyem, Agona, Assin, Bono, Buem, Denkyira, Kwahu, Twifo and Wassaw, as mutually intelligible Akan dialects. Presently, the Akan occupy eight of the sixteen administrative regions of Ghana, namely, Eastern, Ashanti, Central, Western, Western North, Bono, Bono East and Ahafo regions, and some part of the Oti region, and they constitute about 47.5% of the Ghanaian

population. The map below depicts the Akan dominance in Ghana's geography and population.⁷

Fig. 5.1 The map of Ghana



5.2.2 Akan social life

In Akan life and thought, the human being (*onipa* or *nyimpa*) is made up of both spiritual and material components. Most Akan (like other Africans) subscribe to a tripartite

⁷ The map was retrieved from <https://www.google.com/search?q=Ghana+map+showing+Akan&client=firefox-b-d&sxsrf=ALeKk00CJccSP4vz5o4e5ualztyCJDSTlg:1593678971795&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUK> (Accessed on 2nd July, 2020).

composition of *onipa*. The first component is *honam/nipadua* (body) which derives from the *mogya* (blood) of the mother and accounts for the strong physiological bond people have with their mothers. Since it is the *mogya* that makes a child a human being, a person's lineage is traced from the mother's descent (see Ephirim-Donkor 2018:8-9). This matrilineal descent also governs inheritance, succession, and land tenure. The second part, the *sunsum* (an individual spirit), derives from the father at conception and bears one's distinctive personality, character, suppositions and behavioral or psychological attributes. It perishes when the *honhom* (the force that animates the body) is disintegrated. The third part is *ɔkra* (the soul) which comes from *Onyame* (God) as an unperishable source of life, energy and vitality, and as the bearer of one's *nkrabea* (destiny).

Community is fundamental to African ontology (Turaki 2020:np). In Akan, like other African societies, “[p]eople are not individuals, living in a state of independence”, but are a part “of a community, living in relationships and interdependence” (Turaki 2006:36). The Akan have a communal worldview of life with a strong family bond (Kyeremanteng 2010:112). Family, in Akan worldview, comprises the living, the dead and the yet-to-be-born. There are two kinds of family in Akan, namely, the nuclear family that comprises spouses and their children and then, extended family, comprising parents, children, uncles, nephews, nieces, grandparents and others.

The Akan family bond is strengthened by the saying “I am related by blood; therefore, I exist or I exist because I belong to a family” (Pobee 1979:49). For the Akan, it is the responsibility of the society to give its members a sense of belonging through acceptance, common ownership of resources (such as land), sharing of individual problems, to mention but a few. The Akan feels doomed if they are isolated from the community because life is not based only on the effort of an individual but also on sharing resources with others. In traditional Akan societies, people escort visitors to their (the visitors') home or at least for half the journey to his/her home. When a meal is prepared, all the family members gather and eat with their fingers. This makes the Akan worldview directly opposite to the individualistic worldview of the people from the West.

Traditional Akan society is characterized by respect for elders. To insult or abuse an elderly person is an irreparable wrong. Children are expected to cater for their parents. It is also the norm for one to share wealth and resources with other family members. Furthermore, due to the matrilineal system of inheritance, Akan males are expected to take care of their sisters' children, the reason being that the children of the females in the family remain in the family of the children's mother but those of the males belong to another family. One's mother's brother is referred to as *wɔfa* (uncle) and he also refers to his sister's children as *wɔfasenom* (nephews and nieces). The Akan also observe the rites of passage such as birth, puberty, marriage, childbirth, and death.

5.2.3 Akan economic life

Like other African people, indigenous Akan economic activities involve the management of the resources available to the people. Traditional Akans are predominantly agricultural, trading, fishing and hunting communities (Botchway and Sarpong 2015). Akan tribes (such as Bono, Akyem, Asante, Sehwi, Akwapim and Assin) occupying forest zones (Akan: *kwaεem*) are mainly farmers who cultivate crops such as yam, plantain, cocoyam, cassava, maize and oranges, (so they are described as *akuafoɔ/ekuafo*, "farmers") and hunters who use equipment such as traps, clubs, spears, bows and arrows and guns for hunting game such as grass cutters, antelopes, rats and occasionally leopards and elephants (Botchway and Sarpong 2015:42; see also Odotei 1995). Not only do the forest-dwelling Akan communities engage in farming and hunting activities, but they also use herbs to prepare traditional medicine, keep livestock and engage in art and craft like goldsmithing and *Kente* weaving as well (Odotei 1995:63; Botchway and Sarpong 2015:42). Products from the forest, which the people domesticate give them various articles of trade such as gold, kola, ivory, and others.

The Fante group primarily constitutes the coastal Akan who have the sea as their key asset. The coastal Akan are mainly into marine fishing and so they are referred to as *apɔfofoɔ/afarfo* (fishermen). Men fish and women process the fish by smoking, salting, or drying them due to their highly perishable nature (Odotei 1995:60ff). They also engage in bead making (Odotei 1995:63). Local fishermen use *hembra*—that is, a canoe sculptured

from a piece of wood—which they push by mat sail and wooden paddles (Botchway and Sarpong 2015:42). Nets made from plant fiber and sisal are used to collect fish from the sea.

Before the introduction of the use of currency, Akans engaged in inter-community trade based on the batter system. Someone who needed rice, for example, could exchange fish for it. Another person could exchange coconut for beans, and so on. Later, the system was considered inappropriate because the worth of the exchanged goods was normally not the same. This led to the adoption of monies such as cowry shells and gold dust as a means of trade. Later, the Gold Coast (Ghana) adopted the *sedee* (cedi) as the means of purchase.

In those times, people from the forest zone traveled to the coast for salt and fish. The coastal people, due to the inadequacy of farm produce, bought foodstuff from other communities. The Asantes transported *Kente* (or *nwentoma*; Ewe: *kete*) to other parts of the country. The Bono also transported foodstuff and other commodities to neighboring people. The poor road network hindered the progress of trade relations among societies. People traveled through the thick forest for days in order to get commodities for their families and society.

Land is an important asset for the Akan. The land is given by God for human benefit and so people make use of the resources available from the land for their survival. People need land to build shelter, to farm on and to engage in economic activities. Land is therefore a vital inheritance passed down the family line. To deprive a traditional Akan of land is to deprive him/her of the means of survival. Since land belongs usually to the family or the clan it cannot be sold by an individual without the endorsement of the family head.

5.2.4 Akan political life

Politically, Akan communities are hierarchically organized. In each household, the father serves as the head. Each lineage is headed by *abusua panin* (family head) who mediates between the ancestors, the living and the unborn. Then there is the *odikro* who is the

head of a small village and then the *ɔhene* who is the head of a town. A cluster of towns and villages (called the *ɔman*) is headed by *ɔmanhene* (state or paramount chief) who is the owner of the traditional area and the one to whom all divisional chiefs swear an oath of allegiance. Akan chiefs were the custodians of the land in the past. They preserved natural resources like land, rivers, timber and others, through laws that are enforced in various communities together with state laws.

Each chief has his female counterpart referred to as *ɔhema* (the queen mother) who helps the chief in administering the community. The queenmother according to Akan political hierarchical order, is the most significant individual after the paramount chief. Referred to as the *ɔbaapanin* (from *ɔbaa*, female, woman, and *panin*, elderly), the queenmother is to be consulted with regards to problematic and delicate issues. She is therefore expected to have great experience and wisdom of the secrets and norms of the society. When the stool of the chief is vacant, another chief is selected from the royal family by the queenmother, in consultation with the family head and king-makers.

Contrary to the misconception that African traditional rule is autocratic, one finds that the indigenous African system of government as exemplified by the Akan traditional governing system is absolutely democratic. The framework of the Akan traditional governing system involves the consultative decision-making process whereby the chief administers the society with the help of a council made up of the sub-chiefs and family heads (Asante 2007:14). Consultation and democratic deliberations characterize council decisions; therefore autocracy has no place in Akan traditional governance. The decision-making process is devoid of haste and intimidation. There is freedom of expression by each member of the council (Gyekye 1996). Decisions are not made until everyone has had the chance to share his/her opinion and consensus is reached (Gyekye 1996). In difficult matters, the council takes time to reflect on the various options before finally coming out with a decision. Among the Akan groups, the council intimates to observers, *yɛrekɔbisa abrewa* (we are going to consult with the old lady) to signify the need to have a further reflection on the issue before finally deciding. The chief is accountable to his people and therefore gives accounts of his leadership occasionally, usually at festivals or similar events.

Not only does the chief have judicial, legislative, executive and administrative powers, he also has spiritual powers (Asante 2007:14). He serves as the spiritual head of his community and the intermediary between the living and dead. He is said to sit on his forefathers' *nkonwa* (stools). Occasionally, he enters the *nkonwa dan mu* (the stool room) to offer sacrifices to the ancestors, pour libation and intercede for his people (Asante 2007:14). In this sense, he acts as the priest-chief before his ancestors. The sacredness of the chieftaincy office is emphasized by taboos including the chief must not hit or be hit by anyone; he is not expected to walk briskly, play with other people in public, be seen walking barefooted; his buttocks must never touch the ground, and he must not be insulted by anyone lest something evil will happen to the community (Asante 2007:14).

Having examined the historical, social, economic and political backgrounds of the Akan, the study now proceeds to consider the religious worldview of the Akan.

5.3 Akan religious beliefs

In Akan, religion and life are inseparable (Opoku 1978:1). Akan religiosity informs all life activities— whether it is hunting, farming, or even eating, drinking or traveling. African Traditional Religion—unlike Judaism, Christianity and Islam— is a natural religion with no written sacred texts. As it is in many other African societies, the Akan primal religion is as old as the history of the Akan people (Gyekye 1996:6). What religious beliefs and practices inform the Akan concept of atonement? The next section takes care of this question.

5.3.1 Belief in the Supreme God

The belief in an all-powerful God is “at the heart of African Religion and dominates all its other beliefs”, says Mbiti (2015:45). Africans have a deep awareness of a Supreme Being who occupies the topmost position in their socio-cosmological structure (Falconer 2013:196) and so there is no need to prove the existence of God to the African. Like other Africans, the Akan express their concept of God in proverbs, short statements, stories, religious rituals, prayers, songs, myths, among others. Mbiti (2015:45-47) has suggested three possible ways through which indigenous Akan people and other Africans got to

know about God. First, Africans got to know God through their daily reflections on the complexity of the universe. After a long time of observing the universe, Africans concluded that there is a Supreme Being whose power holds the world together. Africans also came to believe in God when life challenges made them appreciate and understand their own limitations. The reality of human limitedness and powerlessness prompted ancient Africans to conceive the existence of a greater Being who possesses the highest power and subjects everything under his control. Mbiti's last suggestion is that Africans came to believe in God as they observed the heavenly forces. After realizing that they could only observe celestial bodies like the moon, sun and stars and depend upon them for light, warmth, and other benefits, without being able to reach these bodies, Africans began to associate some of these bodies with God (for instance, the sky was linked with a great God who is very close to humanity). They also perceived them as having one supernatural power or another. Therefore, human limitedness moved Africans to depend on the Supreme Being, the only one who has control, power, knowledge, and ability over everything.

Various African societies (including the Akan society) have different names and appellations for God, each of which points to one attribute of God or the other. For example, for the Maasai, Kamba and Agikuyu of Kenya God is known as *Ngai* who is the Creator of all that exists (Githuku 2012:36); the Ewes of Ghana call him *Mawu* (Supreme/sovereign Being); the Yoruba of Nigeria call God *Oludamare* (Almighty or Supreme). The Akan refer to God as *Onyankopɔn* (*Nyankopɔn*) or *Onyame* (*Nyame*; the One who satisfies) and give him appellations like *Tweduampɔn* (the dependable One), *Otumfoɔ* (the mighty One or powerful One), *Ɔdomakoma* (the only Supplier of grace), *totrobonsu* (Giver of rain), *amowia* (Giver of the sun), *tetekwaframo* (the eternal), *bɔrebɔre a ɔbɔ adeɛ* (the Creator of all things), *amaomee* (Giver of plenitude) (see Quarcoopome 1987:62-66; Asante 2017:41).

The question of whether Africans/Akan are monotheistic or polytheistic has been discussed by scholars for some time now. While for Mbiti the African ontology of God is similar to the Judeo-Christian God, at least as revealed in the Old Testament, Turaki (2020:np) argues that the traditional African concept of God "is not narrowly defined. God

may be viewed in a pantheistic, polytheistic, anthropomorphic manner, as a Supreme Power or a Supreme Being.” However, Bujo (2006:18) avers that “[t]he proclamation of the Christian Gospel was not a novel presentation of the concept of God, but it was instead a more complete and definite proclamation of that one God, whom Africans already knew.” The present researcher sees evidence of the continuity of the African traditional notion of God and the Christian God in the adoption of local names for God in African societies for the God of the Bible. It is valid to conclude then that, for the African, the Supreme Being is clearly one and has no co-equal; therefore, Africans are monotheistic (Mbiti 1975:39-41; see also McVeigh 1974:35; Kapenzi 1974:490).

Onyankopɔn is essentially a spiritual being and so there are no images or visible representations of him. The Akan consider *Onyankopɔn* as too powerful and sacred and, consequently, it is inappropriate for sinful humanity to come close to him. Thus, *Onyankopɔn* is not worshipped directly. There are no shrines, temples and the feast days specifically devoted to God among the Akan; neither are there images or representations of God’s personality (Opoku 1978:30; Ephirim-Donkor 2018:8). The Akan approach God indirectly through priests or priestesses whom he has entrusted with sacred rituals of worship. Earlier it was noted that the Akan society is highly hierarchical. In the Akan setting, the king or chief cannot be addressed directly; he must be addressed through the linguist (*ɔkyeame*). God is a Supreme King who should not be bothered with petty problems, except after all other avenues of action are fruitless, and even in that case, he can only be approached through an intermediary (McVeigh 1974:35; Turaki 2020). The Akan strongly believe that God exists everywhere and can be called upon anywhere at any time. Therefore, the role of intermediaries in Akan religious life is crucial. They bridge the gap between humanity and the Supreme Being. Physical mediators might include traditional rulers, elders/opinion leaders, diviners, seers, traditional medicine men, oracles, ritual elders while spiritual ones include divinities, nature spirits and ancestors.

5.3.2 Belief in ancestral spirits

Ancestors occupy a prominent place in African life and thought. Apart from the Supreme Being, ancestors are the most potent aspect of the African perspective of the spiritual

world (McVeigh 1974:34; Pobee 1979:95). The Akan believes that the human personality survives after death; therefore, death is a transition of the soul of the departed to the world of the ancestral spirits (Akan: *Asamando* or *Asamanadze*) (McVeigh 1974:26; Salm and Falola 2002:43; Ephirim-Donkor 2018:22-23). In the Akan worldview, “ancestors” (*Nananom nsamanfoɔ*) refers to a section of the community who, having completed its earthly life, has gone ahead to the spirit world to be the elder relatives of the living (Pobee 1979:52).

For a person to achieve the status of an ancestor, he/she must die a natural death at a ripe old age after leading a decent life worthy of emulation and must have children and be buried befittingly (see Pobee 1979:46; Dickson 1984:194). Ancestors are believed to preside spiritually at family meetings, ensure the enforcement of law and order in the society, punish evildoers and reward good deeds (as the custodians of law and morality), protect people from diseases, mediate between God and humans, and intercede on humanity’s behalf (Quarcoopome 1987:43; Sarpong 1996:4; Koech 2008:56). Spirits that do not qualify to enter *Asamando* (for example, because they died prematurely) become *saman twentwen* (hovering ghosts) who await reincarnation. Obviously, the Akan worldview gives another chance to those who are not able to become ancestors to be born again and live to attain what is required to enter *Asamando* (the Akan paradise) and hence receive eternal life.

Because of the belief that the ancestors continue to live the same kind of life they led in their earthly existence and so need food and drink to sustain them in their spiritual state of existence, many Akan make contact with their ancestors by placing food on standards that represent them (Quarcoopome 1987:43). Therefore, regular (daily, weekly and yearly) sacrifices are made to the ancestors to ensure peace, protection, prosperity and fertility (Quarcoopome 1987:43).

5.3.3 Belief in lesser divinities

According to Mbiti (1982:29) “Every African people recognizes one God” but in the cosmology of some Africans there is, “besides him, other divinities and spiritual beings, some of whom are closely associated with him.” The Akan situation is not different in that

though the Akan consider *Onyankopon* as a Supreme Being with no-coequal, there are many minor deities—referred to as *abosom* (lesser gods, *ɔbosom*, singular)—who were created by God to represent him on earth and to take care of his children on earth (Quarcoopome 1987:41; Acheampong 2014:62).

Onyinah (2002:46) citing McCaskie, identifies three sources of *abosom*: (i) *Atano* or *nsuom* (water bodies) (ii) *ɛwiem* (the sky) (iii) *Aboom* or *wiram* (stones or the forest). Onyinah (2002:47) further identifies two main kinds of *abosom* in the Akan context, namely (1) *aman-abosom* or *tete abosom* (tutelar gods who have been worshiped by the community since time immemorial) or *abusua-abosom* (family gods)— who are responsible for the welfare of the state, clans, villages, families and individual and are worshipped at these levels—and (2) *abosom-abrafo* (executing gods) who are responsible for witch-hunting and are considered as judging people faster than the *aman-abosom*. Though powerful, *abosom* do not have universal competence and jurisdiction; each one has an area of specialization assigned by God (Quarcoopome 1987:41; see also Idowu 1973:170). They are regarded as representatives of the invisible God on earth responsible for carrying people's requests to God and interpreting messages from God and the ancestors to the people.

The Akan further believe that the land is governed by a venerable great telluric mother spirit, *Asaase Yaa*, who serves as the habitat for many other spirits found in trees, strings, rocks, mountains and some animals. The earth is believed to have spiritual powers with which it makes plants grow (see Asante 2017:6). As a deity, *Asaase Yaa* has some regulations which humans are required to observe. For example, the Akan observe *nkyida* (sacred days, Thursdays in most societies) in regard to *Asaase Yaa*⁸, in which the land is allowed to rest from farming, fishing and hunting activities. Sacrifices are made to *Asaase Yaa* at the beginning of the planting season to seek her permission for the land to be cultivated, and also to seek her favor for a good harvest. Libation is poured to seek permission from her before a dead person is buried. There is also the belief in the existence of a great marine spirit (*Bosom Po*) who presides over the Sea and has

⁸ Yaa is the Akan name for a female child born on Thursday. *Asaase Yaa* is therefore considered to be a Thursday born.

Tuesday as her sacred day. Therefore, Tuesdays are holy days and so no fishing activity takes place.

5.3.4 Belief in lower spirit powers

The belief in spirits is one of the controlling thoughts in the Akan worldview. In Akan life and thought, the universe is both the physical (or the seen world of the living) and the spiritual (or the unseen world), which is full of spiritual entities living in places such as stones, tombs, haunted homes, trees, mountains, among others (see Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:168, 179). These spirits may be benevolent or malevolent. Since one may be punished for not keeping a proper relationship with the spirits or be blessed for maintaining a good relationship with them, Africans try their best to maintain peaceful relationships between the physical and the spiritual worlds (Acheampong 2014:53). Like other Africans, the Akan attribute everything that happens physically to a spiritual antecedent (Koech 2008:48; Acheampong 2014:53).

In Akan spirituality, lower spirits include *sasabonsam*, an evil spirit believed to reside on tall trees such as *odum* (*chlorophora excelsa*) and *onyina* (*ceiba pentandra*), *mmoatia* (dwarfs), very short creatures with feet pointing backward which live in the forest, with powerful and good knowledge in herbal medicine, *abayie* (witchcraft) spiritual entities with the ability to aid or harm humans (see Quarcoopome 1987:43; Acheampong 2014:64-65). It is believed that human spirits can move out of the body on errands to cause destruction (while the actual body of the witch [female] or wizard [male] lies asleep on the bed) (see Salm and Falola 2002:43). When the spirit is sent out it can act either invisibly or through an animal. The Akan consider midnight as the time that most meetings and ceremonies of witches take place, usually, at the top of trees or in open places. Witchcraft is basically meant to harm others or their property, causing problems such as death, sterility, sickness and misfortunes (Salm and Falola 2002:43). They can be controlled or appeased by the pouring of libation, offerings and by any greater spiritual force.

5.3.5 Belief in magic and medicine

Magic is the means by which one manipulates people and events through supernatural means. In Akan, the *asuman*— including man-made objects such as charms, mascots, amulets, juju, talisman or beads which people wear around the waist, neck or the wrist— are considered as possessing powers (Quarvoopome 1987:44). These objects are generally considered less powerful than *ɔbosom* (god) (Acheampong 2014:64). *Asuman* may be acquired for various purposes including protection against evil spirits, successful marriage, good fortune, successful life, favor, promotion, protection, among others. They can also be acquired to invoke malevolent spirits against someone in order to destroy his/her life.

In the Akan worldview, religion is expected to have a healing effect. The Akan consider traditional medicine (Akan: *aduro*) as more efficacious than European medicine. Consequently, in most Akan/African societies “relatives of patients who are admitted to hospitals ‘smuggle’ in for them medicine obtained from traditional doctors” (Idowu 1973:201). Once people believe that their sickness is caused by evil spirits, the only place they go to is medicine-man because it is assumed that in such cases going to the hospital will only make the sickness worse and prolong the duration of the illness. Therefore, there are medicine-men who “claim that they are taught medicine by divinities or, more generally in dreams or trances, or during visits with spirits in the forests” and so have the power to restore people’s health (Idowu 1973:200).

God, the ultimate Healer, dispenses healing through deities and other powerful beings (Mbiti 2015:173). Therefore, the medicine-man is expected to tell the patient the name of the sickness, the cause and how it can be treated. The medicine-man gives herbs and gives directions as to how one’s has to use them for certain rituals (Mbiti 2015:171). He also has the power to render other harmful powers powerless (Mbiti 2015:171). Akan/African medicine can also neutralize the wicked effects of witchcraft, sorcery, and magic on people. In addition, the medicine-man has the power to predict future events (Mbiti 2015:159). Mbiti (2015:159) alludes to the accuracy of prediction by traditional seers when he says “the medium tells where to find lost things, who may have bewitched

the sick person, what types of ritual and medicine are necessary for the cure of peoples' troubles, whether an intended journey will be a success or not", among others. Therefore, prophecy is not new to Akan/African Christians.

5.4 Akan concept of sin

According to Adeyemo (1976:19) "Myths and oral traditions abound in African stories about the Fall of man and the separation of heaven and earth." Yet, these stories and myths may differ somewhat from a strictly biblical understanding of sin. The Akan believe that, a long time ago, God lived in the sky which was very close to the earth, but an old woman pounding *fufu* (a meal of mashed cassava and plantain) kept hitting the underside of heaven (the sky) with her long pestle. The disturbance from the woman made God angry and so he withdrew to a higher plane where people are no more able to reach him. The people gathered all their mortars and piled them up in an attempt to reach God in the heavens. They realized that they needed one more mortar, and so the old woman asked the people to remove one mortar from the bottom and place it on top of the others to reach God. In the process, all the piled-up mortars fell on the people and killed them. This, according to the Akan, is the only instance in which humanity sinned directly against God. The other cases of sin are sins committed against other humans or other creatures, not directly against God (because he is now geographically removed from humans and so cannot be affected directly by human sin) (Agyarko 2009:118). Yet, it is still held that sin against other humans also affects God (Agyarko 2009:118). In Akan religious thought, sin makes the offender ceremonially impure, brings disharmony between the physical and the spiritual worlds, and makes one unworthy of approaching God just as the Bible teaches.

Agyarko (2009:119-120) discusses how the Akan can indirectly sin against God; a summary of his discussion is presented below. The Akan saying *woabra Nyame* (You have sinned against God) underscores the Akan understanding that sin is against God. The word *abra* literally means "to stop someone from doing something" and so one can say *wabo no abra no su* (He/she has beaten him/her and yet prevented him/her from crying). In this context, *bra* signifies "extreme suppression." *Wabo no abra no su* may be

understood in the modern context as institutional evil or suppression. Therefore, *woabra Nyame* underlines the Akan belief that the suppression of humanity amounts to sinning against God, because, as noted earlier, each Akan is linked to God by the *ɔkra*. The expression about sin is *Onyame ntua wo ka* (May God “reward” you according to your deeds) also stresses the belief that sin is against God. This expression is used by a victim of evil deeds as a way of appealing to God to judge the evildoer. Though the victim appeals to God for revenge, once the offender settles the issue with the offended, the issue is automatically settled with God. The Akan view that it is the offended person that the offender has to settle first and foremost and not God, does not agree with David’s assertion that it is God alone that he has sinned against (see exegesis of Psalm 51 in section 3.4.3.2). Yet, it is God who is the ultimate Judge of all human actions. It is for this reason that an Akan who is treated unjustly would normally sigh with the statement, *made m’asem ama Nyame* (I leave my case into God’s hands). Also, in Akan perspective, a child who has not been observed doing something sinful is not a sinful person. This contradicts the biblical concept that even the child is polluted by Adam’s sin.

The English word “sin” is captured by four key Akan terms: *mfomsɔɔ*, *mmarato*, *musuo* and *bɔne* (see Agyarko 2009:114-116). The first word, *mfomsɔɔ* (error, wrongdoing, or inadvertent sin) is a noun which derives from the verb *fom* (to offend). *Mfomsɔɔ* (corresponding to the Hebrew *הַטָּעָה*⁹) means “an error or wrong action without a malicious intention.” *Mfomsɔɔ* normally occurs in the context of interpersonal relations and can be settled with or without a third party. There are however some *mfomsɔɔ* that amount to the breach of societal laws and norms. Ordinarily, *mfomsɔɔ* does not require any sacrifice. An *mfomsɔɔ kɛsɛɛ* (a severe error) however has to be dealt with by making sacrifices to the ancestors and the gods. An example of *mfomsɔɔ kɛsɛɛ* is a situation where a man unknowingly has sexual relations with his blood sister which is a taboo in Akan. Though the act was committed unintentionally, it brings *musuo* (taboo) upon those involved and must be dealt with through sacrifices.

⁹ *הַטָּעָה* can also mean *amumuyɔ* (iniquity) (see Wiafe 2018:90)

The second term for sin is *mmarato* (breach of state laws and norms) which comes from *mmara* (laws) and *to* (breach). Unlike *mfomsɔɔ* which is always unintentional, *mmarato* may be intentional or unintentional. Again, unlike *mfomsɔɔ* which can be committed against an individual or the state, *mmarato* is usually committed against the corporate community rather than an individual. If a person who does not know an existing law (such as a stranger; Akan: *ɔhɔhɔɔ*) breaches the law, it is not taken as sin and so the Akan would say, *ɔhɔhɔɔ nto mmara* (a stranger “to the law” does not breach the law). Therefore, for the Akan, ignorance of a law is a valid excuse.

The third Akan word *musuo* (taboo, abomination or curse) which derives from *mmoa* (animals) and *su* (behavior) signifies a grievous evil. *Musuo* therefore literally means “the behavior of animals.” When someone commits *musuo* the Akan will say *wabɔ musuo* (he/she has committed an abomination). This means that the person has acted in a way that contradicts what is deemed as befitting human dignity and so he/she can be said to have behaved like an animal. The one who *bɔ musuo* (commits an abomination) incurs the wrath or punishment of the deities. Consequently, the situation is dealt with through *musuyi* (the removal of the abomination). To *yi musuo* therefore refers to the act of removing the curse that the sinful act will bring upon the society through the offering of *afɔdeɛ* (a sin sacrifice), similar to what the Old Testament refers to as sin/guilt offering. In some cases, another animal referred to as *musuyideɛ* (a curse bearer) is offered in addition to the *afɔdeɛ* and this may be compared to the “scapegoat” ritual in the Old Testament. The carcass of the *afɔdeɛ* is consumed by the traditional priest and the elders but it is a taboo to consume the carcass of *musuyideɛ* because of the notion that it carries some curse.

The last term for sin is *bɔne* (evil) has the stem *bɔn* (stink). Though *bɔne* (relating to the Hebrew *עֲוֹן* or Greek *ἀμαρτία*) may be used generically for all sins including *mfomsɔɔ*, *mmarato*, and *musuo*, it also carries a distinctive meaning which excludes what the other terms may include. For example, if someone breaks the law of not going to farm on a certain day, the act is considered as *mmarato* (breach of law or norm) but not *bɔne*. If two unmarried people consent to engage in sex, it is not *bɔne*. Similarly, smoking is not *bɔne*. *Bɔne* has to do with an evil plan (*adwene bɔne*) and an evil act against another human

being. Technically, an evil thought alone is not *bɔne* and an evil act in itself is also not *bɔne*, unless the evil act was preceded by an evil intention. *Bɔne* may also be referred to as *amumuyɔ* which means intentional sin. The one who commits *bɔne* knows that what he/she is doing is a sin and yet does it.

5.5 Priesthood in Akan religious context

Akan Traditional Religion revolves around priesthood. A priest is a person chosen by the gods, trained and dedicated to a particular temple, shrine or sacred grove to perform rituals for the benefit of the society in which he/she serves (Quarcoopome 1987:74). The Akan refer to the traditional priest or priestess as the *ɔkɔmfɔɔ*—a person possessed by *ɔbosom* (a deity) to perform priestly functions—and to his/her priestly vocation as *akɔm*. Quarcoopome 1987:74) identifies two kinds of traditional priests, namely, the lay priest who leads his/her family to make sacrifices to a family deity and a professional priest who is connected with the cult of the deities. The present discussion focuses more on the professional priest.

The *ɔkɔmfɔɔ* is the main figure in the worship of the gods (*abosomsom*). The word *ɔkɔmfɔɔ* derives from the word *kɔm*, “to prophesy,” “to predict,” or “to dance” (Onyiah 2002:55). The Akan trace the origin of idol worship to Twumasi, and so goes the maxim, *sɛ Twumasi ammɔ dam ante a, anka akɔm amma* (“if Twumasi had not gone mad and then become normal again, there would not have come spirit possession”) (Onyiah 2002:45-46). This maxim means that there was a time when a certain man called Twumasi behaved like a mad person but he suddenly became normal and began prognosing events such that people could go to him for *abisa* (divinatory-consultation).

Like the Christian call into the priesthood, it is common for those called into traditional Akan priesthood not to understand all that their call is about, especially with regards to the initiation and practice process. Failure to respond to the one’s call into the priestly ministry may lead to madness or failure in economic ventures or the experience of strange sicknesses like seizures, intermittent fits and frequent convulsions, among others. At the initial stages of the call, the deity may take the chosen person into the bush and on his/her return the person would behave strangely and utter strange sounds that require a trained

priest to interpret (Atuahene 2010:84). Observers would then say *akɔm asi ne so* (a deity has descended on him/her), *akɔm aka no* (a deity has mounted him/her) or *ɔbosom aforo no*, (a deity has possessed him/her) (Atuahene 2010:84), and *akɔm afa no* (a deity has taken hold of him/her) to indicate the person's call into priesthood. As a way of verifying one's call, the first question the Akan people ask when a person is seen possessed is "*ɔbosom bɛn na afa no no?*" ("Which deity has possessed him/her?"). A senior priest is then invited to answer this question and confirm the call before the community would endorse the training of the possessed into the priesthood (Quarcoopome 1987:75-76; Atuahene 2010:106).

After his/her call has been confirmed, and the family of the person involved has indicated their acceptance and support, the novice is given formal training in the art of the priesthood at a traditional center designated for such training (Ekem 2008:48; Atuahene 2010:89). The training period, which may last for at least three years, is meant to transform the priest in training both physically and spiritually to adopt a new personality, beliefs, values and habits that will enhance his/her work as a priest (Atuahene 2010:88). The training ends with the rite of initiation which ushers the candidate into the sacred of the priesthood.

Quarcoopome (1987:76-77) discusses various roles of the priest, a summary of which is presented below. As an intermediary, the priest symbolizes the presence of God and the divinities among the people. He takes messages from the divine and translates and interprets this message to the people; thus, he is the mouthpiece of the divinities. In addition, the priest performs ritual sacrifices and offerings on behalf of the community. Aside from his/her religious duties, the traditional priest (together with the chief) is the custodian of societal or communal customs, knowledge and wisdom, taboos and the history and general culture of the society. The priest also advises the king on both personal and state issues. The priest acts as a judge, managing and resolving conflicts related to witchcraft accusations and curses. He/she is also an opinion leader and an elder in the society.

Many of the deities have *abisa da* (a day of consultation), a day when people come to the shrine for consultation. Therefore, the priest often sits for people to consult him/her about life matters. The *ɔkɔmfɔɔ* advises the society regarding the cause, the type and the treatment of a disease or causes of misfortunes like barrenness, accidents, sudden deaths and others. He also informs society about an impending calamity, and how it can be avoided. People may go to the shrine to seek protection and the Akan refer to this as *wɔde wɔn ti akɔhyɛ ɔbosom no ase* (literally, they have put their heads under the protection of the gods). The client of an *ɔkɔmfɔɔ* is supposed to visit and pay homage to the deity at least once every year.

Each *ɔbosom* has its own *akyiwadɛɛ* referring to “forbidden things” of the deity, or a practice an individual, a family or a community is to stay away from if they are to come into contact with the *ɔbosom*. For example, it is a taboo for a woman who is menstruating to come into contact with most Akan deities. Adherents of a deity who refuse to abstain from the *akyiwadɛɛ* (or taboo) face the consequences of their disobedience.

Comparatively, the Akan priesthood is like the Levitical priesthood which involved mortal humans who died and were replaced from time to time. The sacrifices made by Akan priests are also repetitious just like those of the Levitical order. In some cases, priests in Akan religious setting come from a particular family line (though there are exceptions), making it similar to the Old Testament requirement that priests come from the tribe of Levi. Yet, the Akan priesthood differs from the Levitical priesthood in that the latter is dedicated to YHWH while the former is dedicated to lesser divinities. Clearly, Christ’s priesthood supersedes Akan traditional priest in all respects. The insight gained in the Akan priesthood will be used as a foundation for exploring the significance of Christ’s eternal priesthood in the next chapter.

5.6 Atonement in Akan religious context

As noted earlier, the Akan socio-cosmological structure is overtly saturated with the invisible and the supernatural forces. Found in the midst of these forces which may be harmful, the Akan consider themselves so vulnerable that they constantly look for means to protect themselves from malevolent powers and to be at peace with the spirit world. To

this end, Africans (both individuals and communities) perform various sacrifices and rituals of atonement to attach themselves to the most powerful Being. Almost all African traditional societies, like the Akan society, have some kind of sacrificial system which fundamentally constitutes sacred reconciliatory rituals, facilitated by priests with the aims of achieving “at-one-ment” with the unseen world which is the most desirous thing in the life of the Akan/African. A sacrifice refers to “the act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage especially the ritual slaughter of an animal or a person” (Wiafe, Anson, Enam 2016:2515). Usually, the sacrificial victim is a domestic animal (such as cattle, sheep, goats, and chicken) because of their close connection with the one offering the sacrifice. There is a close association between life and blood in African life and thought just as it is in biblical perspective (cf. Lev. 17:11).

The object for sacrifice must be selected carefully. Ngewa (2006:1529) gives the following three factors that must be considered in choosing an animal as a sacrifice. First, a sacrificial animal must not be a stolen animal. If it is for a whole community, it must come from a noble person. Second, while the specific color may differ across societies, the sacrificial animal must have a uniform color. Third, the animal must be perfect, without defects or injuries. Factors that determine the value of the sacrificial object include the situation that necessitated the sacrifice (for example, epidemic, famine, taboo-breaking or irreverence), purpose or expectation of the worshipper, and event or person involved in the sacrifice (Wiafe, Anson, Enam 2016:2520). Sacrifices are performed: (a) to fulfill a vow; (b) to show appreciation to a deity or the spirits; (c) to establish a mystical union with a deity; (d) to appease angry gods; (e) to protect the giver against calamities such as sickness, famine and premature death; (f) to have a communal meal with a deity; (g) to seek good health, long life, peace, prosperity, growth of crops, bumper yield and harvest, and safety in traveling from the gods; (h) for exorcism and purification when a taboo has been broken or sin committed (see Awoniyi 2015:68-69; Wiafe, Anson, Enam 2016:2519-2520).

The survey of relevant literature reveals various types of sacrifices in Akan in particular and Africa at large. They include thanksgiving, communion, foundation, preventive, votive, propitiatory and substitutionary sacrifices. Thanksgiving offering is given to show

appreciation to the gods for something good received from them; communion offering is a form of sacrifice (usually a meal) in which both the worshipper and the gods participate; foundation sacrifice is given before the foundation of a building is laid; preventive sacrifice is given to prevent a calamity from befalling the society or an individual and votive sacrifice is given in fulfillment of a vow (Quarcoopome 1987:91-92; Awoniyi 2015:68-69; Wiafe, Anson, Enam 2016:2519-2520). The study focuses on propitiatory and substitutionary sacrifices due to their direct impact on the subject of atonement. The propitiatory sacrifice is offered to gods and spirits when disasters such as famine, epidemic, calamity, floods, drought and others threaten the security of the society as a result of the anger of the gods and spirits against the community (Quarcoopome 1987:92; Awoniyi 2015:68; Wiafe, Anson, Enam 2016:2520). This sacrifice is not only for the appeasement or pacification of the gods and spirits but also for the purification of individuals and the community.

The substitutionary sacrifice is performed for a person who should have suffered privation, discomfort or even death (Quarcoopome 1987:91). The sacrificial victim saves the person who should have suffered the consequences of his/her own sinful action by dying in the person's stead. The sacrifice is not only meant for prevention and substitution but also for propitiation in that through the sacrifice the anger of the gods is removed (Awoniyi 2015:68). Usually, the sacrificial victim for substitutionary sacrifice is a sheep. The carcass of the victim is not eaten but treated like a corpse and buried (Quarcoopome 1987:92). There is an element of sin transfer from the worshipper to the animal achieved either by scratching the animal with the sinner or through the laying on of hands as in the case of the goat of Azazel in the *Yom Kippur* ritual (cf. Lev. 16:20-22). This Akan concept can be compared to a ritual performed by the Chagga people of Tanzania in East Africa. These people usually offer a goat to the gods to seek healing for the sick. In the process of praying over the goat, the priest spits on it (which in the view of the present researcher symbolizes the transfer of the sickness and other misfortunes to the goat) after which it is made to wander in the wilderness and to disappear (Mojola 1999:69).

Clearly, substitutionary sacrifice is not foreign to the Akan traditional religious institution. The example of the voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, and representative sacrifices of Egya Ahor and Tweneboah-Koduah need attention at this point. It is believed that long

ago the Abura-Fante people experienced famine and a deadly epidemic, which according to an oracle, required human sacrifice to deal with. At the time that no one was willing to suffer for the community, Egya Ahor (a traditional chief priest of the Fante god, *Akyen*) willingly offered himself to be killed on behalf of his people to stop the plagues that threatened to annihilate the Fante population (Ekem 2005:62). After slaughtering him, Egya Ahor's blood was mixed with water and aspersed on the people to effect healing and cleansing (Ekem 2005:62). This act did not only avert the plague but also strengthened the faith of the people in their god. Another story is that of Tweneboah-Koduah (the paramount chief of Kumawu in Asante) who offered himself as a sacrificial lamb to save and protect the then Asante Confederacy during one of the Asante-Denkyira wars. The result of this sacrifice was the defeat of the Denkyiras.

Atonement forms a key part of most Akan festivals. For example, in the Odwira (purification) festival celebrated by the Akuapem people of Ghana, there is a ritual sacrifice of a dog (referred to as *odwan kɔkɔɔ*; literally, a red sheep) for both purification and renewal of the covenant between the Akuapem people and *Odosu*, their protector (Afriyie 2020:147, 148). The need to enforce their covenant with *Odosu* through the Odwira festival is that (as it was between ancient Israel and YHWH in the Old Testament) the sin of the people of Akuapem does not only make one impure but also breaks one's covenant with their deity, *Odosu*. Therefore, it is not sufficient to cleanse the people from religious impurity due to sin without renewing his/her covenant with his/her object of worship. The Odwira ritual constitutes a sacred reconciliatory act that signifies communal reverence to deities and ancestors.

The substitutionary nature and atoning efficacy of festive sacrifices are also expressed in the Fokuo festival celebrated by the people of Nkoransa-Sensima. The festive rituals include the tearing apart of a live sheep (referred to as *Ntomaboɔ dwan*) by a group of strong men until it dies. The interpretation given to the ritual is that as the sheep goes through afflictions until its death, it symbolically takes away the afflictions that were to come upon the people in the ensuing year. Thus, the sheep is substituted for the people in its afflictions just as Christ suffered on behalf of humanity.

In all the above examples, atonement has the purpose of restoring the broken divine-human relationship. Thus, like the biblical concept of atonement, atonement in Akan Traditional Religion is meant to restore the disruption of the cosmic equilibrium caused by sin. This is usually achieved through ritual cleansing, the shedding of blood to pacify the gods, and so on. In this light, Akan traditional sacrifices may be considered as picturing Christ's purifying role. However, while biblical sacrifices are directed to God, Akan sacrifices are offered to God through the gods and ancestors.

5.7 Akan view on salvation

According to Asante (2014:57), the African concept of salvation is informed by the belief that the physical world is controlled by the spiritual world. Due to the belief in evil forces salvation in the mind of the African is expected to deal adequately with any forces that can hinder the life and health progress of the worshipper. Salvation in the Akan/African worldview includes "getting answers for the problems of life and overcoming the agents of evil and the hard realities of life" (Bediako as cited by Asante 2014:58). This means that salvation in African thought is more this-worldly in contrast to the predominantly other-worldly nature of the Christian concept of salvation. The fact however is that a holistic view of salvation must comprise both this-worldly and other-worldly aspects. Salvation is "essentially instrumental; it is understood purely as that which enables one to make successful adjustment in the face of day-to-day economic, social, spiritual, and psychological problems" (Asante 2014:57). In line with the above quote, the Akan have a holistic view of salvation in terms of good health, wealth, and long life. The Akan term for salvation is *nkwagyee* which derives from *nkwa* (or life) and *ogyee* (rescue, save, deliver, redeem). *Nkwagyee* therefore, refers to the act of delivering a person, family or community from misfortune, a deadly disease, a disgraceful situation or any life-threatening condition. The one who facilitates *nkwagyee* is *Agyenkwa* or *Nkwagyefo* (Savior).

As it is in other African societies, the Akan concept of salvation has so much to do with the concrete realities or physical and immediate threats to individual or communal existence and enjoyment of life in all its fullness. Therefore, it does not touch on the salvation of the soul as it is in Christianity. In the Akan community where poverty abounds,

salvation is expected to ensure economic progress. It is in this light that Larbi (2001:8) avers that salvation in Akan “includes the enjoyment of *ahonyadee* (prosperity, possessions), that is wealth, riches and substance including children.” In addition, salvation is expected to bring peace and tranquillity and free one from disturbances in life (Larbi 2001:8).

Salvation in Akan religious thought is also expected to deal with the problem of sin. From the Akan dictum, “I am related by blood, therefore I exist” comes the social or horizontal dimension sin in the Akan worldview. Accordingly, in the Akan worldview, as noted earlier, sin affects not only the individual sinner but also the community as a whole. Though sin is against the ancestors and God, it has more effect on the life of the community. Sin brings disharmony between the physical and the spiritual world. Pobee (1979:111) therefore rightly says “sin is an act, motivation, or conduct which is directed against the *sensus communis*, the social harmony and the personal achievement sanctioned by the traditional code.” Salvation then is the process by which sin, which destroys the relationship between humanity and God, ancestors and other spiritual entities, is taken away in order to facilitate reconciliation. The communal dimension of salvation in Akan/African thought is different from the individualistic interpretation of the biblical concept of salvation.

To sum up, salvation in Akan thought is expected to bring about healing, deliverance, prosperity, empowerment, and provide victory over any reality that can affect one’s life negatively. The study will develop these and other themes in the next chapter where a contextual theology of atonement is formulated for the Akan community.

5.8 Curses in Akan context

African Traditional Religion holds that human utterances have intrinsic power. It is believed that authorities such as gods, priests, diviners, chiefs, and others have the power to bless or curse through the spoken word. Curses may come upon an individual, a family or a community due to offences committed against the gods. For example, if one should visit some river or some parts of the forest on days considered as sacred days for the deity of the river or the forest in question, he/she may be cursed by the deity. The

researcher deems it necessary to discuss curses because they are considered as constituting a major hindrance to the realization of full life and for that matter salvation, *nkwa*.

A curse can also be pronounced by one person against the other. When one feels aggrieved by another person's actions, a curse may be pronounced against the offender out of pain of the deep hurt. For example, when one's item is stolen, he/she may invoke the gods to visit their wrath on the offenders. The normal practice is to mention specific misfortune such as blindness, barrenness, illness, untimely death, upon the offender. Regardless of how one is cursed, the Akan believe that a curse may hinder one's life progress (Acheampong 2014:73). An offended party may contact malevolent spirits to curse a person and deprive him/her of economic progress or good health. The curse may manifest itself in any self-destructive behavior of the cursed such as extreme laziness, extreme drunkenness, extreme smoking, and others (Acheampong 2014:75). The Akan usually say of such people that "*yɛnkum wo nanso na yasɛe wo*" ("they will not kill you but they will destroy you"). The punishment from a deity may affect future generations in the offender's family, thereby becoming a generational curse. In view of the effect of curses, most Akan people seek good health, or children, or prosperity in business, or protection from misfortune and from witchcraft.

Due to the Akan perception that a curse has a huge influence on people's lives, it has to be dealt adequately with so that the person(s) affected can be freed from the influence of the curse. Normally, the deity involved in the curse has to be pacified through sacrifices so that the victim is restored to his/her normal state. The expression used for the ritual is *duadaneɛ* (literary, the turning of a curse). The study will return to this issue in the next chapter to propose how Akan Christians are to handle the issues of curses.

5.9 A brief account of Christianity in Ghana

Christianity is a major religion in Ghana (formerly Gold Coast), and for that matter the Akan community. Scholars trace the history of the advent of Christianity in Ghana to 19th January, 1482 when Don Diego d'Azambuja arrived at Elmina in the Gold Coast with six hundred (600) Portuguese merchants and explorers (Agbeti 1986:4). The merchants

erected an altar under a tree and then celebrated their first Eucharistic service (Kpobi 2008:68). This was followed by a visit to Nana Kwamena Ansah, the chief of Elmina who later accepted the Christian faith and offered a piece of land on which the St. George Fort and a chapel were built (Boaheng 2018:209). The Elmina people were to enjoy military alliance and trade relations with the Portuguese. It was from Elmina that Christianity spread to other parts of the country. The ensuing years witnessed the works of Catholic missionaries of the Jesuit, Dominican, Franciscan, Augustinian and Capuchin orders (Kpobi 2008:68). Though the missionaries achieved some successes in their enterprise, their work was not sustained after some left and others also died (Kpobi 2008:68).

Therefore, Foli (2006:14) argues that serious missionary efforts to reintroduce Christianity in Ghana began in the 1730s when various missionary groups started visiting the country. The failure of the earlier attempt was due to the dominance of foreigners in the evangelization of the indigenous people of Ghana. The Moravian United Brethren (in an attempt to overcome these challenges) trained two mullatos, namely, Chretien Protten (in 1737) and Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein (in 1742) as priests to work in the Gold Coast (Foli 2006:14; Kpobi 2008:72). The ministry of these two African priests brought about the tremendous growth in the Church.

Anglican missionaries also joined the evangelization of the Gold Coast in 1751 when Rev. Thomas Thomson came to the Gold Coast (Foli 2006:17-18). His five-year stay at Cape Coast did not only result in massive transformation and growth of the Church. Before leaving the Gold Coast, he established a school at Cape Coast and drew a strategic plan for the continuation of the missionary work that he had begun. He facilitated the training of Philip Quaque in Britain as an Anglican priest (Foli 2006:17-18; Kpobi 2008:79). The fifty-year ministry of Rev. Quaque, at Cape Coast, was not very successful in terms of disciple-making, though he maintained the Cape Coast School. Quaque did not make any arrangement for a successor and consequently, the Anglican Church became inactive for about forty years after his death (Kpobi 2008:79).

On 18th December 1828, K. F. Salbach, J. G. Schmidt, G. Holzwarth and J. P. Henke arrived at Christianborg in Accra as four missionaries sent by the Basel Evangelical

Mission Society (Kpobi 2008:75). Unfortunately, all four missionaries died within a year. The determination of the Basel Evangelical Mission Society to evangelize the Gold Coast was demonstrated by the sending of three more missionaries, namely Reverends Peter Peterson Jager and Andreas Riis (both Danes), and Christian Frederich Heinz (from Saxony) to Accra (in 1833) after the first batch of missionaries had all perished (Kpobi 2008:75). The only survivor of the second batch of missionaries was Riis who worked in Akropong-Akuapem for four years but had no convert due to the indigenous people's perception of Christianity as a white people's religion (Foli 2006:19-20). Riis' failure prompted the introduction of West Indies (Jamaicans) into the Akuapem missionary field (Kpobi 2008:76). The West Indies were accepted by the people and many indigenous people got converted. The Basel Mission established Christian communities (Akan: *Salem*) where indigenous converts were required to live. The *Salem* system was believed to serve as a model of God's community for unbelievers, make pastoral care easier and keep converts from participating in non-biblical traditional practices like pouring libation and traditional sacrifices (Kpobi 2008:76). The Basel mission worked in the country until the First World War (World War I) when they were forced to leave due to political pressure.

The operations of the Methodist Church in the Gold Coast commenced on January 1st, 1835 when Rev. Joseph Dunwell arrived as one sent to plant the Methodist faith (Foli 2006:22). Before the arrival of Rev. Dunwell, a Bible Study Group (called the Bible Band or The Meeting) had requested Bibles and other Christian literature from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) established by the British Methodist Conference. It was in response to the request by the Bible Band that the SPCK sent Rev. Dunwell to the Gold Coast. Though he lacked theological education, Rev. Dunwell made every effort to make converts within the six months that he survived in the Gold Coast (Kpobi 2008:87). Following Dunwell were other missionaries like George Wrigley and Peter Harrop, who also died soon after their arrival because of the hostile environment. Wrigley learned the Fante dialect to break the language barrier in his ministry. The successor of Wrigley was a mullato, Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman who survived longer than all his predecessors, working both in Ghana and other parts of West Africa, including Badagry and Abeokuta (Kpobi 2008:88-89).

The Bremen Mission of North German which founded the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana was the next missionary group to visit the Gold Coast. The Bremen Mission sent missionaries to New Zealand and India in 1842 and in 1847, four more missionaries were sent to Gabon (Kpobi 2008:82). The four missionaries came first to Cape Coast. Two of them stayed at Cape Coast and the other two went to Gabon to find how feasible missionary work could be in Gabon (Kpobi 2008:82). One missionary died from each group. Having faced opposition from the French Authorities in Gabon, the surviving missionary returned to Cape Coast to meet his counterpart. The two surviving missionaries, James Graff and Lorenz Wolf decided to move to Christiansburg to seek missionary advice from other German missionaries who were living there (Kpobi 2008:82). Later, they moved to the Eweland and starting from Peki on 14th November 1847, penetrated mainly German Togoland among the Ewe (Kpobi 2008:83). The Bremen Mission worked in the Eweland until World War I forced them out of the country in 1919.

Early missionaries promoted formal education, agriculture, trade and mother-tongue development. Through formal education Ghanaians like J. W. De Graft Johnson, J.P. Brown and John Mensah Sarbah collaborated with local rulers to form the Aborigines' Right Protection Society which opposed British imperialism (Asante 2007). However, their missionary approach opposed the Ghanaian worldview in many respects. For example, the *Salem* system broke the bond between Ghanaian converts and their families. The result of the missionaries' uncompromising approach to African traditional life was the emergence of protest movements against white hegemony and missionary imperialism. Soon, the quest for a church that could merge Christianity and African culture began. Preparations for indigenization of African Christianity included the training of African missionaries, language development and mother-tongue translations of scriptures.

Missionary Christianity failed to meet the (spiritual) needs of the indigenous people. Not only that; they strengthened the primal view about spiritual realities (especially witchcraft) by introducing a personalized devil and associating gods with demons (Onyinah 2012:np). Consequently, Ghanaian converts found it extremely difficult to eject belief in supernatural forces from their minds (Asamoah-Gyadu 2002:29-34). The resultant effect is that, after publicly professing faith in Christ, many African Christians return home only to pour

libation and offer sacrifices to various traditional deities for fear that these deities would harm them if they fail to perform these rituals. Gradually, the desire for a kind of Christianity that could deal adequately with the African culture and its world of spirits grew higher, leading to the emergence of Spiritual, Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal and other Churches.

The activities of three prophetic figures—namely, Prophets William Wade Harris (the “Black Elijah” of West Africa), John Swatson and Sampson Opong— Pentecostal prepared grounds for the planting of classical Pentecostalism. The ministries of these prophets resulted in the emergence of spiritual churches (Akan: *Sunsum sɔre*) which were intended to satisfy the spiritual needs and break the Western dominance over the church in terms of theology, worship style, governance and culture (Koech 2008:66). These Churches had Pentecostal persuasions evident in their emphasis on pneumatic experiences in their personal lives and the life of the church (Koech 2008:61). However, there were excesses in their practices. The low level of theological education of most of the leaders of these churches led to unsound theological positions. Later, most of these churches waned off mainly due to leadership crises or schism after the demise of the founder.

Foli (2006:73) traces Ghanaian Classical Pentecostalism to the activities of Pentecostal missionaries who worked in the country in the early 1930s. Pentecostal Christianity is characterized by “its belief in the experience of the Holy Spirit and by the normalization of charismatic experience in religious practice” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013:17). These experiences include “speaking in tongues, revelations, prophecies, healing, exorcism or deliverance”, and other spiritual experiences that are considered as the consequence of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the believer (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013:17).

From Pentecostalism came Neo-Pentecostalism (Charismatism) which resulted from strong winds of evangelical/charismatic renewal that blew throughout the country in the 1960s and 1970s (Omenyo 2006:96). Charismatic Christianity was the result of the influence of Pentecostalism among historic mainline churches. Renewal groups within the mainline historic churches later turned into Charismatic churches which, like Pentecostal

Churches, emphasized the baptism of the Holy Spirit with experiences of speaking in tongues, healing and prophecies (Larbi 2001:296). These churches are lay oriented, attract “upwardly mobile youth”, make excessive use of contemporary media facilities, “one-man” city churches with a few or sometimes no branches, do not use religious symbols in chapels, use the English language for communication, and have an international reputation (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:31).

In recent times another Christian movement which this study refers to as the “Newer Prophetic Movement” has also emerged. This movement is relatively new and seems to be an off-shoot of the Charismatic movement for which reason Stiles-Ocran (cited in Novieto 2013:37) refers to it as “Prophetic Charismatic Churches.” The two labels underscore the fact that movement majors in prophetic activities. Churches belonging to this movement share some features with Spiritual Churches, but also have their own distinctive features. Most churches in this category are characterized by primal focus, use of mother-tongue (mixed with “broken English”), leader’s use of extravagant/flamboyant outfit, intensive use of media (especially television and radio), leader’s frequent visit to the spirit world (*sunsum wiase*), use of liturgical objects as a medium for healing and deliverance, low level of formal (ministerial) training on the part of the leader (usually below a degree level), leader’s use of security personnel, leader’s use of self-acclaimed titles, and heavy theological emphasis on *yiedie* (prosperity), *atamfo* (enemies), and *akwankyerε* (prophetic guidance).¹⁰ Some of these pastors give lotto number to members and even claim to have the ability to put money into their followers’ bank accounts as a way of helping them have a financial breakthrough. More so, there is a patron-client relationship between members and the leader which makes it easy for the leader to abuse and exploit his/her members. Further, these churches are led by prophets unlike their Charismatic counterparts which are led by Bishops and Archbishops. Their followers are mainly illiterates and the low class in the society, unlike the case of their Charismatic counterpart with educated and middle- or high-class people as members.

¹⁰ Some of these features were gathered from radio and television broadcasts of some of the prominent people operating in this category of ministry.

5.10 Imprecatory prayers in contemporary Akan Christianity

Christianity is widespread among the Akan. However, the influence of Akan traditional religious worldview on Akan Christian beliefs and practices is still strong. Consequently, Akan Christians still attribute failure in life to witchcraft, marine spirits and ancestral spirits. This situation has made the Akan more “demon-conscious Christians” rather than “Christ-conscious Christians” (Koduah 2004:34). In the midst of fear of evil forces, Akan Christians resort to imprecatory prayers as a means to make the evil forces powerless. Today, most Christian prayers are geared toward the destruction of one enemy or the other. Satan is caned, butchered, shot and tied with ropes during Christian prayer meetings.

According to Laney (1981:35), an imprecation refers to “an invocation of judgment, calamity, or curse uttered against one’s enemies, or the enemies of God.” Imprecatory prayer, therefore, pronounces judgment, calamity, curse, or evil upon one’s enemies or enemies of God. Advocates of imprecatory prayers always point to imprecatory Psalms (such as Psa. 35; 109) for biblical support. Today, Christian prayers in most Akan societies are characterized by imprecation.

There is an Akan saying that *Se aboa bi beka wo a, na efiri wo ntoma mu* (“Before you can be bitten by an insect, it might first have to be in your cloth”). This Akan imaginary insect in their clothes betrays the belief that the forces that work against the Akan comes from their associates. It is important to point out the link between the Akan use of imprecatory in the church with the Akan practice of libation (*apaeε*). The act of libation is the traditional means of praying to God and the gods. Libation, in the Akan context, is usually performed on occasions such as festivals, funerals, community gathering, in times of crisis and joy and so on by the *Okyeame* (spokesperson) or the *Okomfoε* (traditional priest or priestess). Libation has four main components: invocation, message or explanation, supplication and a curse or imprecation (Kilson 1970:169-170). The concluding part which invokes a curse on evil forces and agents of chaos is in two parts: First, he says, “*Obi nto nsa enkɔhyira ne busuefoε*” meaning “in the process of prayer one does not seek the welfare of his/her enemies.” He then adds, “*Onipa bonefoε a ɔmpε yεn*

yiedie no deɛ, ne nkɔnkɔ mmɔ ne so” meaning “anyone who does not want our progress should fall and die.” Upon hearing the request that God rids the society of all the people who do not want the progress of the society, all the worshippers unanimously shout the congratulatory phrase, *mo ne kasa* (well-spoken). Akan Christians come to church expecting a similar prayer which now dominates Akan Christian prayers. Again, most of the ministers who support imprecatory prayers lack proper theological training. People feel that once they can meet their followers’ needs there is no need for theological education. In the end, these people interpret the Bible without applying the required rules of interpretation. They are noted for using texts as prooftexts.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed key aspects of Akan society that are relevant to the subject of atonement. Though the study was conducted in the Akan context, the chapter is relevant for all Africans because it also deals with the general African worldview as well. Therefore, the discussions in this chapter are not only significant for the formulation of a contextual theology for atonement but also relevant for drawing lessons for all African Christians. The communal orientation of the Akan people, the concept of personality, the Akan view on sin and atonement, the account of Christianity in Akan, among others, featured prominently in the discussions. The chapter established that the Akan, like other Africans, are deeply religious. Every Akan therefore is very consciousness about the spiritual and physical realms. Consequently, the Akan strive, through interaction with their ancestors, deities and spirits, to maintain a peaceful coexistence with the living and the dead. The Akan political system is hierarchical, involving several participants who contribute to the administration of the state.

The chapter also dealt with the introduction of Christianity into Ghana through foreign missionaries. The inclusion of a brief history, culture and religion of the Akan in this study is to ensure that the reader understands the context within which the Akan became Christians and how the Akan indigenous cultural, religious and historical circumstances have informed their view of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross. One significant discovery is that though the Akan community has been Christianized for a couple of centuries now,

the Akan primal religious worldview still takes hold of Akan Christians such that most Akan Christians still seek protection and favor from lesser gods. This is simply because Akan Christians carried this cultural baggage into Christianity. The consequence of this situation is also the use of imprecatory prayers as a means of dealing with so-called spiritual enemies.

The study now moves on to formulate a theology of atonement based on the discussions so far.

CHAPTER SIX

AKAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF ATONEMENT

6.1 Introduction

Like any other religion, Christianity cannot be meaningful to any human society unless it is given a contextual interpretation. A contextual perspective of Christ's atonement is therefore vital not only for a better understanding of God's salvific plan for all humanity but also for effectively planting and sustaining the growth of Christianity in Africa, more so, in the Akan community of Ghana. In view of this, the present chapter attempts to formulate a theology of the atonement from an Akan perspective based on the historical, biblical and Akan primal backgrounds explored in the previous chapters. Here, the study engages relevant portions of Afua Kuma's *Jesus of the Deep Forest: Prayers and Praises* to demonstrate how the traditional Akan Christian makes meaning of Christ's death. In the process, Akan primal concepts that can facilitate the understanding of the Christian theology of atonement will be developed while those which are unbiblical will be acknowledged as such and discarded.

6.2. Afua Kuma and primal worldview

Madam Christiana Afua Gyan, better known as Afua Kuma, was born in 1900 at Obo-Kwahu in the Eastern Region of Ghana (Laryea 2000:51). However, she stayed at Asempaneye (Atuobikrom), where she engaged in farming activities and also served as a traditional midwife. She was a member of The Church of Pentecost, Ghana. In a state of emotional and psychological shock as a result of the demise of her brother, Kuma and her congregation were one day exhorted at Church to be thankful to God at all times (Laryea 2000:52). After the sermon, she was asked to pray and the power of her prayers surprised everyone because such prayer had not been said in the church before. From that time, she devoted herself to the composition of poems for Jesus and performed at various Christian gatherings until her demise in 1987 (Laryea 2000:52).

Madam Kuma was illiterate in English and so her prayers and praises were given in her mother tongue (Twi) and tape-recorded by Peter Kwasi Ameyaw. The Twi transcription of the prayers was done by Vincent Adjepong and Michael Owusu Nimako while the English translation was done by Father Jon Kirby (Kuma 2011:3). In her book, Kuma “uses the language of African traditions of worship and chieftaincy, to praise the name of Jesus” (Kuma 2011:3). Kuma’s use of metaphors from African traditional folklore in praising Jesus gives “a clear departure from any Western form to that which expresses itself in a faith which lives in a truly traditional African world, a primal worldview” (Walton 2018:107).

The researcher’s motivation for engaging with Kuma’s work is two-fold. In the first place, since the Akan society is dominated by the oral culture of transmitting information, the development of oral theology (through engagement with works like Kuma’s) has the potential of firming the Christian faith in the continent and ensuring grassroots participation in theologizing as well. This is so because as a community with a high illiteracy rate, Christianity in Akan will only remain an enterprise solely for scholars if oral theology is not developed and promoted. By “oral theology” the researcher means “the interpretation of biblical message through sermons, teachings, prayers, discussions, songs, witnessing and any oral communication” (Gehman 1987:28). Kuma’s use of the vernacular helps to develop not only Akan/African contextual theology but mother-tongue theology as well. Oral theology is expected to be a bedfellow of academic theology, the former serving as the foundation for the latter (Bediako 2000:17-18). Without this partnership, academic theology will remain exclusively for scholars and hence be less beneficial to the masses. Therefore, by engaging Kuma’s oral theology the study seeks to contribute to the development and promotion of grassroots theology which Akan/Africa needs to make Christianity meaningful.

The second reason is that an engagement with Kuma’s work together with the Akan background examined in chapter five has the potential of demonstrating key areas of continuity and discontinuity between African primal imaginations and Christianity. By so doing the study will not only check syncretic tendencies but will also demonstrate that “God can be encountered in Africa here and now—in farm and forest, and amid the

customs and structures of African traditional life” (Kuma 2011: blurb). In showing that one can have a primal worldview and at the same time be a true Christian, Kuma refutes the conclusion made at the first Missionary Conference in Edinburg (in 1910) that “animism” (the then terminology for African Traditional Religions) was “the farthest removed from Christianity, at the bottom of a scale of religions that rose through polytheism to monotheism, with Christianity being the highest and most civilized of the monotheistic faith” (Bediako 2000:2). Kuma’s work shows that Christianity has become “an African’s religion” rather than “an African religion”, “the point being, not that historical circumstances have made Christianity an unavoidable factor in African life, but rather that the African experience of the Christian faith can be seen to be fully coherent with the religious quests in African life” (Bediako 1995:60). Therefore, Kuma’s work serves as a foundation upon which traces of light in African primal imaginations can be shown, developed and promoted.

With this brief background, the study moves on to explore how the Akan/African Christian can appreciate the atonement of Christ and relate this understanding to everyday reality.

6.3 The concept of sin from the Akan Christian perspective

The concept of atonement is based on the fact of human sinfulness. Therefore, the right place to begin the formulation of a theology of atonement for the Akan community is to provide an Akan Christian definition for sin. From the discussions in the previous chapters, the following theological facts can be deduced as common to both the biblical and Akan concepts of sin. First of all, sin creates a barrier between the sinner and God. The Akan considers this barrier as the result of human (an old woman’s) act of disturbing God through the pounding of *fufu* (mashed cassava and plantain or cocoyam) which constitutes the first sin. Subsequent sins are considered as creating discord between the human world and the spiritual realm. This primal concept connects well with the biblical view that the Fall (Gen. 3) and all subsequent human acts of sin alienate humans from God.

Secondly, both the Akan and biblical views hold that sin leads to death. In the Akan legend of God’s self-withdrawal, the human attempt to reach God (after his separation from

humanity) through the piling up of mortars resulted in many human deaths. Aside from this, Africans believe that sin can cause premature death and consequently, disqualify the spirit of the deceased from becoming an ancestor. Similarly, Christianity holds that sin leads to both physical and spiritual death and prevents one from obtaining eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

Though becoming part of God's kingdom is an individual affair, the Bible still acknowledges the communal effect of sin. Therefore, in addition to sin leading to death and alienating humanity from God, the Akan communal view of sin is biblical and needs to be maintained and developed. That the Akan, like other Africans, interpret sin from the communal rather than individualistic perspective was noted in chapter five. Sin, in Akan life and thought, therefore destroys not only the individual but the entire society. The cosmic harmony is affected by sin so that one person's sin may affect a whole community or even the entire universe. This idea is similar to the situation in which one person's sin had consequences on the entire family in biblical times. For example, corporate punishment for an individual's sin is evident in the story that says YHWH "turned from his fierce anger" when Achan's family were killed because of Achan's sin (Josh. 7). This communal dimension of sin, when emphasized, has the tendency of dealing with most of the environmental problems that modern societies face. Since one's sin affects the whole community rather than the individual sinner, every individual sees himself/herself as a watchdog responsible for reporting people who abuse environmental norms. This is an effective solution to the present environmental challenges facing the Akan community.

African worldview has no place for the idea of original sin as the biblical account of sin reveals. The Akan, like other Africans, hold that no one is born with sinful pollution or nature (Mbiti 1974:113). Therefore, one only becomes a sinner by deed, not by nature. In the Akan myth about sin, the disturbance of God through the pounding of *fufu* by the old woman, which constitutes the sin that led to God's self-withdrawal from humanity, has no direct impact on the entire human race as the Fall of Adam (in Gen. 3) has on humanity (cf. Psa. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-14). The biblical concept that the Fall has universal human and cosmological significance must be given an Akan expression.

The Akan maxim *bɔne bata onipa ho* (“sin is attached to human beings”) is useful in preparing the Akan for the Christian idea that humanity has a sinful nature. The word *bata* means “attached to” and it is different from *bɛn* (which means “is close to”). Therefore, by saying sin *bata* (“is attached to”) human beings, the Akan goes beyond a mere acknowledgment of the proximity of sin to humans to the recognition of the attachment of sin to the human will; hence sin is inevitable in human life. The cause of this inevitability of sin in human life is attributed to the presence of sinful nature in all humans as a consequence of Adam’s sin.

Furthermore, the Akan do not consider every sin as committed ultimately against God. For example, wrongdoing in the context of interpersonal relations (referred to as *mfomsɔɔ*, that is, error or mistake), having been settled with or without a third party, requires no sacrifice or prayer to God or any being for forgiveness. Further, the Akan reason that since God is so far from humans, he is not directly affected by human sins. This idea contradicts the biblical teaching that every sin is ultimately against God and taken seriously by God (Psa. 51:4). The Akan notion is unbiblical and must be corrected by emphasizing biblical teachings about God’s interest and involvement in all affairs of the universe.

Here, the transcendence of God in Akan thought must be balanced with his immanence which is also not foreign to Akan primal imaginations. The Akan show their belief in God’s involvement in human life (or God’s immanence) when they refer to him as “the Giver of rain” or “the Giver of sun.” The Akan also concede that as omnipresent Spirit, God is present everywhere and hence, he is fully aware of all human words, thought and deeds. The Akan saying *nnipa nyinaa yɛ Onyankopɔn mma* (“All human beings are God’s children”) serves as a useful bridge connecting the Akan primal thought to the Christian idea that all sins ultimately affect God. Like a parent who cares about what happens to his/her child, so does God who is the heavenly Father have interest in and is affected by whatever happens to any of his children (humans). Therefore, a sin against humanity also affects God who serves as a Parent to every human being. God’s parenting role is depicted in the Akan description of God as *ɔbaatan pa* (“Good mother”).

To conclude, the following constitutive features of sin from the Akan Christian perspective should be noted. First of all, sin is a turning away from the transcendent God. God is always available and close; sin however takes humanity away from him. Secondly, sin is the result of one's attempt to be absolute—that is, to live independent of God. Human attempt to be infinite and independent of God breeds sinful attitudes like self-centeredness, self-seeking, self-righteousness, pride, envy, among others. Thirdly, sin changes the mode of being in the universe from a life lived in harmony with God to an ordinate desire of finite good which eventually leads to avarice and idolatry. Fourthly, every sin is significant (no matter how small it may seem to humans) because all sin has the tendency of sending one to hell if it is not confessed. This is the reason why no sin (whether committed willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly) was left out in the Day of Atonement when the high priest atoned for his and Israel's sin. This fact must serve to correct the Akan idea that ignorance of a law is a valid excuse (cf. section 5.4). Fifthly, sin has a communal effect; it does not only affect the individual but the entire society as well. Sixthly, all humans are polluted by Adam's sin and therefore one is to be considered sinful right from birth. Humans are not only sinners by their actions but also by their nature. In light of this fact, all humans are expected to make personal conscious decision to accept Christ as personal Lord and savior; this is the way by which human sin is to be dealt with.

6.4 Akan Christian perspective on Christ and his atoning death

6.4.1 The dual nature of Christ (*Nyame-Kra-teasefoɔ* Christology)

Christian soteriology depends on the person and works of Jesus, the Christ. The most important qualification of Christ as the Savior of the world is his dual nature, being truly God and truly human. As the Savior of humanity, Christ was supposed to be truly human in order to be a perfect representative of humanity for whom he died on the cross. At the same time, he had to be fully God to be able to offer a perfect and the highest price for the redemption of humanity from bondage. Since the validity of Christ's atonement depends largely on his dual personality, it is imperative to give an Akan anthropological

reinterpretation of Christ's dual nature (referred to in this study as *Nyame-Kra-teasefoo* Christology) before considering his atoning sacrifice.

The Akan tripartite division of the human being (cf. section 5.2.2) are *honam/nipadua* (body) which comes from the mother's blood, *sunsum* (an individual spirit) which the father supplies at conception, bears one's distinctive personality, character, suppositions and behavioral or psychological attributes and *ɔkra* (the soul) which comes from *Onyame* (God) as an unperishable source of life, energy and vitality, and bears one's *nkrabea* (destiny). The *onipa-kra* (human soul) emanates from the *Nyame-Kra* (soul of God) in a similar way that sparks emanate from a fire (Agyarko 2009:163). However, *Nyame-Kra* is divine but *onipa-kra* is not divine, though immortal. The immortality of the soul is stressed by the Akan saying "If God dies, I shall die, but since God does not die, I shall therefore not die" (Quarcoopome 1987:106). Once the *onipa-kra* sparks from *Nyame-Kra* to become human, it becomes a creation in contrast with the Creator, though still inseparable from the *Nyame-Kra* from which it derives. *Onipa-kra*, therefore, from the Christian perspective, is the manifestation of an eternal absolute Being found in individual human beings.

ɔkra (the short form of *onipa-kra*) may then be regarded as the Akan version of the *imago Dei*. Thus, in Akan thought, *Onyame* has manifested himself in individual human beings in the form of *ɔkra* which mediates between humanity and himself. The Akan understanding of *Nyame-Kra* serves as the dynamic equivalence of the biblical idea of *Logos* which is a life-giving principle that governs the universe as well (Agyarko 2009:164). Just as the *Logos* is the source of life for all that is in the universe (Blomberg 1997:162), so is the *Nyame-Kra* the source of life for all humanity. The *ɔkra* bears the *nkrabea* (destiny) of every individual's being; therefore, it could be deduced that *ɔkra* is not only the manifestation of the God-given life but also the governing principle in the human world.

Since the *Logos* who became flesh and lived as Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:1, 14) may be regarded as the *Nyame-Kra* (noted earlier), Jesus also manifests all the attributes of *Nyame* (Agyarko 2009:168). It is in this sense that the Akan say *Yesu kra yɛ duru* (Jesus

has a heavy soul). Pobee (1979:92) maintains that since the *ɔkra* is “the mark of the Creator, the vitalizing power of the Creator” in Jesus, to say that Jesus’s *kra* is heavy means he “retained unimpaired and in double dose that authority and power of the Creator.”

As *Nyame-Kra*, Jesus is the embodiment of the ultimate reality (*Nyame*, cf. Col. 2:9) and thereby the governing principle of the world. From the Akan concept of destiny comes the notion that whatever happens in the universe is an unfolding drama in which each person acts in a way to contribute to the overall drama, which is ultimately controlled by *Nyame* (Agyarko 2009:168). The *ɔkra*, which dictates one’s role and how he/she plays it, comes from God and seeks permission from God to be part of the drama. Thus, the totality of world history comprises all human destinies, embodied in the individual *ɔkra* and controlled by *Nyame* (Agyarko 2009:168). The *Nyame-Kra* is a metaphysical reality that bears the universal destiny from which the individual *ɔkra* of human being derives. That being the case, Jesus (as *Nyame-Kra*) bears universal destinies and history of the world (Agyarko 2009:168).

In the case of other human beings, the *ɔkra* is a spark from the fire, but in the case of Jesus, his *ɔkra* is the fire itself (that is, *Nyame-Kra*). The *ɔkra* after sparking from God is bound to become human and when it does, it becomes what the Akan refer to as *ɔkra teasefoɔ* (a living soul), who is now a historic person. Thus, Jesus was a historic human being. Jesus’s death, from the Akan perspective, underlines his humanity because the Akan believe that each individual will experience death. The sayings *obiara bɛwu* (“every person will die”) and *Onipa ba, ɔbra twa wuo* (meaning “For humans born of a woman, life inevitably ends in death”) testify to this belief. Hence, through the incarnation, Jesus (the eternal *Nyame-Kra*) assumed a *teasefoɔ* nature (a human nature) and became *Nyame-Kra-teasefoɔ* (God’s soul manifested in human form) which is an instance of the co-presence of time (*teasefoɔ*-human being) and eternity (*Nyame-Kra*) in one person (Agyarko 2009:174).

The dual nature of Christ is not lacking in Kuma’s poem. She alludes to Christ’s divine nature by referring to Jesus as *Otumfoɔ Nyankopɔn* (Almighty God), *Onyankopɔn*

Toturobonsu (God, the source of all rain), *Onyankopɔn Amponyinam* (God, the provider), *Korɔbɛtoe* (the eternal one) and *Awurade* (Lord) (Kuma 2011:5, 7, 10, 29). At the same time, she considers Jesus as a true human being (*kra-teasefoɔ*) and so declares: “Truly, Jesus is a Man among men, the most stalwart of men! he stands firm as a rock” (Kuma 2011:19). To sum up, *Nyame-Kra-teasefoɔ* Christology is the idea that Christ possesses both co-equality with God (being *Nyame-Kra*) and co-humanity with the rest of humankind (being *teasefoɔ*). Hence, he is a perfect representative of humanity and the perfect sacrifice of atonement. The dual nature of Christ serves as the basis for the validity of his priesthood and atoning sacrifice, both of which are examined below.

6.4.2 The priesthood of Christ (*Ntamgyinafokann* Christology)

From the Akan perspective, sin brings guilt upon the sinner. Consequently, the Akan are not only concerned about public opinion about sin but also about how the *tiboa* (conscience) or *Nyame* (God) judges the sinner.¹¹ The Akan say *ne tiboa bu no fɔ* (“his/her conscience condemns him/her”) to emphasize the power of the human conscience to judge the sinner. *Nyame mmpɛ bɔne* (“God hates evil/sin”) is another Akan saying that betrays the Akan awareness that sin contradicts God’s will and purpose. When the Akan say *Nyame ntua wo ka* (“May God punish you [the sinner]”) they recognize God as the ultimate Judge of all humankind. Therefore, for the Akan, certain sins offend God and need to be dealt with by making sacrifices to him.

Nonetheless, the Akan do not offer (sin) sacrifices directly to God because they have no shrine or priest dedicated to God. For the Akan, God is not like one of the local deities who have local priests and shrines dedicated to them. The belief is that God, being a perfectly holy Being, requires a perfectly holy priest to offer sacrifices to him on behalf of the people (Agyarko 2009:124). Unfortunately, the Akan find no perfect person among themselves or among the entire human race who qualifies as God’s priest. This situation creates a vacuum in the Akan religious set up. From the Akan Christian perspective, the religious vacuum created by the lack of qualified priests for God among humans is filled

¹¹ Earlier, the point was made that for the Akan God does not care about *mfosoɔ* (wrongdoing in the context of human relations). The sins in mind here are the other kinds of sin aside *mfosoɔ*.

by Christ who, in addition to being sinless and perfect, offers the greatest sacrifice to God on behalf of humanity. Kuma (2011:9,19) acknowledges the sinlessness of Christ when she states that Jesus is “without sin” and then refers to him as *Kronkroni* (“The Holy One”).

In the researcher’s opinion, Akan priestly tradition can enhance the Akan understanding of Christ’s priesthood. However, this potential depends largely on the Akan rendition of the expression “high priest” (Greek: ἀρχιερεὺς, cf. Heb. 9:25) into the Bible versions of the different Akan dialects because these Bibles serve as the main source of divine revelation for Akan Christians. Unfortunately, Akan Bible translations (since the missionary era) have had one challenge or the other with the Akan rendition of “high priest.” As a corrective measure, the researcher proceeds to analyze how “high priest” has been translated in Akan and to propose an alternative Akan rendition to enhance the Akan understanding of Jesus’s priestly office and his sacrifice.

Three major Akan dialects render “high priest” as follows: *Sɔfo panin* (Asante-Twi), *Sɔfo panyin* (Akuapem-Twi) and *Sɔfopanyin* (Fante). A preliminary observation is that, whereas Fante puts the noun *Sɔfo* (priest) and the adjective *panyin* (senior/head) together, Asante-Twi and Akuapem-Twi separates them to underline the adjectival dimension. Both approaches, nonetheless, underscore the importation of the hierarchical nature of Akan priesthood into Christian vocabulary (Ekem 2005:116).

In the traditional setting, the term *ɔsɔfo* refers to “a custodian or representative of the *tete abosom* (lesser divinities)” or a “priest, one who officiates in the service of a fetish, or who performs religious ceremonies” (Agyarko 2009:126). In addition to *ɔsɔfo* is the term *ɔbosomfoɔ*, *ɔkɔmfo-hene* or *ɔkɔmfo-panyin* (chief priest or head of the priests) who also serves at the traditional shrine. There can be only one *ɔbosomfoɔ* at a traditional shrine though there may be many *asɔfoɔ* (plural of *ɔsɔfo*) (Agyarko 2009:126). The *asɔfoɔ* officiate at the Akan traditional shrine according to the directives of the chief priest (*ɔbosomfoɔ*) or traditional priests/priestesses (*akɔmfoɔ*) (Ekem 2005:119). One of the *asɔfoɔ* may be chosen to replace a deceased *ɔbosomfoɔ* as the chief priest and for this reason, the traditional *asɔfoɔ* may be considered as priests in training (singular: *ɔkɔmfowa*).

Therefore, strictly speaking, the use of *asɔfoɔ* for priest of God and hence *Ɔsɔfo panyin* for the high-priestly office of Christ does not depict Christ's true position and role in God's salvific plan. However, the priestly nature of the roles of traditional *asɔfoɔ* might have led to the use of *asɔfoɔ* in reference to ministers of the gospel and by extension, the priestly office of Christ. In connection with this Krass (1974:21) notes that:

In Ghana, the name given to a Christian minister has been an Akan word which is also used for the priest of a traditional divinity or "fetish." The "fetish priest" was the one who performed sacrifices to the divinity. His role was that of a mediator between the divinity and the people who worshipped it. Much of the traditional meaning became attached to the Ghanaian idea of Christian minister. The church did not intend this to happen. Indeed, the first church to use this was a Presbyterian church, and Presbyterians do not think of their ministers as mediators—Presbyterian ministers are not priests. Nevertheless, the use of the word encouraged the people and even some ministers to regard themselves as "Christian fetish priests." They simply interpreted the minister's role in the way for which their culture had prepared them.

Ekem (2005:120) rightly argues that *ɔkɔmfɔɔ* better captures the biblical idea of Jesus's priesthood in terms of his priestly functions. As noted earlier (cf. section 4.6.3), Jesus exercises his high priesthood primarily in the metaphysical sphere, rather than the physical sphere (Heb. 9:11). For Ekem (2005:120) the Akan spiritual realm is mediated metaphysically through the *akɔmfɔɔ* rather than the *asɔfoɔ*. The point is that though the *asɔfoɔ* also mediate, their mediation takes place between the people and the *ɔkɔmfɔɔ*, taking place in the physical rather than metaphysical real. Bible translators however refuse to translate "priest" as *ɔkɔmfɔɔ* in order to avoid the fetish connotation associated with the term *ɔkɔmfɔɔ*. While the avoidance of the term *ɔkɔmfɔɔ* is not out of place considering its fetish connotations, the use of *asɔfoɔ* for "priest" does not do justice to

both the mediatorial role and the metaphysical nature of Christ's priesthood. Against this background, Ekem (2005:120) suggests the expression *Ntamgyinafoɔ panyin* (high/senior mediator) as a better alternative for translating "high priest" into Akan and maintains that this expression fits well the Hellenistic idea of the high priest and at the same time highlight Christ's self-giving nature.

As a Translation Consultant for the Bible Society of Ghana, and Distinguished Professor of Biblical Exegesis and Mother Tongue Hermeneutics, Ekem must be commended for the linguistic and theological insights he offers his readers. His suggested expression "*Ntamgyinafoɔ pinyin*" is obviously better than *ɔsɔfo panyin* for the reasons stated above. The present researcher agrees with Ekem's emphasis on Jesus's mediatorial role because the primary priestly function of Jesus is objective mediation, which includes both sacrifice and intercession. Nonetheless, "*Ntamgyinafoɔ panyin*" has the tendency of creating the impression that there are some junior *ntamgyinafoɔ* (mediators) between God and humankind, Christ being their head (senior-most). There has to be at least one valid lesser mediator to make the presence of a high/senior mediator acceptable. This however is not biblically supported—there is only one mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:5). Neither is it consistent with the Akan worldview.

Agyarko (2009:131-132), against the backdrop of the challenges associated with Ekem's proposal, suggests the term *Nyamesɔfopɛko* ("God's unique Priest") as the most appropriate Akan terminology for Jesus's high-priestly office. As a way of evaluation, the term *Nyamesɔfopɛko* makes it explicit that Christ is a priest (minister) of God and not of any other being. Consequently, the traditional Akan is made to understand that Christ's priesthood is not in the context of Akan Traditional Religion. While this move by Agyarko is commendable, *Nyamesɔfopɛko* necessitates the existence of many high priests of God of which Christ is unique. Such an idea (similar to Ekem's proposal), however, is neither biblically warranted nor contextually acceptable.

Considering the challenges associated with the proposals made by scholars like Ekem and Agyarko, the present study considers three alternative terminologies for translating "high priest" into Akan, namely, *Ntamgyinafotrodoo* ("the true mediator"),

Ntamgyinafokoro (“the only mediator”) and *Ntamgyinafoankasa/Ntamgyinafokann* (“real mediator”).¹² Hagner (2002:122) defines a “mediator” as a person “who serves as a bridge between two individuals or groups and the one who must have credibility with both sides, ideally with some participation in some sense with both.” Christ, through his blood, established a New Covenant between God and humanity (Heb. 9:15a) of which he became the sole mediator (Hagner 2002:122). Christ qualifies for this mediatorial role as he is both fully God and a perfect human being and hence, has credibility with both sides. Jesus’s mediatorial role is not new to Akan Christians, as evident in the works of some Akan theologians outlined below. Kuma (2011:29) adds her voice to Christ’s mediatorial identity when she refers to him as *ɔkyeame Nɔkwafoɔ*, that is, “the truthful Linguist who judges things rightly!” or “an unerring interpreter of God.” Just as the *ɔkyeame* (a royal spokesperson in Akan) mediates between the king and his subjects, so does Jesus mediate between God and humanity. Antobam (cited in Aye-Addo 2013:78) asserts that “In Akan religion, the Supreme Being is perceived as a great paramount chief who is ‘so big’ that he has to be approached through sub-chiefs and his official spokesman, called *ɔkyeame*, who in public matters is as the chief and exercises royal authority, even if it is subordinate to that of the paramount chief.” Thus, it means that *ɔkyeame* Jesus mediates between God, the King and his subjects, humanity. In support of Jesus’s mediatorial role as *ɔkyeame*, Pobee (1979:95-96) writes “Just as the Chief exercises a sacral and priestly role as well, so too does Jesus exercise a sacral and priestly function between God and [humanity].”

Another terminology that betrays the traditional identification of Jesus as a mediator is *ɔkyerɛma Nyannɔ* (divine drummer) (Kuma 2011:35). *ɔkyerɛma Nyannɔ* is the figure seen in the full moon which the Akan consider as *Onyankopɔn*’s master drummer. Laryea (2000:89) asserts that the state drummer, in addition to being a historian, plays a “role in cultic and ritual functions by invoking the presence of the Supreme Being, the lesser gods, ancestor drummers and other spirits.” Therefore, as *ɔkyerɛma Nyannɔ*, Jesus becomes the bridge that links humanity to God and also serves as the means of divine revelation

¹² Alternatively, they can be written as *Ntamgyinafoɔ trodoo* (“the true mediator”), *Ntamgyinafoɔ koro* (“the only mediator”) and *Ntamgyinafoɔ ankasa* or *Ntamgyinafoɔ kann* (“real mediator”) depending on the orthography of the particular Akan dialect used.

(Laryea 2000:89). All these give credit to the researcher's emphasis on the mediatorial role of Christ's priestly office which is obviously not foreign to the Akan primal thought.

The researcher avoids the use of *ɔsɔfoɔ* because this terminology (as noted earlier) fails to capture the nature of Jesus's mediatorial role which is key to his priestly office and to the understanding of his atoning sacrifice. Christ's priestly role (as noted earlier) comprises primarily of mediating between God and humankind achieved through his sacrifice on the cross and his intercession on behalf of his people. It must be admitted that *ntamgyinafoɔ* is a general term and needs to be placed in a context to make sense. Yet, it offers a better option than *ɔsɔfoɔ* which, aside from being used in connection with traditional shrines, fails to capture the metaphysical nature of Christ's priesthood.

Now, the meaning of each of the three terms proposed earlier are as follows: *Ntamgyinafotrodoo* means that Christ is the only true mediator between God and humanity; *Ntamgyinafokoro* implies that Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity just as he is the only begotten Son of God, and *Ntamgyinafoankasa/Ntamgyinafokann* means Christ is the real mediator between God and humanity. Though linguistically and culturally appropriate, the first two options have the tendency of portraying the Levitical priests as false (or illegitimate) mediators who were not appointed by God. As a matter of fact, the Levitical priests were also divinely appointed mediators. The third option, which is preferable, allows for the legitimacy of both the Levitical priesthood and Christ's priesthood while acknowledging Christ's priesthood as the real and incomparable priesthood, that is, *Ntamgyinafoɔ a ɔnni nsɛsɔɔ* (incomparable Mediator). Therefore, the study contends that an accurate Akan terminology for "high priest" (with reference to Jesus) that stands the chance of giving a right Akan Christian perspective on Jesus's priesthood is either *Ntamgyinafoankasa* or *Ntamgyinafokann*¹³, both meaning "real mediator." This does not mean that the Levitical priests were fake ones but rather that the Levitical priesthood was a type appointed by God to adumbrate the priesthood of Christ, which is the antitype.

¹³ Another way to put it is *Ntamgyinafo-a-ɔdi-mu* (lit. "the mediator who is valuable"). This expression places emphasis on the value of Christ's mediation.

The researcher's proposal not only agrees with the biblical idea that Christ is the perfect high priest whose priesthood surpasses all other priestly orders (Heb. 9:11-14)—be it Levitical priesthood or Akan/African traditional priesthood—but also shows the reality of his priesthood (though not the only priesthood instituted by God) as compared to the Levitical priesthood which is only a shadow (though not false) of the reality. It also depicts Christ not only as a matchless priest (one who has no co-equal and whose mediatory role cannot be performed by anyone) but also as the sole Mediator between God and humankind. The Akan traditional priests are therefore to be seen as priests of a man-made religion (or humanly-instituted priests) whose nature and role can be used to appreciate the priesthood of Christ, which alone is the real priesthood.

Further, it should be noted that the priesthood of Christ differs from the traditional priesthood because of his sinless nature, his nature as both God and human as well as the heavenly tabernacle in which his priestly sacrifice takes place. More so, the scope and approach of Christ's priesthood are different from those of traditional priests. Christ's humiliation (including incarnation, suffering, crucifixion and descent into hell) and exaltation (resurrection, ascension, session at the Father's right hand), which are necessary parts of his priesthood, cannot be found in any traditional priesthood. Aside from his past priestly role, Christ continues as a high priest forever (interceding for humanity, cf. Rom. 8:34), an aspect which has no place in Akan primal religion.

Kuma helps us to appreciate the superiority of Christ's priesthood to African traditional priesthood by connecting his victory over death to his incomparable wisdom. In an African religious setting, the priest is a historian of the society, a person of great wisdom, and a mediator, among others. Kuma's (2011:20) reference to Jesus as *Nyansaboakwa* (possessor of all wisdom) highlights the Akan Christian belief that Jesus has absolute wisdom or is the custodian of wisdom. The Akan maxim, *Nyansa nni ɔbaakofoɔ tirim* ("wisdom is not the exclusive possession of one person") underlines the Akan belief that no individual can have unlimited wisdom. Therefore, no human being is *Nyansaboakwa*; only God is *Nyansaboakwa*. Kuma's application of the title *Nyansaboakwa* to Jesus comes in the context of his death and resurrection and so she says Jesus "blockades the road of death with wisdom and power" (2011:20). It is therefore Kuma's contention that

Jesus dealt with death and he resurrected by the use of his unlimited wisdom. Here, Kuma (2011:33) again serves this study well in referring to Jesus as “[the] **Wisest** of soothsayers, the resurrected body, who raised himself from three days in the grave” (the researcher’s emphasis). Christ, raising himself from the grave, is all-powerful.

The significance of Jesus’s wise dealing with death for the Akan community becomes evident in the story of Okomfo Anokye who is the greatest traditional priest in Ghana’s religious history. The story has it that Okomfo Anokye promised his people that he was journeying to the spirit world to get the antidote to death, but he never returned because death captured him. Christ must therefore be superior to Ghana’s most celebrated high priest in order to succeed in getting the antidote to death, something that Okomfo Anokye and other priests failed to achieve. The researcher agrees with Laryea (2000:88) that “[i]f all the heroes in Akan mythology have wrestled with death and have failed, we have in Jesus one who confronted death and came back alive. The Akan then can appreciate the superiority of Jesus over this powerful priest and all other traditional priests.”

As the only real priest of God, Christ alone offers the once-for-all sacrifice for his people, a discussion of which is presented in the next section.

6.4.3 The once-for-all atoning sacrifice of Christ (*Afɔdepreko* Christology)

The importance of sacrifices in African Traditional Religion prepares Akan Christians to appreciate Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Before Christ’s ultimate sacrifice, some Old Testament foreshadows were given through the Levitical priestly order (as noted earlier). The sacrifice made during the *Yom Kippur* (cf. section 3.4.3) is prominent among Old Testament atoning sacrifices. Since this and other sacrifices could not attain atonement in the strict sense of the word, YHWH prophesied—for example, through Isaiah (52:13—53:12)—that his own servant would one day die to atone for the sins of humanity. In the New Testament, the study found Jesus as fulfilling not only Isaiah’s prophecy about YHWH’s servant but also other prophecies about the Savior of the world. Jesus is found as the Lamb whose blood ratifies the New Covenant between YHWH and his people (cf. Mark 14:24). From the Pauline perspective, Jesus’s sacrifice comes as the fulfillment of God’s plan for salvation which he (God) had put in place before creation but only made

manifest at the right time according to his own plan (Rom. 5:6). The perfect nature and finality of Christ's sacrifice is the main contention of the letter to the Hebrews (especially 9:11-14 which was examined in section 4.6). Key principles that guide biblical atoning sacrifices (as discussed in chapters three and four of this study) could be summarized as follows: An offense or sin has brought about debt and guilt; the offended party is to be pacified or atoned; the party is to be forgiven and reconciled, and a sacrifice or another appropriate means is to be used to achieve the needed pardon and reconciliation.

The question of how African traditional sacrifices relate to Christ's sacrifice needs consideration at this point. On this, Tlhagale (1995:58) argues that traditional sacrifices are offered metaphorically to make special requests such as good health, well-being, peace, reconciliation, favor, and others, while Christ's sacrifice is the true sacrifice that achieves redemption for humanity. Tlhagale is right in noting that only Christ's sacrifice achieves atonement in the true sense of the word. However, (as the study demonstrates later) Christ's sacrifice goes beyond the redemption of the soul to bringing other benefits such as good health, reconciliation, peace, among others, to believers. This makes Tlhagale's position on the purpose of Christ's sacrifice theologically inappropriate. In the author's view, Akan sacrifices are in a way similar to the Old Testament typological provision which was made to deal with defilement that came as a result of sin. In the same way that the Old Testament sacrifices could not provide atonement in the true sense, so Akan sacrifices could not and/or cannot achieve atonement for the worshipper. However, the Old Testament atoning sacrifices were sanctioned by God and dedicated to him alone unlike Akan sacrifices which are neither sanctioned by God nor received by him (alone).

An important distinction between traditional sacrifice and Christ's sacrifice is the fact that Christ is both the sacrificial victim and the priest who offers the sacrifice. In both the Levitical and Akan traditional sacrificial systems, the priest is distinct from the sacrificial victim. Hence, on the cross, Christ combines what were two distinct parties in both the Levitical and Akan traditional sacrificial traditions (that is, the priest and the sacrifice). Again, Christ's sacrifice was made to God, not to lesser gods and ancestral spirits as is the case in Akan primal religion. The concept of making an offering to the Supreme Being through intermediaries (such as lower deities and ancestors) has no place in Christian

theology and must give way to the idea that God is the only legitimate Receiver of all sacrifices.

Furthermore, Christ's sacrifice, unlike traditional sacrifices, takes place on a universal plane, affecting all humankind. This point is made by the writer of Hebrews who argues that Christ, the great High Priest, passed through the heavens, the greater and more perfect and unperishable tabernacle (cf. 9:11). Here, the writer also highlights the time quality and intrinsic quality of Christ's sacrifice by pointing out that he (Christ) entered once for all into the Holy Place by means of his own blood in contrast to the Levitical high priests who entered the Holy Place every year with the blood of animals like goats and calves. On the cross, Christ gave his life to God as a sacrifice for the sin of humanity and, by so doing, accomplished in reality what no traditional sacrifice has ever achieved or can ever achieve.

For the present study, the finality of Christ's sacrifice needs further emphasis. Rather than using Old Testament repetitious sacrifices or primal religious sacrifices as a means of atoning for sin, God has chosen to deal with sin once for all through the death of Christ. All sacrifices that preceded Christ's sacrifice are therefore inferior and not capable of attaining atonement in the strict sense of the word. God instituted and permitted the Old Testament sacrifices as a teaching aid, expected to facilitate human understanding of Christ's sacrifice which was to come at the right time as the only acceptable and real sacrifice that truly redeems humanity from sin's dominion. The ultimate sacrifice of Christ was the act through which he received the punishment that humanity deserves, met the divine demand that sin must necessarily be punished, and used his blood to efface the impurity that hindered access to God (Heb. 9:22; 10:22). The perfect efficacy of Christ's sacrifice in dealing with the problem of all sin of all time committed by all kinds of people also makes it unnecessary and unacceptable (from the Christian perspective) for any other sacrifice to be made in the post-resurrection era. That is why the writer of Hebrews could say that there is no other sacrifice left for those who fail to accept Christ's atonement as the means of salvation (cf. 10:26).

The study of Old Testament atonement tradition (in chapter three of this thesis) identified two kinds of defilement. The first is ritual impurity, that is, non-sinful, but contagious, impermanent defilement including direct or indirect contact with skin diseases (Lev. 13:1-46) or human corpses (Num. 19:10-22) which could be dealt with through purification rituals. The second is moral impurity that resulted from committing heinous, defiling acts such as sexual sin (Lev. 18:24-30) or idolatry (Lev. 19:31). This could not be cleansed by animal sacrifice. The cultic rituals and animal sacrifices only dealt with ritual uncleanness. Jesus's blood, in addition to dealing with ceremonial impurity, purifies the conscience, liberates the conscience from "dead works" (Heb. 9:14) and thus qualifies those who were disqualified by their defiled conscience to serve God.

Bediako (2000:33) makes the following remarks in his study of Hebrews 1:3b in relation to the *Odwira* festival to show that Christ's sacrifice is efficacious, complete and final.

Jesus ... secured eternal redemption for all who cease from their own works of purification and trust in him and his perfect *Odwira*; that is Christ himself, (the Twi here— *ɔde n'ankasa ne ho*—being more expressive than the English versions), who has become our *Odwira*. The *Odwira* to end all *odwiras* has taken place through the death of Jesus Christ.

Bediako's point is that the yearly purificatory sacrifices offered at the *Odwira* and all other traditional sacrifices have been fulfilled and transcended by the once-for-all perfect *Odwira* sacrifice offered by Christ through his death on the cross. The Akan term *afɔdeprɛko*¹⁴ (once-for-all sacrifice) accurately captures this thought. The repetitious nature of Akan traditional sacrifices as well as the lack of a universal sacrifice in the Akan society, disqualifies any Akan sacrifice to be regarded as *afɔdeprɛko*. The *afɔdeprɛko* Christology advanced in this study suggests that Christ's atonement, being complete, perfect and final, demands an end to any sacrifices in any human society. In other words, since Christ's sacrifice annulled and ended all other sacrifices, all the blood of all immolated animals is no more relevant. Hence, ancestral sacrifices are wrong and

¹⁴ The word *afɔdeprɛko* derives from *afɔdeɛ* (sacrifice) and *prɛko* (once for all).

unnecessary and must be discontinued. Akan ancestors do not qualify as appropriate mediators because, like the Levitical priests, these are also spirits of (dead) humans who were mere creatures, sinful and in need of salvation themselves. That being the case, the Akan no longer need to approach God through ancestors, but through Christ, who alone is the legitimate mediator between God and humanity. Ancestral Christology as noted in section 1.6 of this thesis resonates with the Akan/African worldview but at the same time, has the tendency of promoting syncretism.

The substitutionary dimension of Christ's sacrifice also needs some attention. The *Yom Kippur* ritual, which foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice, involved the substitution of a guiltless animal for guilty human beings (cf. Lev. 16:1-28). The vicarious nature of the promised Savior who was to come as YHWH's servant is a key contention in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song (52:13—53:12). The writer says in 53:4, "Surely he [the servant of YHWH] has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted" (RSV). The entire song makes it clear that the servant suffered not for his own deeds but for the deeds of others and in their stead. The New Testament gives a complete picture of the substitutionary nature of God's ultimate sacrificial victim, Jesus Christ, who is presented as the real atoning sacrifice that the Old Testament anticipated. Therefore, one finds in the New Testament a clearer idea of penal substitution in which Christ's death becomes a satisfaction of divine justice in the stead of humanity who themselves deserve the punishment Christ received. Said differently, the satisfaction of justice intended and accomplished by Christ's sacrifice is for others, not for himself (cf. Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28 see also Luke 22:19–20; John 6:51; 15:13; Rom. 5:6–8; 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:14–15, 21).

The substitutionary nature of atoning sacrifice is not new to the Africa setting where a sacrificial victim (in the context of atonement) carries the sin of the worshipper away through its substitutionary death so that the worshipper bears them (the sins) no more. Here, one can recall the Chagga goat ritual in which the victim dies in place of a sick person and by so doing, achieves the restoration of the person's health. The substitutionary nature of the death of Tweneboah-Koduah and Egya Ahor for their people was also noted in section 5.5. These and other substitutionary sacrifices can facilitate the

Akan comprehension of the substitutionary nature of the atonement of Christ. Just as it is required (in the Akan context) of the victim to be without defect and have nothing to do with the sin committed by the worshipper, so it is in the Christian context a requirement that the unguilty dies for the guilty, the sinless for the sinful.

Kuma (2011:39) makes this point when she says, “Jesus! We have taken you out, and nailed you to the cross.” By use of the inclusive pronoun “we”, Kuma underscores the fact that all humanity, through sinful intentions and activities, led Jesus to the cross. This assertion reminisces the biblical idea that all humans have sinned (Rom. 3:23). The righteous, Jesus, died not because of his own sin but because of the sins committed by others. From the Akan perspective, Jesus may be considered as a superior Egya Ahor who died to deal with the disease of sin in order to save the lives of his people (in this case all humanity). Jesus’s role is analogous to that of Tweneboah-Koduah who offered himself to be used as the sacrifice that defeated the enemies of his people (in Jesus’s case, the enemies are Satan and his hosts). Jesus’s sacrifice is also foreshadowed in the tearing apart of the live sheep (referred to as *Ntomaboo dwan*) during the Fokuo festival as a symbolic riding off of the affliction of his people (cf. section 5.5).

Christ, however, supersedes all these sacrificial victims in every respect, be it the value of the sacrifice, the method of the sacrifice, what the sacrifice achieves, or any other respect. Therefore, these Akan backgrounds can only facilitate a Christian understanding of God’s ultimate sacrifice rather than giving a perfect analogy for the death of Christ and its benefits. One needs therefore to be careful not to look for point-by-point correspondence between Christ’s sacrifice and those in any society because strictly speaking Christ’s sacrifice is incomparable to any past, present, or future sacrifice in the history of the universe. Therefore, no perfect analogy can be created for it. The following quote by Bediako (2000:28-29) is a very accurate summary of the foregone discussions.

The quality and achievement and ministry of Jesus Christ for and on behalf of all people, together with who he is, reveal his absolute supremacy. As One who is fully divine, he nonetheless took on human nature in order to offer himself in

death as sacrifice for human sin. Jesus Christ is unique not because he stands apart from us but because no one has identified so profoundly with human predicament as he has, in order to transform it...This unique achievement renders all other priestly mediations obsolete and reveals their ineffectiveness.

6.5 The meaning of the atonement from Akan Christian perspective

6.5.1 Atonement as remedy to sin (*Bɔne-ano-aduro* Christology)

An examination of how the atonement blesses people with eternal salvation,¹⁵ as a remedy to human sin, is crucial to the African setting which lacks any idea of salvation from moral evil (Mbiti 1974:113). Akan/African primal religion, unlike Christianity, has no concept of spiritual redemption. According to Larbi (2001:11), Akan traditional sacrifices are made “to make amends with the gods or the ancestors, in order to remove the danger-radiating pollution which would ordinarily destroy the personhood of the individual with its consequential effect on the community as a whole.” The primal idea of salvation that is similar to the spiritual aspect of Christian soteriology is the idea that through sacrifices one can align himself/herself with the spiritual realm such that he/she can “call upon the salvific works of the benevolent spirit force” (Larbi 2001:11).

The biblical texts examined earlier reveal that Christ died for the sin of humanity, which means, the death of Christ is the means by which the guilt of human sin and the associated punishment are removed. In answering the question of the necessity of the atonement, one has to consider two things, namely, what humanity has become and who God is. On the question of what humanity has become, it could be said that humanity is guilty and merits God’s punishment because of sin. Humanity is in bondage due to sin and is not free to come to God, an idea (theologically) referred to as human depravity. On the nature of God, it could be said that God is a holy King and his holiness does not permit him to receive a sinful human being into his Kingdom without dealing with the sin. Again,

¹⁵ The word salvation is used here in the narrow sense to refer to God’s act of rescuing someone from the penalty of sin.

God's justice requires that all sins should be given the appropriate divine punishment. On the other side are God's holy love and mercy which move him toward humanity in spite of the sinful condition of humans. It was on the cross that the demands of God's love, mercy, holiness and justice were met. From the biblical teachings espoused in chapters three and four of this study comes at least five imageries that contribute to the Christian understanding of how the atonement brought about salvation to the human soul. These terms are propitiation, expiation, redemption, justification and reconciliation. In subsequent paragraphs, the study outlines each of these aspects of salvation briefly.

The first aspect of *Bone-ano-aduro*¹⁶ Christology is that on the cross God poured on Christ his divine wrath which resulted from all the sin of the world. Christ bore the awesome punishment and experienced its incomparable torment and anguish. The agony he passed through is highlighted in his assertion on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34). If Christ has borne the full penalty of human sin then believers must not live in fear or anxiety about God's punishment. The Akan primal conception of the need to appease deities may facilitate this understanding. The study noted in section 5.5 that the Akan offer propitiation sacrifices to gods and spirits when disasters such as famine, epidemic, calamity, floods, drought and others threaten the security of the society as a result of the anger of the gods and spirits against an individual or the community at large. In Akan thought, the supreme God as well as lesser deities, ancestors and other spiritual entities become angry when one sins. The consequence is their withdrawal from humanity or the premature death of the sinner. The Akan Christian finds a solution to the problems of death and alienation from God and other spiritual beings in the death of Christ which deals with human sin by first of all effecting propitiation. The Akan understanding of the propitiatory dimension of atonement serves as a useful link for espousing the biblical doctrine of propitiation within the Akan/African community.

¹⁶ This term (coined by the researcher) literally means "remedy/cure for sin." It offers the Akan a contextual understanding of what spiritual salvation is and how it is attained. It should however not be taken to mean the atonement makes the believer sinless (or unable to sin). Sinlessness will only be achieved after glorification. The researcher's intention is to say atonement frees the believer from the penalty of sin and gives the repentant sinner the ability to overcome sin.

However, it is important to maintain that God is not like one of the traditional deities whose wrath is uncontrollable and therefore needs to be constantly appeased. Morris (1986:131) says “God is not thought of as being capriciously angry (like the deities of the heathen), but, because he is a moral being, his anger is directed toward wrongdoing in any shape or form.” The Old Testament portrayal of God as a merciful Being who does not take delight in the death of a sinner (Ezek. 18:23) supports Morris’ assertion. God’s wrath is simply “the stern reaction of the divine nature toward evil” (Morris 1986:132) which is aroused only by the presence of sin (cf. Exod. 22:23-25; Job 21:20; Jer. 21:12; Ezek. 16:38; 23:4; 24:13; 25:17). Stott (2011:197) maintains that any crude concept of anger, sacrifice and propitiation that tends to make God one of the bloodthirsty gods of paganism is unbiblical.

Again, in the case of the Akan concept of appeasement, it is the worshipper who brings the atoning sacrifice; however, in the biblical concept, the sacrifice is provided by God. It is God who initiates the process of averting his own anger. No human could provide a sacrifice that is worthy enough to deal with God’s wrath upon humanity due to sin. Further (as noted earlier), the Akan notion that atonement sacrifice is made to gods, ancestors and other spiritual entities is unbiblical and must be rejected. As a matter of fact, all sacrifices in the context of Christianity are made to God. God has not given any entity the power or privilege to receive any sacrifice on his behalf.

In addition to appeasing God, the death of Christ expiates (makes amends or reparation for guilt). Christ did not only receive the just punishment human sins deserved, he also took “away from the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The expiatory dimension of the atonement is crucial to the Akan context where people have a strong sense of guilt after committing sin. In Akan primal imagination, God, the community and the individual conscience are major players who can make a sinner guilty of his/her sin. Therefore, when one sins, the person will feel guilty until an appropriate step is taken to deal with the sin and its guilt. An atonement theology for the Akan community must therefore provide the means by which this guilt is taken away. In chapter 4, the researcher argued for the expiatory connotation of *ἰλαστήριον* (in Rom. 3:25) while acknowledging that the idea of expiation does not exclude propitiation. It was further argued that since God’s holy anger

is triggered by the presence of sin, true propitiation must be preceded by the removal of sin and its guilt. Paul speaks of “the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood” (Rom. 3:24-25). In removing the guilt of human sins, Christ was made sin for humanity in order that, in him, humans become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21; see also 1 Pet. 2:24).

Another imagery used in connection with the cross is redemption, meaning Christ’s death bought humanity from slavery to sin (John 8:34). The concept of redemption however goes beyond buying ordinarily from the market to ransoming someone from captivity. In the Old Testament, people were redeemed from social situations including debt, slavery, captivity, exile, liability to execution, among others. From the New Testament perspective, human beings are held captive from which only the payment of a ransom could set them free and that the required ransom is Christ’s blood (see Mark 10:45; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:18; Tit. 2:14; Rom. 3:24; Rom. 8:21; Heb. 2:15; Gal. 3:13). By his blood, Christ paid the ransom needed for human redemption from sin; salvation to the fullest (see discussions on Heb. 9:12 in section 4.6.3.2). Having been “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23), the ransomed person now has control over his/her own sinful impulses as well as the seductions of the world (an issue explored further in the next section).

The biblical concept of salvation also includes justification—that is, declaring that one is righteous. In Romans 4:25, Paul states that Christ was put to death “for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (RSV). Here, Paul closely links Christ’s death with his resurrection and considers both as necessary for human salvation. Justification goes beyond the pardon of sin and the removal of guilt to the imputation of righteousness. Paul’s point then is that the death of Christ attained the pardon of sin while his resurrection attained righteousness for humanity. Atonement and justification stand in unbroken unity just as Jesus’s death and resurrection do. Other benefits of justification are having (a) peace with God, (b) access to God’s presence, (c) hope of sharing the glory of God, (d) forgiveness of sin and (e) reconciliation to God, among others (see exegesis of Romans 5 in section 4.5).

Therefore, the atonement of Christ assures the Akan believer of God's pardon of their sin and their reconciliation to him. Paul says "that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19 RSV). The traditional sacrifice needed to reconcile the Akan to the spiritual world now finds expression in Christ's sacrifice which reconciles humanity to God by removing sin and its guilt, the cause of enmity between God and humanity caused (cf. Rom. 5:10-11; see Letham 1993:143). The relationship between humanity and God which was marred by the sin of the first Adam has now been restored by the obedience and sacrifice of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ.

The salvific dimension of the cross is well captured in the following quote by Kuma (2011:39): "The cross is the bridge we cross over to search for the well of his blood. The blood-pool is there. If it were not for the cross, we would never have the chance to wash in that blood. The cross is Christians' precious inheritance; It brings us to eternal life." In these lines, the cross is depicted as the antidote to the human problem of sin, for it is the cross that gives humanity access to the blood and cleanses sin spiritually. Here, the Akan primal idea of the cleansing power of blood comes up strongly.

To conclude, it must be noted that, unlike the Akan primal view of reincarnation which offers the individual many chances to be born into the world again to attain ancestral status and enter *Asamando* (a realm similar to Paradise), in the biblical concept of salvation each individual has just a single chance to live on earth; once a person dies, there is no second chance, what is left is judgment (Heb. 9:27). The atonement model proposed in this study, therefore, demands a rejection of the idea of reincarnation because of its lack of biblical support and its ability to undermine the urgency of the gospel message and the purpose of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

6.5.2 Atonement as victory over Satan and his hosts (*Nkunimdie* Christology)

The researcher deems it necessary to look at the nature and activities of Satan and his host in Akan Christian thought before considering Christ's victory over these forces. This will facilitate the reader's understanding of how the atonement dealt with evil powers.

6.5.2.1 Akan Christian understanding of evil forces

Akan Christians acknowledge the existence of a spiritual battle between God, his angels and believers on one hand against Satan, his angels and unbelievers on the other hand (Dua-Agyeman 2011:2). The war started in heaven when Lucifer and other angels rebelled against God, attempting to take over God's rule and position in the world (Ezek. 28:12-19; Rev. 12:9). Therefore, Akan Christians consider themselves as being in a constant battle against unseen forces of the wicked kingdom of Satan. In Akan thought, demons (*ahonhommone*) are supernatural beings or fallen spirits of evil intentions. Common categories of demons identifiable from the Scripture are rulers/principalities (the highest-ranking spiritual entities), authorities (subordinate to principalities and act like regional heads), world rulers (who rule various villages, cities, or nations) and spiritual hosts of wickedness (wicked spiritual beings who serve as Satan's errand boys) (Eph. 6:10-11; Dua-Agyeman 2011:48-50). As spirits, demons materialize by changing from their spiritual form into a material form which may include animals (such as snakes, scorpions, millipedes, dogs, cats, and so on), human beings and trees, among others. Reports about hunters who shoot and kill animals that later turn into human beings are not uncommon in Akan communities (Dua-Agyeman 2011:57).

Four kinds of demonic activities and influences may be identified, namely, oppression, suppression (subjugation or subjection), obsession and possession (Dua-Agyeman 2011:56). Demonic oppression refers to "suffering or frustrations in life, including insomnia, poor financial management, frequent illness, failure to receive business contracts or even lack of academic progress, all of which may be interpreted as resulting from satanic or demonic activity" (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:167). Through medical science, people acknowledge the fact that sickness can be caused by medical factors such as lack of certain vitamins, hormonal imbalances and lack of enough sleep, exercise, and excessive stress. However, Akan primal worldview attributes most bodily and mental problems to the influences of spiritual forces. Some Akan-Christian deliverance workers consider deliverance as the only solution for all sickness; therefore, they do not encourage medical treatment (Dua-Agyeman 2011:60). Such faith healers do not accept even the non-observance of basic personal hygiene as a legitimate cause of sicknesses

(Amevenku 2015:87). Contrary to this position, one finds no biblical text that condemns the use of medical science to cure diseases or any biblical text that denies the possibility of human behavior (such as uncleanness) causing sicknesses.

Demonic possession¹⁷ has to do with “altered states of consciousness, conditions in which suffering or ‘unnatural behavior’ is deemed to be the result of an invasion of the human body by an alien spirit” (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:167). Unger (cited in Dua-Agyeman 2011:100) defines “possession” as “a condition in which one or more evil spirits or demons inhabit the body of a human being and take control of their victim at will.” It is deducible from the above definitions that the possessed becomes the habitat of the evil spirit which not only influences the person’s life but also thinks, speaks and acts through him/her. Demonic possession affects the totality of the victim—body, soul and spirit. One can be oppressed without being possessed, although possession and oppression usually go together.

Opinions are divided on whether a believer can or cannot be possessed by a demon. Some believe a weak Christian can be possessed; others think demons cannot dwell in what has become God’s temple through the reconciliation that the atonement brings (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:168). Arguing that a believer cannot be possessed, Dua-Agyeman (2011:101) asserts that the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 19) and there is no way the Spirit will allow his temple to be occupied by another being. Tabiri (2004) however maintains that believers can be possessed because of their contact with evil even after coming to Christ. Some possible indicators of demonic possession listed by Dua-Agyeman (2011:103-112) include extraordinary strength, extreme annoyance, clairvoyance and the speaking of unknown languages (similar to the Christian practice of speaking in tongues).

Demonic suppression (subjugation or subjection) has to do with the situation whereby a person’s life is being controlled by demons. The suppressed is like a slave to the demon suppressing him/her. Therefore, the suppressed has no will-power to be free. Dua-Agyeman (2011:83-84) lists some of the signs of mental subjection as persistent anxiety,

¹⁷ Possession comes from the word *daimonizoumai* which means “possesses by a demon.”

unguarded thought life, memory loss, procrastination, indecision, doubt, skepticism, unbelief, self-condemnation, discordant emotions such as hatred, resentment and unforgiveness. Other signs are abnormal behaviors like hysterical laughs without any apparent reason, behaving foolishly, having an unfamiliar loud tone, inconsistent actions, speaking to oneself, abnormal bodily rigidity, unclear speech and thought, among others.

Demonic obsession is the situation where evil spirits bind, blind and confuse a person's mind (Dua-Agyeman 2011:77). The victim's mind is usually filled with fear, false ideas, scenes, and mental imageries that make the person distressed, insecure and uncertain about life. Self-accusations and self-condemnation are some of the signs of demonic obsession. Demonic obsession can bring about diseases that defy any form of medical treatment.

Aware of the realities of all these demonic activities and influences in human life, most Akan Christians live in perpetual fear. Therefore, a holistic view of atonement for the Akan community must emphasize Christ's victory over spiritual forces that militate against the life of the Akan Christian. This emphasis is not only culturally relevant but also biblically grounded. The Akan religious view of the existence of evil forces may not change. However, the belief that these forces still have control over the life of the Christian is unbiblical and must be done away with. The Christian is expected to appropriate the victory won by Christ and allow this victory to manifest in his/her life when these powers come against him/her.

6.5.2.2 *Christ's victory over Satan and his hosts*

The *Christus Victor* motif of Christ's atonement offers a significant solution to the Akan problem of the fear of death and evil forces. The exegesis of Romans 5 revealed that death came into the human world through the sin of Adam. Satan's dominion is death because he is the one who introduced sin (which brought death) into the entire universe. According to Agyarko (2009:41) "viewing Jesus as victorious over the spiritual realm and particularly over evil forces, answers the need for a powerful protector against these forces and powers." Mbiti (1968:78) serves this study well with the following quote: "Africans do not explain the significance of the cross primarily as the sacrificial action of

Christ For many African Christians, the cross, in so far as it relates to the human life of Jesus, is not a sign of shame and humiliation, but a symbol of might and power.” Here, Christ’s death is considered as the destruction of sin and defeat of Satan and death so that the Christian does not only enjoy forgiveness of sin, but also freedom from all forces and the fear associated with these forces. From humanity’s viewpoint, the greatest weapon that Satan has is the power of death. Kuma (2011:31) stresses Christ’s power over death when she describes Jesus as “[t]he first-born Child who knows Death’s antidote”, “the wall which bars Death from entry and makes many hearts leap for joy” and “one who shouted at Death, and death ran from his face.” Her point is simply that Christ’s death made Satan (who is the lord of death) powerless.

Akan Christians must therefore not only understand Christ’s death as a means of taking up the penalty of their sins but also as God’s acts of setting them free from the fear of death. Having dispossessed Satan of his weapon (humanity’s fear of death), Christ is triumphant and has doomed Satan to be absolutely powerless. Kuma (2011:31) captures this beautifully when she describes Christ as “the one who shouted at Death, and death ran from his face.” Christ is therefore the great Warrior who fought victoriously against Satan and his hosts. This is what the writer of Hebrew means when he says Christ came as flesh and blood so that “through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (2:14 RSV) and free all those in bondage to the power of death. This does not mean that human beings will not die, but that Jesus, through his death and resurrection, gives humanity the assurance that death is not the end of life; there is resurrection. The spiritual and eternal death that confronted humanity has also been catered for through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. It is in view of this that Kuma (2011:7) declares that Jesus “has tied death to a tree so that we may be happy.”

The pronouncement on the Serpent after deceiving Adam and Eve includes the assertion that the seed of the woman would crush its (the serpent’s) head (Gen. 3:15). Paul identifies the serpent as Satan (2 Cor. 11:3-4, 14-15 cf. Rev. 12:9) and considers Christ as crushing Satan under the feet of the Church (Rom. 16:20). Paul then goes on to dramatize Christ’s victory over Satan and his forces in Colossians 2:15, saying, “He [Christ] disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them,

triumphing over them in him” (RSV). In this text, Paul draws on the Roman world to picture how rulers and authorities, having been defeated, are dragged along in Christ’s procession. In the Greco-Roman world, writes Adria (2006:1479), “when a city surrendered to a victorious general, the conquerors would stage a victory parade at which they would display their conquered enemies and all the goods they had plundered.”

The Asante-Twi captures Colossians 2:15 as “*na watu mpaninnie ne tumidie agu ayi won adi akyere pefee wo badwam de adi won so nkonim wo mu*” (lit. “And he has uprooted principalities and powers and has revealed them clearly in public as means of having victory over them”). The metaphor of a tree that has been uprooted, as shown in this Akan version of Colossians 2:15, underlines the powerlessness of demonic forces in the post-resurrection era. Predominantly farmers, the Akan are fully aware that a plant cannot survive without root to supply it with water and nutrients and to keep it firm in the ground. Therefore, to say that demonic powers are now like tree without root is the best way of saying that demonic powers are powerless before Christ and by extension before the believer. Kuma (2011:19) makes the same point when she says, “Should the devil himself become a lion and chase us as his prey, we shall have no fear; Lamb of God! Satan says he is a wolf—Jesus stretches forth his hand, and, look: Satan is a mouse.” Also worthy of note is the public display of the defeated forces. To defeat someone and afterward drag the person to public view is a way of demonstrating how powerful the victor is. Jesus, therefore, deserves the title *Okatakyie* (the Brave one or the Hero) (Kuma 2011:1). This appellation according to Laryea (2000:80) “is used for war heroes who make a clean sweep of their enemies and return from battle victorious. It is only a brave person and man of valor who fights and covers his back while facing the enemy or does not turn his back to the enemy in battle.”

Nkunimdie Christology (or Christ’s victory over Satan) is echoed in many Christian songs to inspire hope and to remind believers of the victory of Christ over evil forces. An example of such songs is as follows:

Woadi nkoguo

You have lost the battle,

Obonsam, woadi nkoguo

Satan, you have lost the battle,

<i>Woadi nkoguo ampa ara (2x)</i>	You have, indeed, lost the battle (2x)
<i>Ɔma ne ho so a,</i>	If he rises up (against me),
<i>Yesu abre no ase.</i>	Jesus subdues him,
<i>Ɔtu yen so sa a,</i>	If he battles against me
<i>Yesu mogya nka n'anim,</i>	May the blood of Jesus rebuke him,
<i>Woadi nkoguo ampa ara.</i>	You have, indeed, lost the battle.

Depicting Christ as the divine Conqueror of the Akan spirit world, Kuma (2011:49) writes, “If Satan troubles us, Jesus Christ, You who are the Lion of the grasslands, You whose claws are sharp, Will tear out his entrails, And leave them on the ground For the flies to eat. Let us all say, Amen!” Clearly, Kuma sees Christ as supreme over every spiritual rule and authority. To appreciate this quote by Kuma a little contextual background is relevant. As indicated earlier, farming is a major occupation for Akan people. Like most other Akan, Kuma was a farmer who spent a lot of time in the thick forest where most farming activities take place. Encounters with wild animals such as the lion, bear, python, elephants and others are very common in such a setting. The need for some kind of daily protection in such a hostile environment is obvious. Consequently, in many Akan communities, nobody goes to the farm alone because of the likelihood of being attacked by wild animals. On their way to the farm, Akan people usually organize themselves in a queue with the elderly (usually men) in front, holding defensive weapons like a gun or a machete, followed by women and children who are also followed by men with weapons. In the event of an encounter with any wild animal the men with the weapons fight to rescue the vulnerable.

In the earlier quote by Kuma, she depicts the Christian life as the journey through the forest where one can easily be attacked by wild animals. This imagery is informed by the Akan perception of life as a struggle between the humans in the physical world and spiritual forces in the spirit realm. Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5), is portrayed as the Lion of the forest who always appears in defense of the Christian who has been attacked by Satan and his demonic forces. Christ is not an ordinary Lion but

one whose claws are strong enough to tear out Satan's entrails, render him powerless and lifeless and leave his (Satan's) carcass for flies to feed on (Kuma 2011:49). The feeding on Satan's body by flies is an allusion to the public display of Christ's defeat of Satan and his forces (cf. Col. 2:15). Indeed, Satan has lost the battle as the song quoted above says.

As a way of helping the Akan Christian to appreciate how powerless evil forces have become, Kuma (2011:7) further states concerning Jesus, "You have killed the evil spirit, and cut off its head!" The Akan believe that if a warrior or a fearful animal (like a snake) is defeated, one has to cut the head, else it could resuscitate and fight back. Therefore, when a snake is beaten to death one would normally cut off the head to indicate that the battle is over. In the context of wars, victory is shown by the possession of the head or the capture of the most important person in the opponents' camp (usually, a prince or the king himself). Considering this point, Kuma's point is to be understood as an assertion that Christ has won a total victory over evil spirits and that battle is now over.

Kuma's (2011:9, 20) *Nkunimdie* Christology further goes on to state: "Hunter, you have gone to the hunt and destroyed the ugly *kakae*.... [Jesus], the sharpest of all great swords, has made the forest safe for the hunters. The *mmoatia* he has cut into pieces; and he has caught *sasabonsam* and twisted off its head!" For a better understanding of what Kuma is saying here, one needs to recall what was said about *mmoatia* and *sasabonsam* in section 5.3.4 of this study. They are both fearful creatures believed to live in the forest. *Sasabonsam* is regarded as the chief of the evil spirits in the forest. *Mmoatia* is a very short terrible creature. *Kakae* is an imaginary frightening figure which is greatly feared by people (especially children) in the Akan society. Kuma's imagery is striking: By the power of Jesus, the great Hunter, the *kakae* has been destroyed, *mmoatia* has been cut into pieces while the *sasabonsam's* head has been twisted off. This total victory makes Jesus's followers happy because in the midst of their fear, Jesus appeared on the scene and rescued them, enabling "the same fearful men to now gird up their loins, attack and kill the elephant, an enemy of a considerable standing" (Walton 2018:115). The believer is to put away past fears because the forces that mitigated against him/her have been destroyed.

Nkunimdie Christology, according to Chinua Achebe, became a reality in the life of earlier missionaries who worked in Nigeria. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe recounts how Africans offered Western missionaries some portion of the evil forest with the hope that the missionaries who boasted about victory over death, would have “a real battlefield in which to show their victory” (Achebe 1994:149). The missionaries who were ignorant of this plan received the land with gratitude and began to explore it. The indigenes, based on their knowledge about how dangerous the evil forest was, thought the missionaries would all be dead within a few days. Yet, none died! This made the people acknowledge the power of the white man’s “fetish” and started accepting the Christian faith. Consequently, “not long after, he won his first three converts” (Achebe 1994:149).

The Akan version of this Nigerian experience compares closely with the story of the Fante shrine of Nananom¹⁸ Mpow (“the groove of the ancestors”). Nananom Mpow is believed to be the place where the remains of three great Fante leaders, namely, Oburumankoma, Odapagyan, and Oson, were buried. Therefore, this sacred site became a powerful shrine, where traditional priests mediated on behalf of ancestors and supernatural powers. Fante oral tradition maintains that this site was the spiritual powerhouse (a form of refuge) for the Fantes which was key to the Fantes’ strategies for defense, survival, and political change during the era of the Atlantic slave trade (Essamuah 2010). However, a religious “battle” ensued between early Fante Methodists and the priests of Nananom Mpow which resulted in the conversion of Akweesi (one of the traditional priests) to Christianity. Akweesi cut down a tree in the grove, an act which was forbidden, and this led to a confrontation between the Christians and the traditional people. The Christians eventually came out victorious, the interpretation being that the Christian God is more powerful than any local deity. As Essamuah (2003:25) rightly points out:

The Christian significance of this victory over Nananom Mpow went far beyond the Fante collective cultural identity and religious coherence; it was the very usurping of the role played by traditional authorities in Mfantseman. Wesleyan

¹⁸ The Fante or Akan word “Nana” (plural: Nananom) means elders, chiefs, grandfathers and ancestors.

Christianity was seen to have displaced the religious authority of the Nananom Mpow much as the new merchant class had displaced the financial and social authority of the chiefs

In the Akan context in which salvation has to do with deliverance from the physical and immediate dangers that fight against individual and communal survival and enjoyment of abundant life, the need to develop and promote *Nkunimdie* Christology cannot be overemphasized. Presenting Christ as the divine Conqueror has the potential of dealing effectively with the challenge of idolatry in Akan Christianity. With Christ, the Field Marshal by their side, Akan Christians can now boast of full protection, a subject the study now considers in the next section.

6.5.3 Atonement as protection against evil forces (*Ahobammɔ* Christology)

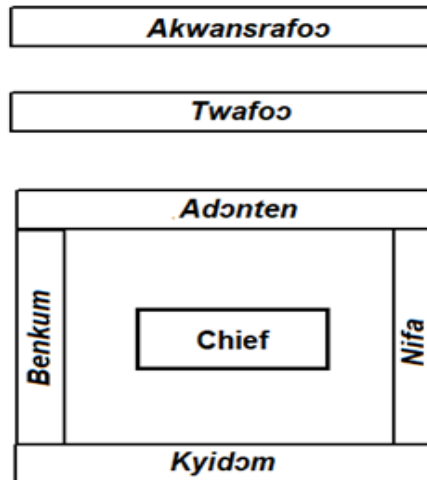
Christ's victory over Satan and his host is intertwined with his protection of the believer. According to Nkansah-Obrempong (2006:1481) "While Satan is active in the world through his agents, African Christians need to remember that witchcraft, sorcery and all forms of demonic activities have been conquered and rendered powerless by Christ through his death and resurrection." Christ's victory over these powers makes them incapable of harming believers and the Church. This is exactly what the previous section espoused as *Nkunimdie* Christology. However, in the Akan setting in which the fear of perceived evil beings is part of the everyday reality, there is the need to translate the abstract concept of Christ's victory over Satan and lesser divinities into (concrete/existential) reality where the Akan Christian is fully assured that he/she is fully protected. Christ's victory over Satan is therefore not meaningful unless it gives practical assurance to the Akan believer that he/she cannot be harmed. This is why the researcher finds it necessary to deal with the protection that Christ's atonement brings in a separate section. The discussions will be divided into two—protection by Christ and protection by his blood.

6.5.3.1 Protection by Jesus Christ

Kuma's (2011:12, 13) picture of Jesus as a warrior based on imageries from Akan war formation is a good place to start the discussion on *Ahobammɔ* Christology. She captures her thought as follows: "Jesus, you are on the right and on the left. Where the sun rises, and where it sets! You are the chief of the rear-guard! You are *Korobetoe*, who lives forever, Chief of defense and chief of body-guards, ... *Adontenhene* Jesus, Field Marshal! With a gold mirror as protection; You guide us, and give us lamps of gold to lead the way." An understanding of the Akan military structure helps the reader to appreciate what Kuma is trying to say here. In the Akan military set-up, the chief is considered as the most important person who needs maximum protection from the army. The capture of a chief or the death of a chief during war renders the dead or captured chief's people defeated, and they (the defeated side) automatically become slaves to the conquering community. In view of this, all measures are put in place to protect the chief from the enemies (opponents).

As a war strategy against the capturing or killing of the chief, the *ɔmanhene* (the paramount chief) occupies a central position with sub-chiefs flanked around him. To the right and left of the *ɔmanhene* are the *Nifahene* (Right-wing chief) and the *Benkumhene* (Left-wing chief) respectively. The *Adontenhene* goes in front of the army while the *Kyidɔmhene* gathers the soldiers who are left behind and sends them back. In addition to these groups are the *Akwansrafoɔ* (mainly hunters responsible for scouting the route to be taken by the army) and the *Twafoɔ* (who follow the scouts and serves as spiritual guards of the chief) who also come in front of the chief. Following the *Twafoɔ* is the main body comprising the *Adonten* and the *Kronti*, which is also followed by the chief and his bodyguards (as depicted diagrammatically below). With this arrangement, there is virtually no way that an enemy can capture or kill the chief, who is the most important person in the Akan military set-up.

Fig. 6.1: The Akan military set-up



In her poem, Kuma explicitly refers to Jesus as *Adontehene*, *Kyidomhene*, and *Ankɔbeahene*. She implicitly identifies him as *Nifahene* and *Benkumhene* by considering him as being on the right and on the left respectively. Worthy of note is the fact that unlike the Akan military arrangement where various people are assigned different roles, Kuma sees Jesus as a fulfillment of all the functions of the various divisions in the Akan army set up. Drawing on Kuma’s metaphor, the Christian can be considered as the chief who is so precious to God that he (God) makes all efforts to protect him/her. Christ, being an embodiment of the total Akan army, ensures this protection.

Kuma’s Christological thought expressed through the imagery of Christ serving as a protective covering for the believer brings to mind Paul’s metaphor of the spiritual warfare between Christians and powers and principalities (Eph. 6:12-18). Kuma (2011:43) alludes to this point when she says the weapons for the spiritual battle are not bullets or guns. This statement is meant to say that her use of physical weapons for Jesus’s battle is figurative rather than literal. This view is an echo of David’s assertion that God “saves not with sword and spear” (1 Sam. 17:47). Here, David was talking about salvation from the enemy in the context of war. Indeed, God has provided the believer with both what is needed for attacking the enemy (weapon) and what is needed for protecting oneself from the attacks of the enemy (armor). In the Ephesian text, Paul, drawing from the Roman army, encourages the believer to be battle-ready at all times with his/her helmet

(salvation), belt (truth), sword (word of God), shield (faith), breastplate (righteousness), and his feet protected with the gospel of peace. The Christian is expected put on these military armors through holy life so that he/she does not fall prey to Satan. This is important because as Greathouse (2004:19) asserts “Christ’s victory is complete but not final.” Though Christ has won victory over evil forces, this victory will only be manifested fully during the *Parousia* when he arrives in his glory to glorify believers (Rom. 8:15-17; Cor. 15:22-28; Phil. 3:12-21). Until then “our sanctification has the character of spiritual warfare in which our victory over sin is assured as we permit Christ to live moment by moment in us (John 15:1-6; Eph. 6:10-15; Phil. 1:6) (Greathouse (2004:19)).

The Pauline thought about Christian warfare as well as Jesus’s encounters with demon-possessed and demon-afflicted people is in line with the Akan traditional belief about spiritual warfare. Paul’s thought about the Christian armor links well with Kuma’s (2011:6) reference to Jesus as wearing a *batakari* (smock) studded with the sun and the moon that “sparkle like the morning star.” Traditionally, the *batakari* is a type of dress worn by priest diviners and used as a war dress as well. The *batakari* used for religious and military purposes are usually studded with talismans as a means of protecting one from spells, incantations, bullets, arrows and other weapons. Kuma depicts Jesus as a Great Warrior who leads Christians into battle wearing his *batakarikεσεε* (great *batakari*). Studded with the sun and the moon, Jesus’s *batakari* offers the greatest and most perfect protection. Christians can therefore be rest assured that with Jesus around them no enemy (physical or spiritual) can come near them. With Jesus, the “Sergeant- Major of the Soldiers” and the “Victorious Chief of soldiers” (Kuma 2011:17) on every side of the believer, no power dares come near. The atonement therefore, equips the Christian to be an overcomer in spiritual warfare.

Kuma (2011:9) further advances her *Ahobammɔ* Christology by stating “You [Jesus] stand at the mouth of the big gun while your body absorbs the bullets aimed at your followers.” This line means that when Satan attacks, Jesus forms a spiritual bullet proof shield for his followers and therefore no follower of Jesus can be harmed by the schemes of Satan. This, however, is true only for those who continue to abide in Christ. Hence,

Kuma (2011:49) avows that Satan's attack against the believer is fruitless when "the people of Jesus" remain "in the midst of the mountains of Zion."

6.5.3.2 Protection by the atoning blood

In Akan Traditional Religion, blood is used for ritual purposes like protection, healing, initiation, and cleansing, among others. Aside the use of blood by diviners to protect their patients, blood is used to appease the gods when sins such as adultery, fornication, incest, and others are committed. Akan Christians (especially Pentecostals and Charismatics) import this idea into Christianity and hence consider the blood of Jesus as a potent weapon. Consequently, Akan Christians derive protection not only from the personality of Christ but also from his blood. Many Akan believers use the blood of Jesus as a "powerful weapon" with which they overcome the devil and life challenges. Baxter (2005:89-91) lists seven instances in which Jesus offered his blood: (a). when his sweat became like huge blood drops falling down the ground as he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44); (b). when he was struck in the face (Matt. 26:67); (c). when he was lashed (Matt. 27:26); (d). when the soldiers pierced his head with thorns (Matt. 27:29-30); (e). when his captors plucked out his beard (Isa. 50:6)¹⁹; (f). during the crucifixion (cf. Psa. 22:16); and (g). when he was pierced with a spear (John 19:34). Like the blood of Abel, Jesus's blood speaks; the former speaks retribution but the latter speaks "better things" (Heb. 12:24) such as mercy, pardon and reconciliation (Baxter 2005:93). Therefore, on the cross "mercy triumphs over judgement" (James 2:13).

According to Duncan-Williams (2012: blurb) Jesus's blood is "efficacious", "redeeming", "sanctifying", "cleansing", "justifying", "prevailing", "overcoming", and "triumphant." Christians make such declarations as "I cover myself and my family with the blood of Jesus", "I sanctify this food with the blood of Jesus", "I cover my properties (car, house and others) with the blood of Jesus." Oyedepo (2006:119) maintains that the person who wakes up in the morning and declares "I cover myself with the blood of Jesus" becomes "no trespass" territory to Satan because "[t]he blood is a devastating weapon against

¹⁹ The researcher finds this point only as an inference rather than something attested by the New Testament account of Christ.

Satan; he hasn't got an answer to it and never will." Hence, in the same way that the blood protected human beings from death in the Passover episode (Exod. 11—12), when the believer sprinkles his/her cars, houses, furniture, businesses, shops, and other possessions with the blood of Jesus, evil passes over them.

Aside these passive uses, the blood of Jesus is used actively as a fire-emitting substance capable of consuming evil spirits. To this end, the Akan say "*Yesu mogya nka w'anim*" (lit. "May Jesus's blood be on your face," that is, "I rebuke you with the blood of Jesus") as a way of suppressing and rebuking evil spirits. One may also declare, "*Mede Yesu mogya twam*" (lit. "I cancel it by the blood of Jesus") to reverse any demonic scheme(s) against the person and his/her family. This is important because of the common belief that every believer is constantly opposed by demonic plans which need to be cancelled to render them fruitless. The blood is also used to erase any negative thing that has been written concerning the believer's life. Accordingly, believers are encouraged to sprinkle the blood of Jesus in their homes to prevent evil spirits from entering. The belief is that the blood of Jesus flames like fire and hence prevents evil spirits from entering the house sprinkled with it.

Akan Christians songs depict the power in the blood of Jesus and its atoning significance. The following Akan chorus illustrates this point.

<i>Tumi wɔ</i> (2x)	There is power (2x)
<i>Tumi wɔ Jesus Ne mogya ne mu</i>	There is power in the blood of Jesus
<i>Ayaresa wɔ</i> (2x)	There is healing
<i>Ayaresa wɔ Jesus Ne mogya ne mu</i>	There is healing in the blood of Jesus
<i>Nkwa wɔ</i> (2x)	There is life (2x)
<i>Nkwa wɔ Jesus Ne mogya ne mu</i>	There is life in the blood of Jesus
<i>Mogya no mu o</i> (2x)	In the blood (2x)

Mogya no mu na tumi wə It is in the blood that power resides

Mogya no mu o (2x) In the blood (2x)

Mogya no mu na tumi wə It is in the blood that power resides

The Sotho of South Africa, who like the Akan and other Africans appreciate the religious significance of blood, accurately capture the significance of Jesus's blood in the following song.

Seteng sediba sa madi (Amen! Amen!) There is a well of blood (Amen! Amen!)

Aletareng ya tofelo lying next to the altar

Diba se e leng sehlare It has the power of healing

Matl'a sona ke bophelo the power that gives life

Baetsadibe ba batsho Sinners who were doomed

Ba se kenang ka tumelo their sins have been washed away

Ba tloha teng ka basweu by the blood and they are spotless

Ka thabo le ka tshwarelo with happiness and forgiveness

Bare amen Hallelujah They say Amen Hallelujah

Ho boraro bo teroneng The Trinity (three) in the altar

Ntate le mora le moya Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Ba bine ka ho sa feleng They that give new life

In these songs, one identifies the redeeming power in the blood of Jesus. From a background of Akan Traditional Religion where blood is used as means of purification from defilement, one could easily consider the blood of Jesus as possessing great power. Both songs stress (explicitly or implicitly) the human need for salvation, the saving power

of the blood of Jesus, the healing efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and finality of Jesus's sacrifice. The healing power of the blood needs further comments. Usually, people will say "I plead the blood of Jesus and claim my healing." With the present COVID-19 situation in the world, it is not uncommon to find people symbolically drinking the blood of Jesus at Christian prayer meetings to clear their system of any virus that might have infected them. The healing efficacy of the blood of Jesus is also seen in testimonies of people who claim to have been healed after participating in the Eucharist, the blood symbolized by the wine taken together with the wafer (which symbolizes Jesus's body).

The Sotho expression *Seteng sediba sa madi ... aletareng ya tofelo* ("There's a well of blood ... lying next to the altar") depicts the blood as a well, highlighting its abundance of the blood. Like a well that never gets dried up, Jesus's blood is always available for those who desire to be cleansed by it. The Sotho song underscores the point that the blood makes the repentant sinner spotless. The same line of the song alludes to the sacrificial death of Christ. He offered himself on the altar and, acting as the priest at the same time, obtained blood from the sacrificial victim to cleanse his people. At the same time, the song points to the fact that salvation is the work of the Triune God. The Akan expression *Mogya no mu na tumi wo* ("It is in the blood that power resides") emphatically states that there is no other source of power than in the blood of Jesus. By this expression, the Akan contends for the superiority of the blood of Jesus. The superiority of Christ's blood to the blood of animals and even other humans' blood is signified by the Akan reference to it as *Adehye mogya* ("royal blood"). The expression "*Adehye mogya*" also highlights Christ's royalty. As a royal, Jesus's blood is more efficacious and powerful than any other blood. For the Akan Christians (particularly Pentecostals and Charismatics), this is not a theoretical idea but a living reality.

The efficacy of the blood of Jesus is not only depicted in African Christian choruses and personal declarations, but also in themes for church programs and other African Christian documents, few of which are considered below.²⁰ Some of the themes the researcher came across include "Using the blood," "The blood and the cross conference," and "The

²⁰ The documents discussed here can be found in appendix I of this study.

blood is for our good” which was linked with Zechariah 9:11 which states, “As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit” (RSV). It must be noted, first of all, that the “blood” referred to in any of these themes is “the blood of Jesus.” The omission of the name “Jesus” in these themes underscores the fact that in African Christianity, “the blood of Jesus” has become so common that it is synonymous with “the blood.” These themes are able to attract huge crowds to these programs because in Akan/African Christianity, Jesus’s blood has many benefits. More so, the blood is connected to God’s covenant with his people, hence referred to as “the blood of [God’s] covenant” (cf. Zech. 9:11). The covenantal dimension of the blood is also important in African Christianity because, being part of God’s covenant people helps the Akan/African Christian to satisfy the quest to be part of the community (in this case, God’s community). The theme “Using the blood” emphasizes the role of the *Adehye mogya* of Jesus in the everyday life of the believer. The theme, “The blood and the cross conference”, stresses the inseparable connection between the blood of Jesus and the cross. This is important and resonates with the biblical data on atonement. The blood resulted from the event that took place on the cross. The theme “The blood is for our good” has to do with the many benefits the cross has achieved for Christians. It also gives the reason for which the Friday on which Jesus died is not described as “bad” but “good.” It is not a “Bad Friday” but a “Good Friday” because of the good benefits it has for humanity, the most important being salvation from the effect and penalty of sin.

Another theme reads “Not my head, not my blood service” and the words “Come and receive total deliverance from demonic operation that is haunting your life in Jesus’s Name” are added to encourage people to attend the program. This points clearly to the power in Jesus’s blood to overcome demonic powers. One church is named “The blood of Jesus family church,” probably with the belief that members of this church are covered by Jesus’s blood and hence are freed from all their existential challenges. Still, the study came across a sticker with the inscription “I am covered by the blood of Jesus.” The fact that people use such stickers to ward off evil spirits and to appropriate other benefits of the cross is not in doubt.

Having examined how African Christians make meaning of the blood which Jesus poured on the cross, the next section considers how the atonement of Jesus deals with the curse God placed on humanity after the Fall and the curse that people experience in life.

6.5.4 Atonement as reversal of curses (*Duadaneɛ* Christology)

For the African Church, another key aspect of atonement that needs emphasis is what this study refers to as *Duadaneɛ* Christology. The term *duadaneɛ* literally refers to the act of reversing curses. Therefore, the idea espoused in this section is that the atonement *dane* (“reverses”) *dua* (“curses”), an idea which serves as an antidote to Akan fear of curses which sometimes leads them to some unchristian practices. According to Ayarkwa (cited in Acheampong 2014:126) “a curse is a spiritual decree or law issued against an individual in order to prevent him/her or forbid him/her from doing what he/she could have naturally done.” A cursed person may experience failure, disappointment, chronic ailment, poverty, barrenness, habitual sins like drunkenness, robbery, among others.

Ancestral/generational curses are punishments extended from generation to generation due to an individuals’ sin within that group. Generational curses are closely connected to the communal worldview of life. An individual does not exist in isolation but exists together with others. Therefore, what an individual does has link with the entire family, society, nation or even yet-to-be-born persons to which he/she is connected. In the Akan society, most ancestral curses are the result of the connection that the forefathers had with some deities. For example, there are stories of some families whose forefathers sought wealth from a deity in exchange for the male children; therefore, males in such families usually die prematurely unless this covenant is broken through spiritual intervention.

Among the Akan, curses constitute a major hindrance to the enjoyment of a full life. In this sense, an atonement theology formulated for the Akan setting needs to deal not only with sin but also with curses that affect people. Akan/African Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals consider ancestors as “demonic doorways through which curses enter and operate through a family” (Ahaligah 2020:15). It is believed that one’s life can be influenced by the sins committed by his/her ancestors. Such a situation may cause financial problems, unsuccessful business ventures, and sickness such as recurrent

miscarriages, chronic and hereditary diseases such as high blood pressure, hepatitis, diabetes, among others. The ancestral/generational curse needs to be broken for an individual, the family, and even for the nation to have progress. Gifford (2004:161) quotes a Ghanaian Charismatic leader Pastor Robert Ampiah-Kwofi as saying that “our...ancestry and culture were steeped in idolatry and heathenism.’ These curses are causing Ghana’s evils and must be broken.” This quote stresses Pastor Ampiah-Kwofi’s understanding of ancestral curses as affecting not only individuals but nations as well.

Curses can be found in the Bible. The covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel was framed in such a way that Israel would enjoy blessings upon obedience to God’s laws and be cursed if they failed to obey God (Deut. 11:26-28; 27:28). In the biblical context, a curse could be regarded as an event or utterance that has adverse effect on the communal balance or an individual. In both ancient Israel and the Akan society, curses can be invoked upon oneself or another. Evidence for generational curses is not lacking in the Bible. The story in the Old Testament that makes King Manasseh responsible for Israel’s suffering in exile (2 Kings 21) and Eli’s descendants who were punished for Eli’s own blunders (1 Sam. 2:27-33) are echoes of generational punishment (or curses).

The biblical account of how Jesus dealt with human curse through his death is significant in this regard. From the biblical perspective, humans were cursed as a result of sin. In addition, God cursed the ground, making it difficult for humans to get their livelihood. The effect that Adam’s sin had on the human race shows that the curse that resulted from the Fall is trans-generational. Christ, as the Second Adam, has reversed all the consequences of the sin of the First Adam through perfect obedience to God in life and ultimately in his death on the cross (Rom. 5). In Galatians (3:10, 13), Paul links Christ’s atonement to a curse. He begins by saying that “those who rely on the law for righteousness are under a curse because all who fail to obey all the Laws recorded in the Book of Law are cursed” (NIV). Paul’s assertion is true because no one can obey all that is written in the Book of Laws and so be put right before God. Therefore, an attempt to secure righteousness through obedience to the Law places a curse on the worshipper. He goes on to say that Christ’s sacrificial death has redeemed (*ἐμμεγόξαζελ*) believers from this curse of the law by becoming a curse for humanity. The word redeem signifies

freedom, and liberation from the curse of the Law and its slavery (Falconer 2013:149). Robertson (2014:631) argues that “we were under the curse; Christ took the curse on himself and thus over us (between the suspended curse and us) and thus rescued us out from under the curse. We went free while he was considered accursed.”

Christ’s removal of the curse that came as a result of sin has implications on curses placed on Christians by other people. It seems from the biblical context that when God blesses someone no one can curse. In Numbers 22—23 Balaam is presented as one with a very high reputation, and as one with the power to bless or curse. Yet, when hired to curse Israel, Balaam was unable to do so. God prohibited him from cursing them, saying, “You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed” (Num. 22:12 ESV). That Balaam could curse other nations is underlined by the assertion of the king of Moab that “for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed” (Num. 22:6 ESV). It seems safe to conclude from the story that Balaam’s ability to curse or bless was effective for the other nations but for Israel it was restricted to only blessings. Therefore, Balaam acknowledged that he could not curse Israel because God had already blessed them (Num. 23:20). Also, God’s blessing upon Noah and his children (Gen. 9:1) made it impossible for Noah to curse Ham who misbehaved and so he (Noah) cursed Canaan, Ham’s yet-to-be-born son (Gen. 9:22-26). God himself can however revoke his blessing and curse as one finds in the story of Adam and Eve (cf. Gen. 1:28 cf. 3:17). When God curses, only he (God) can remove the curse. Therefore, Christ’s divinity is an important factor that made him capable of reversing God’s curse on humanity. One could reason that if God’s own curse on humanity (due to the Fall) has been taken care of through Christ’s sacrifice then it stands to reason that generational curses inflicted upon people through demonic activities has been nullified by Christ through his death.

To conclude this discussion, it must be noted that though Christ has dealt with the curse against humanity, unbelievers can still be affected by the devil’s curse. In the case of Balaam, it was realized that his power to curse was only restricted in the case of the believer, not the unbeliever. Christians are advised to renounce their past evil activities and to cut any connections they might have had with evil powers. Christians who also

continue to have connections with evil powers can be affected by curses. This is so because a curse becomes effective only when it is backed by a just cause (Prov. 26:2). Therefore, a curse against someone because the person has converted to Christianity, for example, has no just cause and hence cannot be effective. Finally, since human words can build or destroy (Prov. 12:18), Christians should be careful not to utter words of doom. Christians must bless, and not curse.

6.5.5 Atonement as prosperity (*Yiedie* Christology)

The economic situation of many African countries is bad. Attention can be drawn to many societies that show evidence of internal displacement and refugees situations characterized by abject poverty. Economic issues such as poverty, high inflation, high budget deficit, increased fuel prices, lack of social amenities, lack of accommodation, frequent labor unrests and high unemployment rate are not new to the African. Aderonmu (2010:201) makes this point when he writes: In the Akan society and most African communities, poverty manifests itself in “bad roads, women and children walking barefooted and trekking long distances to get water and firewood, pupils studying under trees, dilapidated and ill-equipped health centers and scores of [other] poverty-driven problems.” No one in Africa is completely unaffected by poverty, economic inequality, deprivation, and the misery that characterizes the continent. In Ghana and other parts of Africa, some churches have responded to the economic woes of their members through the distribution of lottery numbers and the distribution of miraculous money into people’s accounts for which they (the beneficiaries) cannot account for, among others. Some African youth find solutions to their plight in ritual money and internet fraud (referred to by Ghanaians as *sakawa*).

The economic relief that the atonement brings is also evident in Isaiah 53:5 where the suffering of YHWH’s servant (identified in the New Testament as Jesus) is said to have brought peace (Heb. Shalom) which embraces not only the enjoyment of good health and longevity but also material prosperity. According to Christ, after seeking first the Kingdom of heaven and God’s righteousness, God will take care of the needs of the believer, which

(the researcher believes) includes financial need (Matt. 6:33). In his ministry, Jesus showed concerns for the economic life of many people.

Here, Akan believers are to be rest assured that Jesus has provided for their economic needs through his atonement. Kuma (2011:37) espouses the *Yiedie* Christology when she refers to Jesus as *Kwaεε Kεσεε* (big forest) “which gives us tasty foods.” In agricultural settings like Kuma’s, the forest is the source of livelihood—it is the place where water, food, game and medicine are found for human survival. The abundance of Jesus’s supply is highlighted by the adjective *Kεσεε* (“big”); being a big forest, where one can find every basic life necessity in Jesus. Therefore, Kuma is suggesting that Jesus has made economic provisions for those who abide in him to ensure their wellbeing. Kuma describes the food that Jesus supplies as “tasty”, meaning Jesus is the supplier of perfect gifts. In addition, Kuma’s metaphor of the thick forest portrays Jesus as providing shade to ease the burning effects of a hot mid-day sun. The economic aspect of life may be compared to a scorching sun especially in Ghana and other parts of the world where poverty looms large and where Christ’s provision is the antidote to human economic woes. In addition, Jesus is extremely generous in his provision. This fact is underlined by Kuma’s (2011:10) reference to him as *Ɔɔkɔtobonnuare*, “the hard-working Farmer, who gives food to the carefree in the morning.” Again, Jesus is described as the weaver who supplies people with clothing, not just any cloth but *adwinasa* (Kuma 2011:10). *Adwinasa* is one of the most expensive and highly ranked Akan clothes, therefore if that is what Jesus supplies then his supplies are the best for human need.

Kuma (2011:30) pictures Jesus as “The Chief of Christians whose shade-tree grows money.” In Ghana, workers consider the day when salaries are paid as “rainy days,” the day that money will fall like rain. Jesus does not rain money occasionally; he actually provides money in a similar way that a tree provides fruits. Kuma’s point therefore is that Jesus changes the economic situations of his followers. “The Sea, which gives us fat fish” (Kuma 2011:31), Jesus takes care of the feeding needs of his people. That Christ is rich is depicted by these lines “What kind of rich man is this, that when you are with him, he spends seven hundred pounds on you!” (Kuma 2011:44). Christ is the “the Moon of

the harvest month which gives us our food” and the one upon whom prisoners depend on just as the tongue depends upon the mouth (Kuma 2011:12).

From the foregoing discussions, the economic dimension of the atonement is not in doubt. Through the atonement, Christ has secured economic upliftment for Christians. Yet, one must guard against over emphasizing on material salvation. Though material blessing is important, one needs to note that economic benefit is not the primary aim for the death of Christ. Again, though beauty, power, influence, prosperity, fame, glory and success may be part of the Christian experience, these are not the ultimate reason for which Christ died on the cross. On the cross, God demonstrated how divine weakness, shame and powerlessness can be turned into a success story. The cross demonstrates that what is important in human life is to seek and live in accordance with God’s will and purpose. The passion was a means to Jesus’s exaltation/glorification; in the same way it may be God’s purpose for an individual to suffer for a later glorification. Therefore, Christianity in Akan must not portray material wealth as the right of Christians but as a privilege and as something without which one can still live and please God. Again, it must be noted that not every Christian will be rich in the material sense. Therefore, Christians must avoid being blinded by material wealth.

6.5.6 Atonement as healing and deliverance (*Ayaresa-ne-ahofadie* Christology)

The Akan concept of salvation (as noted in section 5.7) includes the enjoyment of good health. Therefore, the Akan Christian expects the salvific relevance of the atonement to include good health. The Akan expects Jesus who is a priest of the metaphysical realm to be a healer because in Akan cosmology, it is believed that healing power comes from the metaphysical realm. Usually, people refer to chronic diseases as *sunsum yareε* (spiritual diseases) which need spiritual remedy. Healing goes with deliverance because of the belief that sickness may be caused by evil forces.

The term “deliverance” is understood as a rescue operation for a person who is under the dominion of Satan and his host of demons. Healing has to do with restoring one’s health while deliverance deals with freeing one from the bondage of sin, Satan and illness. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:165) argues that “healing and deliverance” are inseparable. He

defines them collectively as the use of spiritual weapons “to provide release for demon-possessed, demon-oppressed, broken, disturbed and troubled persons, in order that victims may be restored to ‘proper functioning order’” so that “they may enjoy God’s fullness of life understood to be available in Christ.”

That Jesus is healer is not new to the New Testament in which stories of Jesus fighting Satan and casting out evil spirits abound. Healing and deliverance were a key aspect of Jesus’s life and ministry. The African view that diseases may be caused by evil spirits is not new in Christian theology. The New Testament, for example, shows that demons can afflict people with diseases such as dumbness (Mark 9:17), deafness and dumbness (Mark 9:25), convulsions (Mark 1:26; 9:20; Luke 9:39), blindness and deafness (Matt. 12:22), and lameness (Acts 8:7), among others. There is also a connection between mental instability, disease and demonic activities (Luke 13:11, 16). That demons also oppose believers’ spiritual progress is also hinted in Ephesians 6:12. Yet, it is not every spiritual retrogression or physical illness that is associated with demonic activities. The Fall of humanity and the subsequent curse (discussed in section 3.2.2) has created the need for redemption for every creation at Christ’s return (Rom. 8:22-23). Therefore, it is theologically unsound to attribute every sickness to some demonic possession or activities.

Nonetheless, Christ’s death on the cross has taken care of the believer’s health needs. The exegesis of Isaiah 53:4-5 brought to the fore the health dimension of the mission of the servant of YHWH. The servant suffering, depicted by three words, strike, smite and afflict, all had the purpose of leading to human healing. The study discovered that though this healing is primarily spiritual, it also has a physical dimension as well. Specifically, the verse says “by his stripes we are healed.” This means that as he was scourged, his physical wounds were meant to achieve both spiritual and physical healing. The servant of YHWH is identified in the New Testament as Jesus Christ and so Jesus’s suffering on the cross achieves healing for believers.

One Ghanaian Pentecostal leader, Apostle Paul Owusu Tabiri (2004:24), categorizes people into three groups: Those who have never had anything to do with occultism or

idolatry, those who have been involved in satanic activities, and those who have backslidden and are now infested by demons. He opines that the last two categories need deliverance while the first may or may not need it. During deliverance or “Breaking”, deliverance workers “gather all offensive weapons to attack and to destroy the devil’s plans, strategies and powers in the name of Jesus” (Tabiri 2004:31). Deliverance, in Tabiri’s (2004:19) view is important at least for the practical reason that many believers are persistently confronted with demonic influences in their lives. He identifies three opinions concerning deliverance (Tabiri 2004:21-24). The first view is that the Church’s task is to preach the gospel and leave issues of deliverance to the believer to decide; the second view equates deliverance to salvation and argues that genetic weaknesses and character traits may be the cause of the problems which people usually associate with demonic influences; the third notion is that deliverance is needed for those who are demon possessed even after receiving Christ. His opinion is that people need to be delivered if tormented by evil spirits and that the only valid way to overcome the devil is to live a life of holiness. Again, there is the need to deliver people so that they would be freed from the influences of demonic forces they associated with in the past. Chigbundu (2007:44) sharing this view and connecting deliverance to Israel’s Exodus, notes that deliverance is “cutting the link between the past and the present so that you can move to the next level of your life. It is removing the Egyptian seed that has followed us from Egypt so that we can enter Canaan and enjoy the milk and honey in the land.” The need for deliverance from satanic influences rest on the fact that though Christ has won victory, the devil still has power over those who give him the chance to influence them.

In other parts of the world, believers may not expect religion to provide them with health needs. The sick would rush to the hospital to seek medical attention. The situation however, is different in Africa. Based on the worldview that every sickness has a spiritual antecedent, African Christians seek spiritual intervention for their health challenges. It is believed that among humans, there are people who use the spirit force for evil purposes. They include the *akaberekyerefoɔ* and *adutofoɔ* (charmers, enchanters and sorcerers) and *abayifoɔ* (witches and wizards). These forces work against humans and hence prevent them from enjoying abundant life, or fulfilling their *nkrabea* (destiny). Therefore,

instead of following one's destiny, a person who is influenced by the activities of these maleficent forces wanders around in life and finally becomes useless.

It was noted that in Akan Traditional Religions, the health needs of the worshipper is catered for by the priest or the medicine man. In the thought of the Akan Christian, Christ takes the place of the traditional priest and must therefore be able to meet the health needs of the worshippers. As *Oduyefo*, Christ is not just like the traditional medical practitioner but the real source of all true healing. Kuma (2011:17) alludes to Christ's healing ability when she refers to him as "Doctor of the sick." The following composition illustrates how the Akan understanding of Jesus as healer is reflected in songs (*Abibindwom*, Akan/African sacred lyrics).

Oduyefo kɛse, fa wo nsa bɛto mo do. Bɛsa me yare ma me na menya ahooɔzen dze asom wo oo. Yare nketse nketse rehaw me wo sunsum mu; nsem nketse nketse rehaw me wo sunsum mu. Mekyinkyin, ekyinkyin, ekyinkyin mennya ano edur koraa, Egya ee! Besa me yare ma me, na menya ahooɔzen na m'asom wo oo.

The English translation of the above song is as found below.

Great Healer, come and touch me. Heal my ailments that my strength may be renewed for your service. Lord, I am deeply troubled, deeply troubled by spiritual sicknesses, anxieties and worries. I have been to many places for healing, but none has been of help. Come, Lord, release me from these spiritual ailments and troubles; that I may enjoy the health, strength and vitality needed to serve you.

Kuma (2011:34) depicts Jesus's healing power in the following quote: "Jesus is the one who fills his basket with sicknesses, and dumps it into the depths of the sea. He has been here already and taken sicknesses away. He stands on the sea with outstretched arms, while the devil walks the forest in agony." Kuma's point is that on the cross, all sicknesses

were gathered and poured on Christ who, by his death, provides healing for his believers. Jesus therefore takes the place of the Akan medicine man. Pobee (1979:93) considers the traditional healer as one who consecrates him/herself for a period to be used by a supreme power to effect healing. Jesus on the other hand, is perpetually sinless and “‘ensouled’ with God so much that the divine power” he uses is “like a continuously flowing electric power in him, unlike the traditional healer, who has the occasional experience of it” (Pobee 1979:93). This unique experience of Jesus has no parallel in Akan religious history. The healing dimension of the atonement may be the most effective way of presenting Jesus to the Akan community.

The need for developing the deliverance ministry in Akan Christianity is attested by the foregoing discussions. The church must take the issue of spiritual forces seriously and use the resources God has provided to overcome these forces. It is important however to check abuses that usually characterize the healing and deliverance ministry in contemporary Christianity. The commodification (or commercialization) of the gospel message and infringement upon human rights all in the name of religion must be avoided. The deliverance ministry must be handled by matured Christians who live in accordance to Jesus’s commands.

The discussions so far underline the fact that salvation is holistic and thus applies to every aspect of life. The Christian life should therefore not be restricted to the “spiritual” aspect alone but must also touch on physical and emotional issues as well. With this foundation, the study now moves on to draw some implications of the Akan theology of atonement for the Christian community in Africa.

6.6 Implications for African Christian religiosity

According to Bediako (1996:109) the transmission of the Christian faith into a given culture must be done in such a way as to make the gospel an integral part of the life of the people who then in reciprocation become even more practical in the Christian living. That is to say, a contextual expression of the gospel must lead to practical Christianity. Therefore, having examined various aspects of Akan Christian theology of atonement in the preceding sections, the study now proceeds to deduce some practical implications of

the entire study for African religious beliefs and practices. It must be noted that even though the study used the Akan context as reference, most of the issues discussed and the implications explored in this section are applicable to other parts of Ghana and Africa as well because of the shared worldview between the Akan and most parts of the African continent.

6.6.1 Salvation and works

The life of Jesus Christ is the basis for Christianity and the Christian life. The Christian life begins immediately one accepts Christ as personal Savior and Lord. Salvation is made possible because of the atonement. Though, freely given by grace (Eph. 2:8-10), the repentant sinner has to express faith in Christ's salvific work in order to be saved. It is important to note that the atoning sacrifice alone is the basis for salvation; no works are attached to it. Unfortunately, the history of the Christian church has records of some Christians who demand works as a requirement for salvation. A biblical example that comes to mind is that of the Colossian church (Col. 2:8-23). This church had made circumcision (vv. 11-14), association with defunct principalities and powers (vv. 15), observance of dietary laws, New Moon festivals and Sabbaths (vv. 16-17), voluntary humility and the worship of angels (v. 18), and ascetic lifestyle (touch not, taste not; vv. 19-23) as spiritual supplements needed to make one's salvation complete.

The triumph of Christ dethroned the Law and delivered humanity from its dominion. The study has argued strongly for the adequacy of Christ's atonement and has maintained that observance of the Mosaic Law does not make one righteous before God (Rom. 3:21-25). The righteousness of Christ which is imputed on the repentant sinner comes apart from the Law. In addition, it has been found that Christ's once-for-all atoning sacrifice alone is capable of saving humanity. Therefore, the contemporary church must desist from work-based salvation theology. There are contemporary preachers who consider the payment of tithe as contributing to one's salvation. Adeboye (2003:44), for instance, asserts, "Anybody who is not paying his/her tithe is not going to heaven. Some people have taught you that if you do not pay your tithes, God will not give you blessings. This is true, but a little more serious, you do not pay your tithes, and you do not go to heaven."

With such a theology people can go on sinning and still have hope of salvation as long as they are able to pay their tithes. This is a key reason why Atiemo (2016:7) has observed an increase in sin despite an unprecedented rise in Pentecostal and Charismatic revival activities in Ghana. The study considers work-based-salvation theology not only as theologically unsound but also as culturally unacceptable.

There are also many evangelists in the streets of many African societies whose messages place works in between the sinner and Christ. They preach sanctification to the unbeliever who has no ability to live godly life, because they (unbelievers) are not Spirit-filled. These evangelists end up ignorantly pushing sinners farther away from Christ. Christian denominations (such as the Seventh Day Adventist Church) which require Sabbath observance, abstinence from certain food, among others, as a requirement for salvation also makes Christ's death inefficacious to save humanity from sin.

In view of this, the study demands a holistic reassessment of the doctrinal positions of the various Christian denominations in the light of Christ's salvific work to know which part needs to be discarded, replaced or modified. Since, salvation is a gracious gift from God, it is important that Christians avoid considering themselves as worthy of their salvation. In other words, no believer should consider himself/herself as having being saved because he/she is better than the unbeliever. It is just by grace that one is saved, not by merit. Good works must however be evident in the believer's life because the faith that saves produces good works through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

6.6.2 The Christian and sin

Christ poured out his blood not only "for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28) but also as a means of liberating humanity from the power of sin. Therefore, sinful desires and deeds must no longer have control over the life of the Christian. The Christian life must be one which is marked by holiness because sin has no dominion over the believer. The salvation that the atonement brings has three stages, namely, the past (salvation from the penalty of sin), the present (salvation from the power of sin) and the future (salvation from the

presence of sin).²¹ The first stage occurs at the instance one accepts Christ as Savior and personal Lord while the last stage will be realized in the Parousia when the believer is glorified. The period between one's acceptance of Christ and death (or the Parousia, if one is alive at the time Christ returns) must be characterized by the believer's control over the power of sin. This corresponds to the Christian doctrine of sanctification, the process of becoming holy. Sanctification is a gradual process aimed at ensuring that believers will mature in faith. One is expected to show consistent growth in this process. The point is that the atonement empowers the believer to overcome sin by providing him/her with a new ability to live in accordance with God's will and purpose. Salvation results in some form of ethical rigor that has no place for moral relativism and permissiveness.

Sin itself has no power over the Christian in whom Christ lives (1 John 4.4; 5.4, 18). This is what Paul alludes to when he says that the rule of sin is broken in the life of the believer (Rom. 8:1-11). The freedom that the atonement brings must be evident in Christian living. The ransom paid on the cross must liberate every Christian from inner desires of the fleshly nature including hypocrisy, sexual immorality, covetousness, witchcraft, drunkenness, backbiting, and the like. For this to be achieved one has to win over the devil in the mental field because the believer's battle is a battle of the mind; that is, a battle which takes place in the mind. Commitment to Christ and personal determination are required to win this battle. Once one is living a holy life, God's covering is already available and so there is no need to resort to any imprecation which is both unbiblical and ineffective.

The Church must therefore make disciples who live victoriously over sin. Instead to boasting about numbers. The church must advance the Kingdom of God through a holy minority rather move on with a compromised majority. That is to say, the church should be more interested the quality of the life of its members rather than their numbers. This can be achieved by developing and promoting biblical principles regarding the life of the disciple. This study offers a useful resource in this regard.

²¹ It is not possible to categorize these three aspects of salvation into neat straight-jackets because they tend to overlap. Therefore, these categories are for the purpose of this study.

6.6.3 Social relations

In Akan/African cosmology, where the peaceful, prosperous, and successful human existence relates closely with the relationship that exists between humans and the benevolent spirits, a suitable model of atonement is expected to promote the love for one another, resulting in a peaceful co-existence. The atonement is therefore expected to bring believers into full union and harmony with the entire human society. The reconciliatory effect of the atonement is not only meant for the divine-human relationship but also for the human-human and human-environment relationship. Christ died so that the believing community would be reconciled to one another. Therefore, the atonement will be meaningless if one's vertical relationship with God does not inform his/her horizontal relationship with other humans and the environment. Christians must remove enmity that sometimes characterize their lives. Imitating Christ, Christians must exhibit agape love toward one another.

The atonement dethroned all divisions, whether between slaves and masters, Jews and Gentiles, whites and blacks, men and women, circumcised and uncircumcised, and so on. The issue of tribalism and ethnocentrism is crucial in Africa where people value their ethnicity so much that they find it difficult to associate themselves with other groups. Tribalism makes people fight about their traditions and interests which eventually leads to ethnic wars, underdevelopment, loss of lives and properties. Ethnocentrism makes people treat those of other tribes unfairly. The atonement negates all these negative ideologies, and perceptions.

Denominationalism that leads to division is also not acceptable because it does not promote the unity that Christ's death intends to bring. The New Testament concept of salvation eventually results in the formation of the ecclesia, the church or the body of Christ. The universal Church is neither built out of a particular race nor made of people of one denomination. Christians must not allow denominational affiliations to weaken the bond between them.

The Christian community must oppose any form of excessive individualism. The command to love God and neighbor seems to support the need for communal significance

of the atonement. It is for the purpose of restoring harmony with God and hence avoiding death and other consequences of sin that atonement becomes important in both Christianity and African primal religion. All people must converge at the cross as one people who have been saved and yet depend on Christ and his works for the completion of their salvation. The African communal worldview is a relevant tool that can enhance the required togetherness, interdependence, solidarity, among all people. Sharing and interdependence whereby people with abundant resources share with those who have less is very important in Africa where people's survival is the responsibility of the entire community. Promoting this African value will go a long way to reduce the poverty situation in Africa, so that at the end, no one will have too much while others have too little.

6.6.4 Priesthood of all believers

Christ's atonement makes possible the priesthood of all believers. This means that every member of the Christian Church shares in Christ's priestly status and so there are no special class of people to mediate the knowledge, presence, and forgiveness of Christ to the rest of the believing community. In the Old Covenant era, the Levitical priests were the people who could approach God on behalf of the Israelites. Even in that case, they could only go into the Holy of Holies once a year. However, the atonement replaced this priesthood with Christ's own priesthood. He is the sole mediator between God and humanity in the New Covenant era. On the basis of his atonement, every believer has a direct access to God. Christ's death led to the division of the veil that separated the people from the Holy of Holies, thus giving everyone a direct access to God. Every believer is therefore expected to approach God directly. This fact does not invalidate the privilege that the Church gives to certain people to play certain roles such as the administration of baptism, the administration of Eucharist and so on.

It is rather unfortunate that in contemporary African Christianity, there are some churches that are patterned against the Old Testament way of ministry. Such churches, including True Faith Church (Ghana) and many other (spiritual) Churches, which still consider their ministers as mediating between the congregants and God. Therefore, the minister is the one who seeks forgiveness for the members. Other churches, mostly Pentecostal and

Charismatic churches, are not like the spiritual churches in this regard. However, in these churches the founders are so much projected that they tend to relegate the relevance of Christ to the background. Large billboards with photos of church leaders and many social media advertisements about founders of various African churches testify to this observation.

The implication of the study in this regard is that the church should be Christocentric (Christ-centered). Christ must increase, while all others decrease. The reason is that the Church is founded on who Christ is and what Christ has done. Ministers are just workers in Christ's vineyard. Therefore, it is not legitimate to promote anyone except Christ, who alone is the owner and head of the church.

6.6.5 The Christian and suffering

The Christian may suffer persecution. One's salvation does not insulate him/her from trials and tribulations. Neither is salvation an immunity from sickness or physical and emotional needs. Persecution and suffering are among the most prominent challenges facing the Church in the 21st century. Christians persecuted for their faith is common in the news. The fact of suffering in the life of the believer is evident in "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:8-10). Paul had health problems (2 Cor. 6:4-10), experienced hunger, poverty, and physical hardship (2 Cor. 6:4-10). It is true that the Christian is promised victory; however, it is wrong to think that all earthly challenges are removed because of one's salvation. Full salvation from sin, poverty and suffering (among others) will only come when Jesus returns (1 Thess. 3:13; Heb. 9:28; 12:23; 1 John 3:2). This does not however mean that the cross is an endorsement to suffering imposed on others. The point rather is that though the cross does not legitimize unjust and dehumanizing structures that impose sufferings on Christians, it assures the oppressed that victory comes after the struggles.

The message of the cross is very relevant in encouraging disciples of Christ to persevere and endure whatever hardship comes their way. The get-rich attitude that make people

involve themselves in performing rituals for money (known in Ghana as *sakawa*), soccer betting and lottery, as well as the pastoral practice of giving so-called instant money to church members as a means of solving their financial problems must be discouraged because such means of acquiring wealth are unbiblical in that they all breed greed and materialism which the Bible frowns upon. The exaltation that followed Christ's suffering (cf. Phil. 2:5-11) gives hope to believers that if they suffer for the sake of Christ, they will have some treasures stored up in heaven for them. Therefore, in the face of verbal persecution, economic hardship, social persecutions and martyrdom, the disciple is encouraged to be resilient and to rejoice because he/she has a share in God's estate.

6.6.6 The Christian and prayer

The atonement has implications for the prayer life of the believer. First, the believer's prayer must be made in accordance to the will of God. Even though at a point in Jesus's life, he wished they he avoided his suffering, he prayed that the will of God be done in his life. Therefore, the believer must be note that prayer may not give the solution to all human problems. As long as the believer continues living in the present world, some problems may persist forever. Total redemption from sufferings and problems will only be actualized in the world to come. Contemporary pastors should desist from the problem-solving approach to ministry which tend to over-emphasize solving life problems at the expense of making true disciples of resilient faith. The true believer must always seek God's will and live in accordance to it no matter the cost.

Concerning the use of imprecatory prayers by many African Christians as means of eliminating forces (people) who are perceived as hindrances to the socio-economic progress of believers, it must be said that vengeance is the Lord's, not humans (Deut. 32:35). The atonement seeks to reconcile rather than to create enmity. All cases of perceived spiritual hindrances should be referred to God who alone is the right and just Avenger. Christ exhorts his followers to pray for and bless their enemies and not to curse them instead (Matt. 5:43-45).

Prayer alone is not enough; Christians must take practical steps to solving problems after they have prayed. Here, one may use environmental care as an example. In many parts

of Africa, floods are a common phenomenon because people have built houses in spaces designated as drainage for the society. Instead of tackling the problem from the root cause, people keep on praying for God's intervention. Such a behavior is not true spirituality. To be sure, the atonement has to do with environmental ethics. The study has espoused how God cursed his own creation as a result of human disobedience to him. This curse included a curse on the environment as well. The good news is that atonement has reversed this curse and promises a total redemption in the Parousia. This means that the atonement must also have some impact on the ecology. Christians are therefore expected to be agents for maintaining the environment. Caring for and preserving the environment should be characterized by stewardship of the creation order.

6.7 Implications for Akan translation of selected atonement-related terms

The Bible is the first and final (though not the only) authority for theological and ethical formulations. For the Akan community, the Akan mother-tongue Bible is the primary Scripture for preaching, bible studies, teachings, among others. This makes it imperative to briefly consider how this study should inform Akan translation of key atonement-related terms in order to enhance the Akan understanding of atonement. Only terminologies that appeared in the passages considered in chapters three and four of this study are considered here. From the exegetical analysis it can be argued that the Akan mother-tongue translation of *shalom* (in Isa. 53:5) needs reconsideration. The exegesis made it clear that *shalom* embraces the enjoyment of good health (Psa. 38:3), longevity (Gen. 15:15), material wealth (Psa. 37:11), harmonious relationship with God, family (Gen. 13:8), nation (2 Sam. 17:3) and environment. The word *asomdwoe* ("peace") which translates "shalom" in Akan Bibles fails to capture the multifaceted dimensions of *shalom*. The word *nkwahosan* is proposed as this term goes beyond peace to embraces longevity, wealth, happiness, and others. In the same verse, the Akan translation of *אָרָץ* as *ayaresa*²² (physical healing, medical treatment in Isaiah 53:5) fails to capture the primary meaning of *אָרָץ* in this context, namely, healing from sin ("spiritual healing"). It was noted that physical healing may result from the spiritual healing. However, the use of *ayaresa* places

²² The present Asante Twi translation is "wode asa yen yadee" which amounts to "ayaresa."

an emphasis on physical healing without giving any hint of spiritual healing which is the main point in the text.

In Romans 3:25 the study argued that *ἱλαστήριον* means “expiation” and this must be translated as *afɔdeɛ de popaa boɔne* instead of *mpatadeɛ*. The last term is *ἀρχιερεὺς* (“high priest”) which the researcher after a lengthy discussion in section 6.4.2 proposes *Ntamgyinafokann* (“true Mediator”). By reconsidering the Akan translation of these and other atonement-related biblical terminologies, Christianity will be enhanced not only in the Akan community but also in other parts of Ghana and Africa at large.

6.8 Conclusion

The crux of contextual theology is that every culture is relevant in God’s salvific plan. Though not every cultural element is biblical, every culture has some aspects which can facilitate the propagation of the gospel. It was on this basis that this chapter attempted to formulate a theology of atonement from an Akan perspective based on Scripture, Church tradition and the Akan worldview. The interactions with Afua Kuma’s work facilitated the inclusion of African primal thoughts and also ensured that the formulated theology touched on everyday African realities.

The study has shown how similar the African and biblical ways of expressing atonement are. The ineffectiveness of African traditional sacrifices was established not only on the basis of them belonging to inferior traditions but also on the basis that they fail to preserve inward freedom from sin or openness to God. These sacrifices in no way relieved the sinner from guilty conscience; neither did they provide eternal cleansing from the defilement that was incurred in the life of the sinner. Therefore, these sacrifices can at best be considered as preparatory grounds for understanding the beneficent sacrifice provided by Christ which alone is complete, perfect, final and has the efficacy of purifying humanity morally and spiritually. This leads to the psychological benefit, namely, through the atonement, human beings now have a clear conscience from sin, in Christ, and know God’s law from their hearts. The sacrifice was made symbolically in the presence of God in a heavenly sanctuary. It is non-repetitious and its effects extend to the past, present and future sins.

It is also important to note that a biblically sound and culturally relevant atonement theology for the Akan must maintain a balance between this and the other worlds. An over emphasis on one of these aspects of salvation results in a distorted view. Therefore, while it is true that the atonement provides healing, economic upliftment, empowerment and other this-worldly benefits, the believer should not set his/her mind on this world but on the world to come. This fact must guide theological formulation of the Church in Africa, especially churches of Pentecostal and Charismatic persuasions, which have a high tendency of over-emphasizing the benefits of the atonement in this world.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of research findings

The overriding purpose of this research was to formulate a contextual theology for the Akan community of Ghana based on historical, biblical and Akan primal backgrounds of atonement. After the general introduction in chapter one, the study proceeded to examine various theories of atonement (including but not limited to the recapitulation theory, the ransom theory, the satisfaction theory, moral influence theory, the penal substitution theory, the moral governmental theory and the *Christus Victor* motif). In addition to the fact that each theory contributes to the holistic understanding of the atonement, the study also found that most of the errors found in the various atonement theories are mainly the result of undue emphasis upon one of the essential elements over the others. There is therefore the need to maintain a balance between the various elements of atonement if one's formulation is to be biblically grounded.

Chapters three and four examined the concept of sin and atonement in the context of the Bible. The study found that sin has a multifaceted nature including, transgression, crookedness, missing the right mark and hitting the wrong one and so on. The Old Testament passages that were examined showed that God provided a sacrificial system by which sin was dealt with temporarily until the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. The New Testament perspective of the atonement gave a complete picture of what was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. The once-for-all and perfect sacrifice of Christ that brings about complete atonement (by providing propitiation, expiation, redemption, justification and reconciliation) was espoused in chapter four.

Focusing on the Akan/African background of atonement, chapter five showed key areas of the continuity and discontinuity between the biblical and Akan concepts of atonement. Both concepts of atonement involve substitutionary sacrifices with the aim of averting an adverse consequence of sin. The multi-dimensional nature of sin from the African

perspective was noted. The communal dimension of sin from African primal imaginations distinguished the African concept of sin from the Western view.

The study reached its climax in chapter six where it formulated a theology of atonement from an Akan perspective. The Akan concept of Christ and his atoning sacrifice pointed out how the African worldview could be used to appreciate theological themes like incarnation, hypostatic union, Christ's priestly office and others. The ultimate sacrifice of Christ, however, was found to supersede all Akan sacrifices in scope, approach and effect. In addition to serving as a remedy to sin, the study found that Christ's atonement has implications on the spiritual warfare, social, economic and political life of the believer. It reverses curses on humanity and serves as spiritual protection against evil forces. For Akan security needs, it was found that Christ has power over all demonic forces in both the physical and spiritual realm. Christians can therefore trust Jesus for protection, wealth, peace, power, fame and longevity, among others. The relevance of Christ's atonement is holistic, touching on spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. This means that elevating one view of atonement over others is unacceptable within the Akan socio-religious setting.

Based on the Akan Christian theology of atonement formulated, the study went ahead to deduce some practical implications for African Christianity. Here, the study focused on sin, suffering, prayer, Christian ministry, and others and outlined some implications as follows. First of all, the atonement dethroned any work-based salvation system; therefore, the African church should guard against any belief that human works such as observance of the Sabbath, payment of tithe and others, are required for salvation. Such beliefs and practices undermine the efficacy of the atonement. Secondly, Christ's victory over sin is expected to yield a transforming effect in a believer through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit such that the believer now has control over his/her passion and hence is able to live a victorious Christian life. Therefore, the church should be more interested in the quality of the life of its members rather than just focusing on numerical strength.

Thirdly, since the atonement restores divine-human and human-human/environment relationships, human society must be characterized by peaceful co-existence

interdependence and sharing of resources. At the same time, Christians must be stewards of the environment, making sure it is protected from destruction. The fourth implication is that Christian ministry must be Christo-centric because Christ is the one whose personality and works serve as the basis of the Church and by extension, Christian ministry. Therefore, it is not legitimate to promote anyone except Christ, who alone is the owner and head of the church.

Fifthly, though the cross does not legitimize unjust and dehumanizing structures that impose sufferings of Christians, it assures the oppressed that victory comes after the struggles. Therefore, Christians should be strong in their trying moments. Sixthly, Christ's defeat of Satan and his hosts means that the Christian has victory over malevolent forces as long as he/she abides in the Lord. Finally, Christians must pray without ceasing; yet, they must supplement their prayers with industry under the providence of God.

Since the Bible is the final authority of matters related to faith and practice, the study has contended that the Akan version of the Bible must render accurately each biblical term, more so atonement-related terms.

Putting all these together confirms the hypothesis that a theology of atonement that is both biblically grounded and genuinely contextual within the Akan worldview and culture is relevant to bring about positive reforms in African religio-ethical beliefs and practices.

7.2 Conclusions

Of the many conclusions deducible from the study, the following are outstanding. First of all, African Christian theologizing must make use of African proverbs and other African thought-forms that touch on concrete issues rather than depending upon Western philosophical abstractions. This is important to help develop and promote African oral theology which is key in the survival of Christianity in Africa.

Secondly, the dual nature of Christ is the most important fact upon which atonement theology should be built because it is his humanity that qualifies him as a true representative of humanity on the cross and it is his divinity that makes him capable of offering the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the redemption of humanity. Therefore, the

dual nature of Christ is a non-negotiable fact in any authentic atonement theology. Any form of Christianity that compromises one or both aspects of Christ's personality is unacceptable.

Third, the African church needs to emphasize a holistic view of the atonement. African Christian soteriology must touch not only on liberation from sin but also liberation from social, political, economic, religious challenges. It is by so doing that African Christian theology can touch on the existential issue bothering African people and hence make Christianity meaningful to the ordinary African. The issue of sin must however be taken more seriously because it is the root of the tree that bears the fruits of sin.

7.3 Contributions of the research to scholarship

The study has contributed to knowledge in the following ways. At the beginning of the study, the lack of contextualized theology of atonement for the Akan community was identified as a major academic gap. This study has contributed to academia by formulating an atonement theology that takes the contextual needs of the Akan seriously. The study has laid a very strong foundation for future researchers who may wish to study further the doctrine of atonement for other African communities.

Furthermore, the study contributes the development of African oral theology through its use of many African proverbs and engagement with Afua Kuma's work. The study has outlined innovative themes such as *Nyame-Kra-teasefoɔ* Christology, *Ntamgyinafokann* Christology, *Afɔdepreko* Christology, *Bɔne-ano-aduro* Christology, *Nkunimdie* Christology, *Ahobammɔ* Christology, *Duadanɛ* Christology, *Yiedie* Christology and *Ayaresa-ne-ahofadie* Christology which could serve as a foundation for developing and promoting African mother-tongue theologizing, which is something that is needed for the contextualization of Christianity in Africa.

Another contribution of this study is its detailed study of at least seven major biblical texts that have a heavy influence on the biblical understanding of Christ's atonement. The exegetical method used has helped to unearth major truths about atonement which hitherto had not been applied to the Akan context.

In terms of Christian belief and practice, the study will empower African Christians to come to terms with the significance of Christ's atonement to their spiritual struggles and hence enable them to develop greater confidence in him alone. The findings from the study have the potential of making African Christians appreciate Christ's provisions for them in terms of security, salvation from sin, economic provision, power among others.

7.4 Suggestions for further research

Like any other research, this research is not exhaustive on the subject matter it studied. There are therefore uncovered areas that future researchers can consider. Few of such areas are outlined below.

In the first place, the thesis focused on seven main biblical texts as representatives of what the entire Bible teaches about sin and atonement. In reality, the passages considered in this study do not give a full biblical view of the subject. In view of this, more extensive work that deals with all major texts related to the subject can be conducted in the future.

Secondly, this study lacks a quantitative component, that is, empirical data. Future researchers may consider the use of quantitative data collection methods (such as questionnaires) to conduct this same study in order to give another perspective of the subject matter.

In addition, future researchers can look at atonement theology of selected African Christian songs in conversation with selected biblical passage(s) on atonement.

Another possible fruitful study could be to investigate the impact of the atonement on the economic life of the believer in dialogue with Western Christian history.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Selected documents depicting the benefits of the blood of Jesus

POWER HOUSE PRAYER NETWORK
online prayer meetings

Theme:
Using the BLOOD

With Prophet Richard Manu (General)

This **SATURDAY & SUNDAY**

15 & 16 AUGUST 2017 | **9:00PM** | Get connected @ **8:50 pm**

0200943080 0245643293

Join us & be blessed

THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA
THE REV'D ERNEST BRUCE MEMORIAL
METHODIST SOCIETY-ADABRAKA

**THE BLOOD AND THE CROSS
CONFERENCE**

TIME:
6 PM EACH NIGHT

DATE:
**4th-7th
APRIL, 2017**

FRI. 14.12.18

DAILY
WORDS
HOPE

PCG - HOPE CONG. - SAK. EST.

The Blood is for our Good

I As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.
Zechariah 9:11 (NIV)



www.hopepresby.org



www.facebook.com/hopepresby

Christ Ambassadors Church

Join Dr Idah Peterside for the

NOT MY HEAD, NOT MY BLOOD Service

Come & receive
TOTAL DELIVERANCE
from every demonic
operation that is haunting
your life in Jesus's Name!!!

It is also a
Holy Communion
& Fasting Day



WEDNESDAY
3 OCT 2018 6PM

@ **C.A.C. MIRACLE CENTER,**
CNR. CR SWART & PRETORIA RD,
KEMPTON PARK, GAUTENG, RSA.



www.christambassadorschurch.org



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I AM
COVERED BY
THE BLOOD
OF JESUS

SHARE TO BLESS!

GODS411.ORG



Appendix II: Ethical clearance certificate



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

13-Nov-2020

Dear Rev Isaac Boaheng

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

A Contextual Theology of Atonement for the Akan Community of Ghana

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2020/1924/1311

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Adri Du Plessis', is written over the typed name.

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Appendix III: Editor's certificate



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Editing Certificate

This is to confirm that the thesis titled
**"A CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY OF ATONEMENT FOR THE
AKAN COMMUNITY OF GHANA"**

by Isaac Boaheng, has been edited and proofread.
I have ensured consistency throughout the document,
corrected grammar and language use where appropriate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Adjei', written over a horizontal line.

Ms. Naa Ayorkor Sowatey-Adjei
Research Editor
Email: naasowat@noyam.org
Date : 25th November, 2020