

Christ the Reconstructor of African Life: A Decolonial Interpretation of Nicene Christology in Response to Spiritual Dualism

Alfred Kaire

St. Paul's University

Abstract

Despite the widespread affirmation of Nicene Christological orthodoxy in many African Christian contexts, numerous believers continue to interpret illness, misfortune, and existential crises through additional spiritual interpretive frameworks involving witchcraft, curses, ancestral displeasure, and other spiritual forces. This phenomenon, commonly described as spiritual dualism, reveals a lived tension between Christian confession and practical reliance on alternative spiritual explanations. This study argues that spiritual dualism constitutes a fundamentally Christological problem, exposing a gap between inherited doctrinal formulations and African existential-relational categories. Employing a qualitative decolonial theological methodology that critically retrieves classical doctrine through African relational categories, and grounded in engagement with patristic theology and African theological scholarship, the study places the Nicene affirmation of Christ's full divinity (homoousios with the Father) in dialogue with African relational ontology. Drawing on the works of John S. Mbiti, Laurenti Magesa, Kwame Bediako, Charles Nyamiti, and Jesse N. K. Mugambi, the paper demonstrates that although Nicene Christology remains doctrinally foundational, its metaphysical articulation has often been insufficiently interpreted within African existential and relational categories. Consequently, Christ's divinity may be affirmed doctrinally yet remain insufficiently integrated into everyday struggles with fear, spiritual insecurity, healing, mediation, and communal fragmentation. In response, the paper proposes the constructive Christological model of Christ the Reconstructor of African Life, presenting Christ as Supreme Spiritual Authority, Definitive Mediator of Life, and Restorer of Broken Relations. Grounded biblically in Christ's victory over hostile powers (Colossians 2:15) and his promise of abundant life (John 10:10), this model interprets Nicene orthodoxy through African relational categories of life, power, mediation, and communal restoration. The study concludes that a decolonial interpretation of Nicene Christology enables a more coherent integration of faith and daily life within African Christianity, thereby addressing spiritual dualism while preserving Nicene Christian orthodoxy.

Keywords: *Christology, Nicene Christology, African Theology, Spiritual Dualism, Decolonial Theology*

1.0 Introduction: Spiritual Dualism as an African Christological Problem

The First Council of Nicaea (325 CE) occupies a foundational place in Christian doctrinal history through its affirmation of the full divinity of Jesus Christ as *homoousios* ("of the same substance") with the Father. Formulated in response to the Arian controversy, the Nicene confession safeguarded the Church's understanding of salvation and worship by affirming that the Son fully shares in the Father's divine being (Pelikan, 1971, pp. 191–195). While Nicene Christology has profoundly shaped Christian theology across diverse historical and cultural

contexts, questions remain regarding its existential reception within contexts where reality is understood relationally, communally, and spiritually.

In many contemporary African Christian contexts, doctrinal orthodoxy coexists with practices that appear to stand in tension with Christian confession. Many believers affirm Christ as Lord and Savior while simultaneously interpreting illness, infertility, poverty, misfortune, or death through spiritual explanatory frameworks involving witchcraft, curses, ancestral influence, or malevolent spiritual forces. In some Pentecostal and Charismatic settings, similar concerns are expressed through practices such as deliverance, spiritual warfare, prophecy, and mediation against perceived spiritual attacks. This phenomenon, often described in African theological scholarship as spiritual dualism, reflects a lived tension between Christian confession and practical responses to existential insecurity (Mbiti, 1971, pp. 14–15; Magesa, 1997, pp. 52–55). The issue is not simply doctrinal inconsistency but a deeper Christological question concerning the perceived adequacy and sufficiency of Christ within everyday life.

Following Bediako (1995), this study does not assume a complete separation between African religious consciousness and Christian faith. African Christianity has often appropriated the Gospel through pre-existing religious and relational categories, producing both continuity and transformation. The concern, therefore, is not the persistence of African religious imagination itself, but the extent to which certain existential practices may functionally relativize Christ's mediatory and salvific sufficiency. The continuing appeal of alternative spiritual explanations suggests that, for many believers, Christ's lordship has not always been interpreted in ways that fully address concerns regarding spiritual power, protection, healing, mediation, and communal well-being.

This study proceeds from the conviction that Christology cannot remain merely a doctrinal abstraction if it is to serve the pastoral and transformative mission of the Church. The persistence of spiritual dualism indicates a gap between inherited Christological formulations and the existential-relational categories through which many African Christians understand reality. Consequently, the challenge is not whether Nicene Christology is true, but how its truth may be communicated and appropriated within African contexts in ways that speak meaningfully to lived experience.

Historically, Nicene Christology has been articulated through conceptual categories such as substance, essence, and ontology. While these categories were indispensable for safeguarding

orthodoxy in the fourth century, their transmission within African Christianity has not always adequately addressed concerns regarding spiritual authority, mediation, healing, communal harmony, and the preservation of life. This study, therefore, employs a qualitative decolonial theological approach that critically engages with both patristic theology and African theological scholarship to interpret Nicene Christology through African relational ontology. The decolonial approach adopted here does not reject classical Christian doctrine; rather, it seeks to recover and reinterpret its theological significance through categories that resonate with African existential realities.

The central argument of this study is that spiritual dualism persists, in part, because Nicene Christology has not been sufficiently interpreted through African relational categories. By placing the Nicene confession in critical dialogue with African relational ontology, the study proposes Christ the Reconstructor of African Life as a constructive Christological model. This model seeks to remain faithful to Nicene orthodoxy while addressing African concerns regarding spiritual insecurity, mediation, communal fragmentation, and holistic well-being.

Accordingly, this study asks: How can the Nicene affirmation of Christ's full divinity be interpreted through African relational ontology in order to address spiritual dualism in contemporary African Christianity? To answer this question, the discussion first examines spiritual dualism as an African existential challenge, then explores the significance of Nicene Christology and African relational ontology, and finally develops a constructive proposal: Christ the Reconstructor of African Life, a decolonial interpretation of Nicene Christology for contemporary African Christianity.

2.0 The African Existential Problem: Spiritual Dualism

Spiritual dualism in African Christianity refers to the lived tension in which Christian confession coexists with alternative spiritual interpretations and practices concerning illness, misfortune, insecurity, and communal well-being. John Mbiti's observation that Africans are "notoriously religious" remains significant in describing worldviews in which spiritual causality permeates everyday life (Mbiti, 1971, pp. 1–3). Across many African societies, health, prosperity, fertility, protection, and social harmony are often understood within interconnected spiritual and communal frameworks. Consequently, misfortune is frequently interpreted not as accidental but as stemming from disrupted relationships across the visible and invisible dimensions of life.

Although Christianity has become deeply rooted across the continent, these assumptions have not disappeared with conversion. Rather, African Christianity has developed through ongoing interaction between biblical faith and African religious consciousness. Kwame Bediako describes this continuity through the notion of a “primal religious imagination,” arguing that African Christians often approach the Gospel with existential questions concerning spiritual power, mediation, protection, and life itself (Bediako, 1995, pp. 92–95). This imagination is not external to Christianity but forms part of the context within which faith is received and interpreted. Nevertheless, tensions arise when Christian doctrinal confession and practical responses to existential crises remain insufficiently integrated.

In many contexts, Christians affirm Christ as Lord while simultaneously seeking additional forms of spiritual security through diviners, ritual specialists, protective objects, prophetic mediation, or similar practices during times of crisis. Such practices are not always conscious rejections of Christianity; rather, they often reflect concerns about suffering, vulnerability, healing, and survival. The central issue is therefore not merely doctrinal inconsistency but uncertainty regarding the adequacy of Christ’s presence and power within everyday life.

These tensions are particularly visible within many African Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Such traditions strongly emphasize Christ’s authority, healing, deliverance, prophecy, and victory over evil powers. In many respects, they represent important contextual attempts to address fears and existential concerns that earlier missionary approaches sometimes neglected. Yet excessive dependence in some contexts on prophetic personalities, anointing materials, ritual acts, or specialized deliverance ministries may unintentionally suggest that Christ’s mediatory presence alone is insufficient for protection and well-being. The persistence of such practices demonstrates the continuing significance of questions of spiritual power and mediation within African Christianity.

Laurenti Magesa argues that African religious consciousness is fundamentally oriented toward the preservation and flourishing of life in its physical, communal, moral, and spiritual dimensions (Magesa, 1997, pp. 37–40). Religious meaning is therefore evaluated according to its capacity to sustain life and restore harmony. When Christian faith appears disconnected from these existential concerns, believers may seek supplementary spiritual assurances. Spiritual dualism thus does not necessarily indicate the abandonment of Christianity; rather, it

reflects uncertainty about how Christ's saving and mediatory work addresses everyday struggles with fear, suffering, illness, insecurity, and communal fragmentation.

African theologians have noted that these tensions may fragment Christian identity and discipleship. Mercy Amba Oduyoye describes many African Christians as inhabiting "two worlds," particularly during moments of crisis such as illness, infertility, unemployment, or death (Oduyoye, 2004, pp. 38–41). In some contexts, fears of witchcraft and spiritual attack contribute to exclusion, suspicion, and the marginalization of vulnerable persons. The Church's proclamation of Christ may consequently appear pastorally inadequate when it fails to engage convincingly with these lived fears and relational realities.

This situation also exposes limitations in the transmission of classical Christological language within African contexts. Nicene Christology affirms Christ's full divinity through the confession that the Son is *homoousios* with the Father, thereby safeguarding the reality of salvation and divine mediation. Yet the metaphysical categories through which this doctrine was historically articulated do not always communicate easily within relational and spiritually integrated African worldviews (Pelikan, 1971, pp. 198–200). As a result, Christ may be affirmed doctrinally within creed and worship while remaining insufficiently integrated into practical responses to spiritual insecurity and communal vulnerability.

At the same time, this challenge should not be understood as a simple opposition between African and Christian worldviews. Significant affinities exist between African and biblical understandings of communal identity, mediation, healing, spiritual causality, and holistic life. The question is therefore not whether African worldviews are compatible with Christianity, but how Nicene Christology can be interpreted in ways that more adequately engage African existential concerns.

Identifying spiritual dualism as a concrete African existential problem provides the starting point for constructive Christological reflection. As Jesse Mugambi argues, African theology must move beyond critique toward reconstructive theological frameworks that address lived realities in postcolonial contexts (Mugambi, 1995, pp. 15–18). This study, therefore, examines how the Nicene affirmation of Christ's full divinity may be interpreted through African relational categories in ways that address spiritual dualism while affirming Christ's sufficiency for African Christian life.

3.0 Nicene Christology and the Question of Divine Power

3.1 *The Nicene Christological Element: The Full Divinity of Christ*

The central affirmation of the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE) was that Jesus Christ is *homoousios* with the Father, meaning that the Son fully shares in God's divine being. This formulation emerged in response to Arianism, which regarded the Son as a created being and therefore subordinate to the Father. By affirming Christ as *homoousios tō Patri* (“of one substance with the Father”), the Nicene fathers safeguarded the Church’s confession that Jesus Christ is truly God and therefore the definitive source of salvation and divine revelation (Athanasius, 1994a, I.19; Pelikan, 1971, pp. 191–195).

The significance of Nicaea was not merely metaphysical. The council sought to protect the Christian understanding of salvation by insisting that redemption is God’s own work rather than the activity of a subordinate intermediary. Athanasius argued that only one who fully participates in the divine life can restore humanity to communion with God (Athanasius, 1994b, sec. 54; Anatolios, 2011, pp. 88–90). Likewise, the Church’s worship of Christ could only be legitimate if Christ were truly divine (Kelly, 1977, pp. 227–230). Nicene Christology, therefore, established a foundational Christian conviction: Jesus Christ is not merely a representative of God but fully participates in God’s being and authority.

Historically, this doctrine was articulated through Hellenistic theological categories such as *ousia* (essence or substance). These conceptual tools enabled the Church to clarify the relationship between the Father and the Son with doctrinal precision and proved indispensable for defending orthodoxy. Yet because such language operates primarily within metaphysical categories, its existential significance has not always been readily apparent in contexts where religious questions are framed relationally and practically rather than philosophically (Pelikan, 1971, pp. 198–200).

This challenge is particularly evident within many African Christian contexts. African worldviews frequently approach reality through categories of relational harmony, spiritual causality, communal well-being, healing, and the preservation of life (Mbiti, 1971, pp. 3–5; Magesa, 1997, pp. 37–40). Consequently, theological questions often concern spiritual protection, mediation, healing, and victory over forces perceived to threaten life. Within such contexts, the confession that Christ is “of one substance with the Father” clearly affirms divine

identity, yet it may not immediately convey how Christ's divinity addresses existential concerns such as fear, suffering, spiritual insecurity, and communal vulnerability.

The issue, however, should not be understood as a contradiction between African worldviews and Christian faith. Biblical Christianity itself emerged within a world deeply concerned with spiritual powers, healing, mediation, and divine protection. The New Testament consistently presents Christ as victorious over hostile powers and as the mediator of life, reconciliation, and restoration. Significant continuities, therefore, exist between African existential concerns and biblical patterns of thought. The challenge lies less in incompatibility than in the contextual interpretation of doctrine.

The persistence of spiritual dualism in some African Christian settings illustrates this challenge. While Christ is confessed as Lord, believers may continue to seek additional forms of spiritual assurance amid illness, misfortune, or insecurity. Such practices often reveal uncertainty regarding the practical implications of Christ's authority and mediatory sufficiency. The problem, therefore, does not lie in Nicene Christology itself, but in the extent to which its theological meaning has been translated into categories that engage African lived realities.

African theologians have argued that Christian faith must be interpreted within the religious consciousness and existential experience of African communities (Bediako, 1995, pp. 102–105). Questions concerning Christ's significance are therefore not limited to ontological identity but also involve the practical issue of how Christ restores and sustains life. As Magesa observes, African religious thought is fundamentally oriented toward the preservation and flourishing of life (Magesa, 1997, pp. 41–43). Consequently, Christological reflection must address not only who Christ is, but also how Christ's divine life is experienced within everyday existence.

Patristic theology itself provides resources for such an interpretation. Athanasius presented the incarnate Word as the source of life and renewal, while Irenaeus understood Christ's work as the restoration and recapitulation of creation (Anatolios, 2011, pp. 112–115; Behr, 2001, pp. 92–95). These themes reveal that Nicene Christology possesses inherently restorative dimensions that can be meaningfully expressed within African relational categories.

The task, therefore, is not to revise Nicene orthodoxy but to interpret it in ways that speak directly to African concerns regarding life, mediation, authority, and communal flourishing.

Such a decolonial reading understands Christ's *homoousios* not only as ontological equality with the Father but also as the basis of Christ's life-giving authority and restorative presence within the community. This perspective provides the foundation for the constructive proposal developed in the next section: Christ the Reconstructor of African Life.

4.0 African Relational Ontology as Theoretical Framework

The constructive interpretation of Christology advanced in this study is guided by African relational ontology as its primary theoretical framework. Although African societies are diverse and cannot be reduced to a single worldview, many African philosophical and religious traditions share a broadly relational understanding of existence that emphasizes interconnectedness, communal belonging, spiritual continuity, and the preservation of life (Mbiti, 1971, pp. 1–5). Rather than understanding reality primarily through abstract categories of substance and individual autonomy, African thought often interprets existence in terms of relationships among persons, communities, creation, and the spiritual world.

John Mbiti's well-known formulation captures this orientation succinctly: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1971, p. 108). Personhood is therefore understood as emerging through participation in communal relationships rather than through isolated individuality. Human life is shaped by reciprocity, belonging, moral responsibility, and continuity between visible and invisible dimensions of existence. Spiritual realities are integrated into everyday life and remain closely connected to questions of health, fertility, protection, justice, reconciliation, and communal well-being. Misfortune is often interpreted in relational terms, reflecting disruptions within the wider network of life (Mbiti, 1971, pp. 3–5).

Importantly, this relational understanding of reality is not entirely foreign to biblical thought. Kwame Bediako argues that African Christian consciousness often resonates more naturally with the relational and spiritually integrated worldview of the biblical world than with later Western secular dualisms (Bediako, 1995, pp. 226–229). Biblical themes such as covenant, kinship, mediation, healing, communal identity, and spiritual causality display significant affinities with African relational worldviews. Consequently, interpreting Christ through African relational ontology should not be understood as a departure from Christian orthodoxy, but as an attempt to recover dimensions of biblical and patristic Christianity that speak meaningfully within African existential contexts.

This framework has important implications for Christology. Within many African settings, Christological questions extend beyond abstract definitions of Christ's nature to concerns about life, mediation, healing, protection, reconciliation, and communal restoration. A Christology expressed exclusively through metaphysical categories risks remaining detached from lived realities shaped by relational understandings of existence. African relational ontology, therefore, provides a conceptual framework through which Christ's significance can be interpreted in ways that address spiritual insecurity, fractured relationships, and the search for holistic well-being while remaining faithful to classical Christian doctrine.

The continuing importance of such concerns is evident in contemporary African Christianity, particularly within Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, where themes of healing, deliverance, spiritual warfare, and divine power occupy a central place. These developments illustrate the enduring significance of mediation, protection, and spiritual authority within African Christian experience. They also reveal the ongoing challenge of integrating doctrinal confession with existential realities. The question is not merely whether Christ is confessed as Lord, but how Christ's lordship is understood and experienced within everyday life.

Charles Nyamiti's ancestor Christology represents one of the most influential attempts to interpret Christ through African relational categories. Nyamiti observes that ancestors often function as symbols of continuity, mediation, moral authority, and communal belonging within African societies (Nyamiti, 2002, pp. 23–27). Rather than rejecting this category, he proposes Christ as the "Supreme Ancestor" whose mediatory role fulfills and transcends ancestral expectations. Christ mediates life, reconciliation, communion, and protection in a definitive manner grounded in the incarnation and divine sonship (Nyamiti, 2002, pp. 61–65). Nyamiti's work demonstrates that Nicene affirmations concerning Christ's divinity and mediation can be interpreted through African relational categories without compromising doctrinal orthodoxy.

Bediako further develops this discussion by analyzing the "primal religious imagination" that continues to shape African Christianity (Bediako, 1995, pp. 91–95). According to Bediako, conversion to Christianity does not eliminate African concerns regarding spiritual power, mediation, protection, and communal identity. Rather, these concerns are reinterpreted in the light of Christ. The theological task, therefore, is not the rejection of African religious consciousness but the faithful interpretation of Christ's significance within it.

The combined insights of Mbiti, Nyamiti, and Bediako demonstrate that African relational ontology provides a coherent framework for Christological reflection. This ontology understands life as communal, spiritually interconnected, and oriented toward wholeness. Consequently, Christ must be understood not merely as the bearer of divine essence in abstract metaphysical terms, but also as the one who restores life, reconciles fractured relationships, overcomes spiritual insecurity, and sustains communal harmony. Such an approach resonates with Jesse Mugambi's reconstructive theological vision, which calls African theology to move beyond reactive critique toward constructive theological frameworks capable of rebuilding meaning within postcolonial African realities (Mugambi, 1995, pp. 15–18).

Employing African relational ontology as the theoretical framework of this study, therefore, does not weaken Nicene Christology; rather, it deepens its reception within African Christian contexts. The confession that Christ is *homoousios* with the Father can thus be interpreted relationally as the affirmation that Christ possesses ultimate authority, life-giving power, and restorative presence within the whole network of life. This framework provides the conceptual foundation for the constructive Christological proposal developed in the following section: Christ the Reconstructor of African Life.

5.0 Christ the Reconstructor of African Life: A Systematic Christological Construction

Building on African relational ontology as the interpretive framework of this study, this section develops the constructive Christological proposal of Christ the Reconstructor of African Life. The proposal responds to enduring questions within African Christianity concerning spiritual power, mediation, suffering, healing, communal belonging, and the search for abundant life. Rather than viewing African religious consciousness and Nicene orthodoxy as opposing realities, this study argues that African existential concerns provide an important context within which the meaning of Christ's divinity may be interpreted more fully and pastorally.

The Council of Nicaea affirmed that Jesus Christ is *homoousios* with the Father—fully divine and sharing in the very being of God (Pelikan, 1971, pp. 191–195). This confession safeguarded the Christian understanding of salvation by insisting that redemption is accomplished by God himself rather than by a subordinate intermediary. Athanasius maintained that only one who is truly divine can restore humanity to communion with God (Anatolios, 2011, pp. 88–90). Nicene Christology, therefore, affirms that in Christ, God enters human history to bring life, reconciliation, and restoration.

Although Nicene Christology remains foundational, its reception within African Christianity has often been mediated through conceptual categories that do not always engage African relational understandings of personhood, spiritual causality, communal belonging, and the preservation of life. African Christian concerns frequently center on practical questions: Who protects life? Who overcomes spiritual insecurity? Who restores broken relationships? Who mediates healing and reconciliation?

These concerns are not foreign to biblical Christianity. Scripture presents salvation as the restoration of communion between God and humanity and the renewal of life within creation. African theology, therefore, provides contextual categories through which biblical and Nicene affirmations may be interpreted afresh within African realities. The growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity across Africa illustrates the continuing importance of healing, deliverance, prayer, and spiritual authority in Christian experience. Such movements demonstrate that African Christians seek not only doctrinal correctness but also a Christology that addresses lived realities.

Drawing on the work of John Mbiti, Charles Nyamiti, Kwame Bediako, Laurenti Magesa, and Jesse Mugambi, this study proposes Christ the Reconstructor of African Life as a constructive and decolonial interpretation of Nicene Christology. Christ's divinity is understood not merely as an abstract metaphysical affirmation but as the basis of his supreme authority, definitive mediation, and restorative presence within the whole network of life.

5.1 Christ as Supreme Spiritual Authority

Questions of spiritual authority remain central within African Christianity because experiences of illness, suffering, insecurity, misfortune, and communal instability are often interpreted within spiritually interconnected understandings of reality. Many Christians confess Christ as Lord while simultaneously seeking additional forms of spiritual assurance through prophetic ministries, ritual practices, or other mediatory mechanisms. The issue is therefore not necessarily unbelief but uncertainty concerning how Christ's authority relates to everyday struggles.

The Nicene affirmation of Christ's divinity establishes the foundation for understanding his authority. By confessing Christ as *homoousios* with the Father, the Church affirmed that Christ fully shares in divine power and sovereignty. Athanasius argued that only one who participates

fully in the divine life can overcome sin, evil, and death (Anatolios, 2011, pp. 88–90). Christ's authority is therefore not delegated or secondary but grounded in his divine identity.

African relational ontology provides a constructive framework for interpreting this authority. Within many African traditions, authority is understood relationally and practically. Legitimate authority preserves life, protects the community, restores harmony, and promotes flourishing. Authority is valued not merely for its status but for its life-giving function.

Interpreted through this lens, Christ's divinity signifies his unsurpassable authority within the entire network of life. Christ is not one spiritual power among many but the definitive revelation of divine power and presence. Through his incarnation, death, and resurrection, God enters human vulnerability and overcomes the forces that threaten life.

This understanding resonates with biblical portrayals of Christ. Matthew 28:18 declares that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Christ. Colossians 2:15 presents him as victorious over hostile powers, while Hebrews 2:14 portrays him as defeating the power of death. Christ's authority is therefore restorative and liberating rather than merely coercive.

Charles Nyamiti's ancestor Christology provides additional insight. By describing Christ as the "Supreme Ancestor," Nyamiti interprets Christ's mediatory and protective role through African relational categories while remaining faithful to classical doctrine (Nyamiti, 2002, pp. 83–87). Christ fulfills and surpasses all other forms of mediation because his authority is grounded in divine sonship.

Understanding Christ as the Supreme Spiritual Authority addresses forms of spirituality shaped primarily by fear. Fear of witchcraft, curses, spiritual attacks, or misfortune often persists where Christ's lordship remains a doctrinal affirmation rather than an existential reality. The reconstructive Christology proposed here insists that Christ's authority extends to every dimension of life—spiritual, social, moral, and communal. Consequently, suffering and insecurity are interpreted within the horizon of Christ's sovereign presence rather than through fear-driven dependence upon competing spiritual systems.

This perspective also promotes integration between Christian confession and daily life. Christ is not confined to liturgical worship or future salvation but is understood as actively present within the realities of ordinary existence. As Oduyoye observes, many African Christians

struggle with living in “two worlds” (Oduyoye, 2004, pp. 40–42). Interpreting Christ as the Supreme Spiritual Authority helps overcome this fragmentation by affirming that all dimensions of life exist under Christ’s lordship.

5.2 Christ as Definitive Mediator of Life

Closely related to authority is the question of mediation. African worldviews often understand life through networks of relationships that involve God, community, family, and the spiritual realm. Within these contexts, mediation serves to sustain harmony, protection, healing, and continuity of life (Mbiti, 1971, pp. 164–170).

African Christianity continues to engage these concerns. Questions of spiritual presence, protection, and mediation remain central within Christian experience. Consequently, believers often seek tangible expressions of Christ’s involvement in everyday struggles. The challenge is not whether mediation is necessary but how Christ’s unique mediatory role is understood and articulated.

Nicene Christology grounds Christ’s mediation in the incarnation. The Son who is *homoousios* with the Father became fully human in order to reconcile humanity to God (Pelikan, 1971, pp. 202–205). Christ mediates salvation because he uniquely unites divinity and humanity in his person. The New Testament consistently presents him as the one mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:5) and the eternal high priest who mediates a new covenant (Heb. 8:6).

African relational ontology deepens the existential significance of this doctrine. Within many African contexts, mediation is valued because it preserves life, restores relationships, and sustains communal harmony. Mediation is therefore understood relationally rather than merely juridically.

Nyamiti’s ancestor Christology again offers an important contribution. Christ fulfills and transcends ancestral mediation by mediating divine life universally and definitively (Nyamiti, 2002, pp. 90–94). Through the incarnation, death, and resurrection, Christ becomes the source of reconciliation, protection, communion, and life.

Building on this insight, the present study proposes Christ as the Definitive Mediator of Life. Christ’s mediation addresses not only personal sin but also fear, alienation, spiritual insecurity,

and communal fragmentation. His work restores communion between God and humanity while simultaneously renewing relationships within the wider community.

This interpretation also provides a framework for understanding many expressions of African Christian spirituality. Healing ministries, prayer gatherings, deliverance services, and acts of reconciliation can be understood as attempts to express confidence in Christ's living presence. Their theological legitimacy depends upon whether they direct believers toward Christ's sufficiency rather than toward alternative sources of spiritual dependence.

Bediako's analysis of African religious consciousness is instructive here. Conversion to Christianity does not eliminate existential concerns regarding mediation, protection, and life; rather, these concerns are transformed through Christ (Bediako, 1995, pp. 116–118). Christ, therefore, fulfills rather than negates the search for mediation.

Understanding Christ as the Definitive Mediator of Life strengthens confidence in Christ's sufficiency and reduces the fragmentation that often results when believers seek competing systems of spiritual security. Christ becomes the center through whom divine life is communicated and sustained.

5.3 Christ as Restorer of Broken Relations

African understandings of personhood are deeply relational. Human identity is shaped through belonging, reciprocity, and participation in community. Mbiti's famous statement, "I am because we are," reflects this worldview (Mbiti, 1971, p. 108). Consequently, fractured relationships often generate profound forms of suffering and insecurity.

Biblical Christianity shares similar relational concerns. Scripture portrays salvation not merely as individual forgiveness but as reconciliation with God, neighbor, and creation. Paul declares that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19), while Ephesians 2:14 presents Christ as the one who destroys hostility and restores peace. Salvation, therefore, possesses both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

Within some Christian traditions, however, salvation has been communicated primarily through individual and juridical categories. While these themes remain important, they may appear inadequate when communities face ethnic conflict, social exclusion, family breakdown,

injustice, and spiritual insecurity. African contexts, therefore, require Christological interpretations that highlight the relational dimensions of salvation.

The present study proposes Christ as the Restorer of Broken Relations. Through his incarnation, death, and resurrection, Christ enters human alienation in order to restore communion with God and renew human relationships. Salvation is therefore understood as relational reconstruction grounded in participation in the life of Christ.

This interpretation is reinforced by Magesa's emphasis on abundant life. African religious consciousness seeks the preservation and flourishing of life in all its dimensions (Magesa, 1997, pp. 48–50). Christ's reconciling work consequently addresses spiritual, social, moral, and communal fragmentation. His divinity signifies God's active involvement in restoring life and healing broken existence.

The implications are both pastoral and ethical. Oduyoye notes that relational brokenness often manifests through exclusion, marginalization, gender injustice, and violence against vulnerable persons (Oduyoye, 2004, pp. 55–58). A Christology centered on reconciliation, therefore, challenges structures that perpetuate division and calls the Church toward justice, forgiveness, solidarity, and healing.

Such a Christology also addresses fear and suspicion. Witchcraft accusations, communal mistrust, and social fragmentation flourish where relationships are perceived as threatened. Christ's reconciling presence offers an alternative vision grounded in trust, communion, and restored belonging.

By presenting Christ as Supreme Spiritual Authority, Definitive Mediator of Life, and Restorer of Broken Relations, this study develops the model of Christ the Reconstructor of African Life. Rooted in African relational ontology and faithful to Nicene orthodoxy, this model interprets Christ's divinity not merely as an abstract metaphysical affirmation but as the foundation of God's restorative presence within human existence. In this way, Nicene Christology is interpreted decolonially and relationally so that its theological depth speaks meaningfully to African experiences of spiritual security, mediation, reconciliation, communal flourishing, and the renewal of life.

6.0 Implications for African Christian Theology, Worship, and Social Transformation

The Christological model proposed in this study, Christ the Reconstructor of African Life, has important implications for African theology and practice. By interpreting Nicene Christology through African relational categories of authority, mediation, reconciliation, and abundant life, the study demonstrates that classical Christian doctrine can address African existential realities without compromising its theological foundations. These implications are particularly evident in worship, pastoral ministry, discipleship, social ethics, and decolonial theological reflection.

Implications for Worship

African Christian worship is deeply communal, participatory, and embodied. Prayer, song, testimony, proclamation, and symbolic expression function as means through which believers encounter God's presence (Mbiti, 1971, pp. 74–76). Worship is therefore not merely the affirmation of doctrine but a lived experience of God's action within everyday realities.

Within many African churches, worship serves as a space where concerns about suffering, illness, insecurity, reconciliation, and hope are brought before God. Interpreting Christ as Supreme Spiritual Authority, Definitive Mediator of Life, and Restorer of Broken Relations transforms worship into a communal confession of Christ's lordship over every dimension of life. Biblical texts such as Philippians 2:9–11 and Colossians 1:15–20 affirm Christ's universal authority and reconciling work, providing a foundation for this understanding.

This perspective also offers a constructive framework for evaluating Pentecostal and Charismatic worship practices. Healing prayer, testimony, deliverance, and intercession reflect genuine pastoral concerns regarding suffering and spiritual vulnerability. Rather than dismissing such practices, this study views them as attempts to experience Christ's power within daily life. At the same time, worship must remain centered on Christ rather than fear, prophetic personalities, or ritual dependence. Authentic worship nurtures confidence in Christ's sufficiency and participation in the abundant life he offers (John 10:10).

Implications for Healing and Pastoral Ministry

Healing ministries occupy a central place in African Christianity because they address concrete experiences of illness, grief, poverty, oppression, and communal suffering. The Gospels portray Christ's ministry holistically through healing, liberation, and reconciliation (Luke

4:18–19; Matthew 11:4–5). African expectations that Christian faith should engage practical realities, therefore, resonate strongly with biblical theology.

Within this study, healing is understood as part of Christ's broader work of restoring life and relationships. Christ the Reconstructor of African Life is not merely a doctrinal figure but the living source of renewal for individuals and communities. Consequently, healing includes spiritual, moral, social, and communal dimensions rather than physical recovery alone.

This approach also encourages critical discernment within contemporary healing and deliverance ministries. While many such ministries arise from genuine pastoral concern, some risk fostering fear or dependence on intermediaries. A reconstructive Christology seeks instead to strengthen trust in Christ's reconciling authority. Colossians 2:15, which presents Christ as victorious over hostile powers, provides a theological foundation for pastoral ministry grounded in confidence rather than anxiety.

Implications for Christian Identity and Discipleship

The model also addresses the fragmentation that sometimes occurs when Christian confession appears disconnected from existential experience. During periods of suffering or insecurity, believers may struggle to integrate Christian faith with inherited assumptions concerning protection, mediation, and well-being.

Christ the Reconstructor of African Life presents discipleship as holistic participation in Christ's reconciling work. Christian identity is not limited to doctrinal assent but involves trust, ethical transformation, communal belonging, and restored relationships. African relational ontology contributes significantly to this vision by understanding personhood in communal rather than individualistic terms.

This perspective resonates with biblical portrayals of the Church as the body of Christ and a reconciled covenant community (Ephesians 4:1–6; John 17:20–23). Discipleship, therefore, includes forgiveness, solidarity, justice, mutual care, and responsibility toward others. It also challenges fear-centred forms of religiosity by inviting believers to live in confidence under Christ's sustaining authority rather than in anxiety about spiritual threats.

Implications for Social Ethics and Community Restoration

African realities involve not only spiritual concerns but also social challenges such as poverty, corruption, ethnic conflict, gender injustice, violence, and communal fragmentation. Consequently, Christology cannot remain confined to personal spirituality.

The New Testament presents reconciliation as both spiritual and social. Believers are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–19), while Christ breaks down barriers of hostility and division (Ephesians 2:14). Christ's reconciling work, therefore, has direct implications for justice, peace, and social transformation.

Within this framework, Christ the Reconstructor of African Life becomes a model for communal renewal. The Church is called to embody reconciliation through justice, forgiveness, peace-making, and solidarity with vulnerable persons. As Oduyoye (2004, pp. 55–58) observes, women and marginalized groups often bear the consequences of relational breakdown; a restorative Christology therefore challenges structures of exclusion and domination. By affirming Christ as Restorer of Broken Relations, the Church is invited to cultivate communities marked by trust, dignity, and shared flourishing.

Decolonial Significance

Finally, this model contributes to decolonial theological reflection. Decolonial theology does not reject historic Christian doctrine but seeks to interpret it through categories emerging from local cultures and lived realities. Accordingly, Nicene orthodoxy can be received faithfully within African relational ontology without sacrificing doctrinal integrity.

Following Bediako (1995, pp. 3–7) and Mugambi (1995, pp. 15–18), this study argues that African theology participates creatively in the wider Christian tradition by rearticulating doctrine within African contexts. Christ the Reconstructor of African Life, therefore, demonstrates that African Christianity is not merely a recipient of theology but an active contributor to global Christian thought. Through themes of authority, mediation, reconciliation, and abundant life, Nicene Christology becomes pastorally meaningful and contextually transformative within African Christianity.

7.0 Conclusion — Who Is Christ for us Today?

This study has examined the challenge of integrating Christian confession with lived experience in contemporary African Christianity by placing Nicene Christology in dialogue with African relational ontology. It has been argued that what many scholars describe as *spiritual dualism*—the coexistence of Christian belief with alternative spiritual practices and explanations—does not necessarily signify rejection of Christianity. Rather, it reveals the continuing need to interpret Christ's person and work in ways that address African concerns about suffering, healing, mediation, protection, reconciliation, and the flourishing of life.

The study has therefore proposed a reconstructive and decolonial interpretation of Nicene Christology that remains faithful to the historic Christian confession while engaging African relational categories. The Nicene affirmation that Christ is *homoousios* with the Father is understood not merely as a metaphysical statement about divine essence, but as the foundation of Christ's living, life-giving, and restorative presence within human existence. Christ's divinity thus signifies God's active participation in the renewal of persons, communities, and creation.

The central question guiding this study: *Who is Christ for us today?* —is answered through the constructive model of Christ the Reconstructor of African Life. Christ is presented as the Supreme Spiritual Authority whose lordship overcomes fear and spiritual insecurity; the Definitive Mediator of Life who reconciles humanity to God and sustains communal wholeness; and the Restorer of Broken Relations who renews fractured spiritual, social, and moral realities. This model seeks not to dismiss African existential concerns but to interpret them within the horizon of Christ's sufficient and reconciling presence.

The biblical witness supports this relational and restorative vision. Christ is portrayed as the one through whom all things hold together (Col. 1:15–20), the mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:5), the victor over hostile powers (Col. 2:15), and the reconciler of the world (2 Cor. 5:18–19). These themes resonate strongly with African concerns regarding life, mediation, protection, and communal restoration. They also reflect biblical understandings of salvation as holistic, relational, and transformative rather than merely individual or future-oriented.

The study has further demonstrated that African relational ontology provides a constructive framework for interpreting classical doctrine within African contexts. Drawing on the insights of John Mbiti, Charles Nyamiti, Kwame Bediako, Laurenti Magesa, Jesse Mugambi, and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, it has shown that African theology possesses rich conceptual resources for engaging historic Christian doctrine critically and creatively. The proposal advanced here does not replace earlier African Christological models but seeks to synthesize and extend their insights into a coherent constructive framework.

The implications of this reconstruction extend beyond academic theology. In worship, it recentres Christ as the source of authority, reconciliation, and communal identity. In pastoral ministry, healing, and deliverance, it grounds confidence in Christ's sufficiency rather than fear-driven spirituality. In discipleship and ethics, it promotes justice, solidarity, reconciliation, and communal responsibility. Christ the Reconstructor of African Life, therefore, functions not only as a doctrinal proposal but also as a pastoral and public theology capable of addressing spiritual and social fragmentation within African societies.

This study acknowledges its limitations. Its methodology has been primarily theological and constructive, relying on textual and conceptual analysis rather than extensive empirical research. Future studies could strengthen and refine this proposal through ethnographic investigation, interviews, and case studies exploring how African Christian communities experience Christ's mediation, authority, and reconciling work in practice.

Nevertheless, the study maintains that a decolonial interpretation of Nicene Christology offers a valuable contribution to contemporary African theology. It demonstrates that fidelity to classical Christian doctrine does not require cultural abstraction. Nicene faith can be interpreted faithfully through African relational categories, deepening both theological understanding and existential relevance.

Ultimately, Christ the Reconstructor of African Life emerges as a constructive Christological vision for African Christianity today. Christ is not merely the object of inherited doctrinal confession but the living Lord who restores life, reconciles communities, overcomes fear, and renews human existence in its fullness. In this way, Nicene Christology becomes not only a doctrine preserved from the past but a living theological reality that speaks meaningfully to African Christian experience in the present.

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