Christ, Our Ancestor
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Abstract: Many believers in Christ still hold dual allegiance to previously held traditional or cultural beliefs and practices with often contradict the Christian faith, teachings and practices. One such is ancestor belief, respect, worship, and veneration. This is prevalent in family-oriented cultures found in various parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. This often leads such people into non-Christian behavior and make a mockery of the Christian mission. This paper argued strongly that Jesus Christ has to occupy all the roles of deity in a functional way for all aspects of life and living for the practicing Christian, in other to eliminate the need for allegiance to any other spiritual complementary substitute. This is when there will be “no other name” needed by such believer (Acts 4:12) in all issues, circumstances, occasions, and problems of life. Jesus must become everything in His follower’s belief system. This paper focused on Jesus Christ as the most fitting to occupy the role of “Ancestor” for all believers at all times, in all places, and in all situations. It contextualizes Jesus’ roles into the cultures, worldview, ethos, philosophical perceptions, and cosmologies of His adherents, sufficiently answering the deepest questions they ask while leaving no room for other deities. Jesus is the Creator, Beginning and Last, Leader, Head, Father, Firstborn, and Firstfruit. He is the Ultimate Ancestor.

Keywords: Ancestry; Ancestor veneration; Ancestor worship; Ancestor respect; Christology; Living Dead; State of the Dead; Spirits; Mediator; Firstborn; Mythology; Patriarchal Society.

INTRODUCTION
“Theology is not Christian at all when it does not offer Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the answer to the human quest [1].” John Mbiti concurs: “Christian Theology ought properly to be Christology, for Theology falls or stands on how it understands, translates and interprets Jesus Christ, at a given time, place and human situation [2].

Jesus Christ has to become all things to all people that He may save them. He springs forth from every culture and tradition to engrain Himself in the hearts of the natives. He seeks to make Himself relevant to their experiences. He speaks human language as they differ from culture to culture. God has implanted symbols and anchors in each location that the people would resonate with as they grapple with the ultimate truth of Christ as the Savior. Many of these may previously be enshrouded with paganism but when the light of the gospel comes, the darkness is dispelled. It may well be divinely expedient to employ known symbols to explain divine truth, devoid of the taint and stain of error.

Biblical Christology must find its safe and unadulterated expression in each culture it encounters rather than be alien to it. It must pick up relevant familiar indigenous illustrations, analogies, and metaphors that may defer from place to place without diluting the biblical intention and content. It is in this light that Charles Nyamiti broadly defines African Christology as “discourse on Christ in accordance with the mentality and needs of the people in the black continent [3-8].

The question of Jesus reverberates through the ages: “Who do you say I am?” (Mark 8:29). Each culture and generation must find its answer to this question by looking within the Holy writ and faithfully applying its content to its contemporary situation. Diane Stanton ventured to describe the vicissitudes of Jesus Christ. She makes bold to describe our Savior as the Life-giver, Healer, Mediator, Ancestor, a family Member, Friend, Loved One, King/Chief, Liberator and Leader [9]. This paper attempts to briefly explore the understanding of “ancestor” and apply it to describe Jesus Christ, devoid of any pagan baggage. It will begin with a brief survey of the ancestor veneration/worship prevalent in parts of the globe today.
Ancestors and Ancestor Worship/Veneration in Afro-Asian Cultures

Ancestors are members of a particular family or clan or tribe or community or nation who are deceased. They are usually male, but female members are also so-considered. There are various peculiarities to the belief in, veneration, respect or even worship of ancestors found in various parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Many of these places have societies that have largely family-oriented, community-based, and less individualism. This is true of Africa, Japan, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Korea and other places. “In general terms, African religion is communal, an affair of the family, the clan, the tribe, rather than of the individual [10].” Prof. Pyun Sun Whan is quoted as saying: “Ancestor worship is a social product of a large family systems [14].”

Korean culture advocates it because of their dominant life belief of patriotic loyalty and filial devotion which are regarded as the “most basic and integral ethical principle [11, p.236].” Yi Yulgok, a Confucian don (1536-1563) is quoted to have advocated devoted ancestor worship as follows: “When a man dies, his soul might be said either existing or non-existing. It is because that a soul exists with sincere devotion and a soul dissolves without devotion [12].” Here, the ancestor took the place of a deity that should be worshipped to earn heaven’s blessings and the ancestor’s blessings [13]. In the past, Japanese government imposed shrine worship of ancestors upon its citizens as a patriotic civil and national ceremony [14].

Some of the common characteristics of ancestor veneration include:

- Natural relationship between ancestor and the earthly relatives, based on parenthood, brotherhood, or membership of the common society
- Supernatural or sacred status acquired at death and supposed nearness to God wherein they can be benevolent or punitive to the living, and are sometimes feared.
- Mediation between God and the living
- Title to regular sacred communication with the living, and
- Exemplarity, as models of good conduct, ethics, and heroism [3, p.15].

U.S. Society

African traditional thinking believes in and reveres those who have died in the family as assuming the role of ancestors which do not cease to belong to the family or community even in death. The spirit of the ancestor can haunt the living. Ancestors are rated as the custodians of the customs, traditions, kinship, ethics, beliefs, morality, religion of their community. Liao enumerates: “the activities of ancestor worship help to provide the necessary group solidarity, strengthen their internal unity and cooperation against pressures from the outside especially in times when the social situation is unatable [15].” It is targeted at strengthening family bond and conservation their heritage. As Latourette submits: “It is the means of moral and social control, and it acts as a check on individualism [16].”

On the national, regional, or community scale, significant heroes, heroines, liberators, defenders, deliverers are considered as progenitors of the whole people. They represent community unity, cohesiveness, and endlessness of traditions. African national liberators and independence agitators are exalted as national ancestors, sacrificial heroes, almost venerated as gods. Such is the case with Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Zambia’s Kenneth Kaunda, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, Mozambique’s Samora Machel, South African Nelson Mandela, and Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikwe in Nigeria, to mention but a few [17].

Chu Ming-ching declared that “ancestor worship is still the most vital factor in Taiwanese folk religion: It continues to hold a position of much consequence in the religious and social life of the people [18].” Lim Guek Eng noted that “most Chinese families have ancestor tablets established in their homes for the convenience of worshipping their ancestors regularly [19],” as part of their filial piety. They go through complex ritual ceremonies at death, burial, mourning, worshipping of the ancestral tablets on the table of the family altar at home, with annual communal feasts in the ancestral temple (hall), and by sweeping the tomb and managing the bones of their ancestors [19].

Ancestor worship in Taiwanese society has primitive animism as its source. Advocating the immortality of the soul of the deceased which now resides in three places: the grave, the ancestral tablet, and future place in hell or heaven.

Ancestor Respect in the Old Testament

The Hebrew words ‘ab,ʾabot in the Old Testament refer to “father,” “grandfather,” “patriarch,” and “ancestor.” In their plural form and the context of the past, it usually refers to male ancestors or forefathers [20]. Current members of each family or people as seen as expressions of immediate or distant ancestors and beneficiaries of generational benefits. The nation of Israel constantly referred to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their ancestors and Yahweh as the God of their ancestors through whom they have blessings (Gen. 12:3; 28:13; Exod. 2:24-25; 6:2-9; Deut. 1:11; 4:31; 7:8; 13:17).
It was not uncommon for reference to be made to Israel’s ancestors in order to inspire hope for Israel’s future (Isa 51:1-3). Building on this, the New Testament writers insisted that current blessings on the people are based on the irrevocable promises and election of their ancestors (Luke 1:46-55; Acts 13:15-41; Rom 9; 11:11-35; Gal 3:15-16) [23]. The opposite was also believed to be true: the cumulative ancestral sin brought about punishment upon an unrepentant people (Exod. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14:18; 2 Kings 17:7-18; Ezek. 20). However, if they repent, they would avoid such ancestral curses and be punished only for individual sins (Jer 31:29-30; Ezek 18) [24].

The Israelite nation was family-oriented [25]. They are composed of one big family, immediately traceable to the twelve tribes of Jacob. These tribal leaders or ancestors represented the whole community in themselves. Each of these ancestors was looked upon as the “deity” of the tribe or “bearer” of the name of the tribe. “The leader of Israel is the ‘representative’ because the ‘soul,’ the history, the vigour and the blessing of the whole are concentrated on him [26, 27].” Not that they were worshipped but rather highly regarded as all the members of the tribe “participated dynamically in what he represents [26].”

Israel was a mostly patriarchal society with the father being the head of a family consisting of those united by common blood and dwelling together. The father had the last word on the marriage of the children (Gen 24; 38:6; Josh 15:16) and the son’s professional and traditional training (Exod 12:26-27; Deut 4:9). Some traces of patriarchate were seen in cases where the eldest brother acted as the head of the family (Gen 24, 34, 37).

Only the sons could inherit the parents except there were only daughters; and the first son received two thirds (Deut 21:17). Israelites struggled to birth more sons “in order to perpetuate the family line and fortune and to preserve the ancestral inheritance [26].” In order to “perpetuate the name of the dead” (Ruth 4:5, 10), the Israelite practiced levirate system whereby upon the death of a childless man, his brother or closest male relation must marry the widow so that her children will be the name of the deceased to perpetuate his lineage (Deut 25:5-10; Gen 38). Furthermore, several sons were given patronymic names, naming after their father, grandfather, great grandfather, uncle, in order to perpetuate ancestry [26].

“Among ancient Israel’s neighbors, there are several instances of deification of ancestors (Mesopotamian mythology and Egyptian kings) [20].” The cult of the dead as widely practiced in the ancient Near East involved the provision of food, drink, and artifacts within tombs to supply the afterlife needs of the departed ancestors. Israel must keep itself pure from these [25, 28]. Israelites must not consult the dead (1Sam 28:3-25; Isa 8:19-20; 19:3; 29:4), or attempt to feed the dead (Deut 26:14; Isa 57:6; 65:1-4; Psa 16:3-4 106:28; Gen 15:2). Mourners should not shave their hair or beards partly or make lacerations on their bodies (Lev 19:27-28; 21:5; Deut 14:1). Ezekiel 43:7-9 condemns worshipping the bodies of Israel’s deceased kings.

Prohibiting ancestor worship, Israel was to practice a high regard, esteem, and respect for their dead. As such, they insisted on treating corpses properly and giving them honorable burial. Dead body of relatives were not to be left unburied or as prey for birds and wild beasts (1 Kings 14:11; Jer 16:4; 22:19; Ezek 29:5). Only notorious criminals or heinous enemies were cremated or burnt (Gen 38:24; Lev 20:14; 21:9; Amos 2:1).

In honor of the dead and feeling of affection towards departed loved ones, perfumes, spices, and sweet-smelling ointments were put in their graves (2 Chron 16:14). Families sometimes have designated family graveyard/tomb were family members were normally buried (Judges 8:32; 2 Sam 21:12-14) and being excluded from it was treated with disdain (1 Kings 13:21-22). Tomb markers were sometimes erected with a stele over them (Gen 35:20; 2 Sam 18:18; Neh 3:16). These were sometimes done as memorials of love to their dead one. Like “an act of piety which was due” in accordance to the fourth commandment mandating respect to parents (dead or alive). The dead were “honored in a religious spirit” but “no cult was paid to them [25].”

The dead ancestors were referred to in the delineation of the land boundaries in Israel. Persistent “appeals to the presence of Israel’s forefathers in the land, whose territories are presented as ancestral holding, and the repeated imaging of YHWH as an imperial landowner, sited in his temple-city, granting land to his people [29].” They believed that their right to an inherited, ancestral land is evoked by divine gift of land and lineage to their forefathers (Gen 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:7; 26:3-5; Isa 41:8-10).

**THE SPECIAL ANCESTOR-SEED**

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Gen 3:15 NASB). The interpretation of Gen 3:15 is both individual-eschatological [30, 31], and individual-messianic [32]. The Church Fathers generally understood the woman’s Seed as pointing to Christ [33, 34]. The Reformers and post-Reformation interpreters maintained the individual-messianic
interpretation of Gen 3:15 [35], Luther called Gen 3:15 the “Protoevangelium,” that is, the first gospel with emphasis on the promise of a Savior [36]. The Seed of the woman is singular, crushing the devil’s head, which refers to the devil’s power and dominion. The Seed as Christ alone. Christ crushed and still crushes the serpent’s head.

Since Christ is the Special Seed, His death from Satan’s attack and victory over Satan pertain to all believers [37]. Jesus is aptly described as “the centre of the collective he, the individualization of the human race [38, p. 26].” Jesus is the Federal Head of God’s kingdom and Champion of the rest of the woman’s seed [39, 40]. In this sense, Jesus has become the spiritual Ancestor of all mankind.

The programmatic identification of the special Seed in Genesis goes through the twists and turns and intrigues of famine, childlessness, and conflicts. It is described through the literarily arrangement of the ten (10) toledot headings in the book of Genesis [41, 42]. This underscores Genesis’ preoccupation with generations, family, ancestors, progenitors, and posterity. All the names mentioned in the toledot headings were significant ancestors; coupled with the ones who were the bearers of the special lineage of the Representative Divine Ancestor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Furthermore, if humankind is to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth,” then our ancestors are significant in ensuring continuity of the race as they produce seeds to carry on this mandate (Gen 1:28).

JESUS AS FIRSTBORN, FIRSTFRUIT, FIRST BEGOTTEN

Drawing from the creation story of Genesis 1 and creation motifs of the wisdom literature, Paul addresses Christ with utmost honour as the Head, the Firstborn of all creation, and the Primacy over and above all created things, rather than being part of them (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:6; Rev 1:5, 11). The Old Testament pictured Christ as the Creator and Sovereign of the angelic beings (Ps 89:6-7; 103:20-21; 147:2-5; Job 38:7; Isa 34:4). “No creature is to be excluded from his sovereign power [43, p. 59].”

Christ is an “Archetype of a fresh stage or leap forward in the collective evolution of all the creatures of God. the icon of the invisible God [44, p. 124].” He is the “Lord over the creation” or “Co-regent over the creation [43, p. 65].” He “exercises the privilege of primogeniture as Lord of all creation, the divinely appointed ‘heir of all things [45, p. 194]’” Jesus is God’s Heir par excellence and the Second Adam. “The heirship is predicated upon his role in creation, preservation and teleology. . . Heir of all things . . . Heir over all things [43, p. 66].” He is “the effulgence of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature [46, p. 541].” Jesus is the Origin and Cause of salvation (5:8) [47]. “Jesus is the one in whom the authority to reconcile ‘all things’ has been implanted [47, p. 548].” “The first of a new humanity, into which we are adopted. . . Jesus is the eschatological man, who gives life [1 Cor 15:45; 47, p. 551].” This has strong Messianic undertone [48].

JESUS AS THE EVERLASTING FATHER

In the prophetic utterance of His birth, Jesus was proclaimed “the Everlasting Father” (Isa 9:6). As a Judge, He is called the “Ancient of Days” (Dan 7:9, 13, 22). In Aramaic, it literally means “advanced in days,” not to convey aging but rather the qualities of wisdom and venerability He possesses. A parallel Ugaritic expression means; “the king, father of years [49, p. 29].” Jesus is “our Father” (Isa 63:16; 64:8; John 10:30; 14:9; 20:17). He is a kingly Father who shall reign in peace and bless us forever [50]. He is “the Father of the everlasting age [51, p. 527].” A Phoenician inscription (ca. 850–800 B.C.) describes their ruler as a father to some and as a mother to others and another inscription (ca. 800 B.C.) their deity is believed to be “a father and a mother” to his people. (See ANET 499–500.) [52].

THE LIVING ULTIMATE ANCESTOR

“Jesus Christ is the ultimate embodiment of all the virtues of the ancestor, the realization of the salvation . . . the Proto-Ancestor, the Proto-life-force, Bearer in a transcendent form of the primitive ‘vital union’ and ‘vital force’” [9, p. 109]. He is an invisible Companion, Mentor, Mediator, Prophet, Redeemer, Priest, Brother, Sacrifice, Vindicator, Reconciler, Advocate, Peacemaker, and our divine living eternal Ancestor par excellence [9, 53, 54].

This living Ultimate Ancestor, Jesus, is one with the Father (John 10:30, 38). He is the Creator (John 1:3; Col 1:15; Heb 1:2), King (Isa 6:1-5; John 12:41), Author (Heb 12:22), Beloved (Eph 1:6-7), Cornerstone (Eph 2:20), Commander (Isa 55:4), Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25), Day Star (2 Pet 1:19), Dayspring from on high (Luke 1:78), Firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:23), Deliverer (Rom 11:26), Forerunner (Heb 6:20), Foundation (Isa 28:16), Fountain (Zech 13:1), Desire of Nations (Hag 2:72), Lord of lords (Rev 19:16 ), Master (Matt 8:19), Prince (Acts 3:15; 5:31), Governor (Matt 2:6), and Guide (Psa 48:14).

JESUS CHRIST IS “ISRAEL.”

Matthew and Luke’s accounts of Jesus’ wilderness temptation after forty days fasting (Matt 4:2; Luke 4:2) recalls Israel’s 40 years wandering in the wilderness (Num 14:20-38). These temptations and His scriptural responses further connect these two events unmistakably (Deut 6, 8). Jesus is Israel’s representative and the true Israel. The ancient nation of Israel is the
type while Jesus is the Antitype. Israel’s disobedience prefigured Jesus’ perfect submission to God [55].

Jesus is Israel’s true heritage [56, 57]. He is Israel’s true Representative and the epitome of its history. As the son and heir of Abraham par excellence, Jesus best communicates blessings to His people. He is the Goal and Climax of Israel’s History [58, 59]. Jesus, God’s Son, is Israel-reduced-to-one [60]. Jesus is our vicarious Advocate and Champion [61].

RECOMMENDATIONS OF FUNCTIONAL SUBSTITUTES

The Bible educates children to honor, esteem, respect, and care for their parents while they are alive (Exod 20:12; 21:17; Deut 5:16; Prov 30:11, 17; Eph 6:2). However, ancestor veneration, on the other hand focusses on parent “care” after their death. While an affectionate remembrance and memorializing of our parents is biblical, outright veneration or worship of dead human beings in not. Jesus Christ replaces all that one would have needed in ancestor worship. Just as Christ replaced all the Old Testament types and offerings and fulfilled them in Himself, Christ has fully replaced any need to venerate or worship human ancestors. Christ is our ultimate Ancestor and Mediator, replacing all heathen “intermediaries” of any other religion or culture with Himself [62]. The Bible says that “the memory of the righteous is a blessing” (Prov 10:7). Our ancestors may be respected and “memories of our forebears can help us to discover and stabilize our identities [63].”

Believers in Christ must never to worship their human ancestors. Neither the church, the believer or his family must accommodate the rites of sacrifices, pouring libation, worship, communication with or burning incense to ancestors. Reject the teaching of purgatory, praying for the dead, and communion of saints because they justify ancestral worship [64]. The Bible unequivocally condemns necromancy, that is, consulting the dead (Lev 19:31; 20:6; 20:27; Deut 18:10-13; 1 Sam 28:3-25; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; 1 Chron 10:13; 2 Chron 33:6; Isa 8:19; 19:3).

Christian and biblical functional substitutes to the practices of Ancestor worship and veneration are useful as this article concludes.

- Know that Jesus has overcome all principalities and powers. He is now your divine ever-living, ever-abiding Ancestor who watches over you to protect you. He power supersedes all human ancestors. “At the knee of Jesus, every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord!” (Phil 2:10-11).

- Since you have given your life totally to Christ, reject all heathen practices, including ancestral worship. Know and celebrate your new identity in Christ. You have been “transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light” (Col 1:13-14). Know who you are in Christ Jesus. You are redeemed, covered, and protected. “No weapon fashioned against you shall prosper. And every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.” (Isa 54:17). No power in heaven, earth, under the earth, in the air, or anywhere, can separate you who is “in Christ,” from the love of God (Rom 8:39; John 10:28). We must appropriate the power we have in and through Christ without fail! We must not live in fear of spirits because we are redeemed, liberated, and blessed (2 Cor 5:17). Greater is Jesus that abides in you, than Satan, demons, spirits that are in the world” (1 John 4:4).

- Some former ancestor worshippers may initially entertain a certain sense of insecurity and fear of the unknown when they abandon heathen rituals and emblems. The Bible may be given to them and their new emblem of faith and weapon of spiritual warfare. It is customary to have a family prayer altar set up at home and to place worship materials like Bibles, hymnbooks, study materials and such like on them. Biblical pictures and text may be inscribed on the wall or hanging around the home as functional substitute. As the new believers are being mentored spiritually, a pastor, elder, or experienced Christian may guide them in prayers initially until they feel knowledgeable and confident enough to lead out by themselves at home (Act 16:31; Josh 24:15).

- It is a normal human emotion to remember parents and closely related loved ones during times of major celebrations because of the void their departure has left in our hearts. During betrothals, wedding, Christmas, New Year, Thanksgiving, Easter, birthdays, family reunions, gradations, promotions, house-warming/dedications, and all other ceremonies and celebrations that bring families together, it is not unbiblical to remember our deceased loved ones. “Memorial services are in order at the time of death and during special days when the folk people remember their dead [19, p. 234].”

- We may cautiously accommodate visit to the grave of the deceased, cleaning, repairing, and decorating with fresh flowers. We do not pray for the dead because the dead know nothing. However, nothing is wrong with “praying to God at the tomb-site for the rest of the family
members who are alive, especially for a fresh awareness of the meaning of life and the wisdom of living it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit [19, p. 233].”

- Many Christians use the Easter celebrations as a time to more specially remember Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to the heavenly sanctuary as our Intercessor, Mediator, and High Priest. However, a daily remembrance of the power of resurrection that operates in believers is a good habit. Give a thoughtful hour each day to the closing events of Christ’s life on earth [65].

- We are constantly in spiritual warfare and must not play with sin (2 Cor 10:4-6). We must put on the whole armor of God at all times (Eph 6:10-18). We must resist the devil and not nurse his ideas and temptation (1 Peter 5:8-9).

- “The individual Christian as well as the collective body of believers have an offensive as well as a defensive strategy” [19, p. 230]. The “gates of hell cannot prevail against” the believer, his home or church (Matt 16:18). The believer must speak the word of faith. The cross must be “lifted up” that the powers of darkness may scatter. The “word of their testimony,” the blood of Christ, and their fearlessness is their surety for victory over Satan and his host.

- “My people perish for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). Members must be properly indoctrinated about the biblical truth concerning the dead. My observation is that this doctrine the last to be fully embraced by believers. The utterances of bereaved families and their genuinely-concerned consolers would confirm the level of confusion that still exists in the church on the state of the dead. Ignorance is fatal in this matter! The first lie/deception of the tempter, Satan, was that when people die, they really do not die (Gen 3:1-3)! This is the source of ancestor worship.

- Understand the Great controversy/conflict that rages between Christ and Satan, truth and error would culminate these last days and center on spiritism. Satan will spare no energy to deceive even the very elect. Satan and his demonic host would camouflage as messengers of righteousness. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Cor 11:13-15). Beyerhaus asserts: “It is the unanimous consensus of Rabbinism, the New Testament and the Church Fathers that the spiritual forces behind mediumistic and occult phenomena are not the souls of the departed but the power of the fallen angels or demons who are masters of disguise [66, p. 137].”

- People’s general apprehension about the future and agitation about outcomes of decisions on business, marriage, carrier, and other significant unresolved issues, have driven many to enlist the inquiry of the dead ancestors or soothsayers. Trust an unknown future to a known God! He knows the thoughts He thinks towards you and your family: “thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer 29:11-13).

- The Communion Service or Lord’s Supper is a sacrament that represents the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus with the ingesting of the symbolic flesh and blood of Jesus. We thereby renew our covenant with Christ. [quote SDA]. In a way, this signifies the mystery of Christ’s forgiveness, our adoption into His family “as well as the divine ancestral and sibling relationship Jesus has with us [67, p. 13].”

A WORD OF CAUTION

- We must tread softly so as not to commit “syncretism.” If calling Jesus “Brother Ancestor” helps to enculturate Christianity in Africa it will be acceptable to the extent that it does not blur the clear biblical meaning that distinguishes Christ from normal ancestors in traditional African belief.

- The ancestry of Jesus is not the same as ancestry in Asia or Africa or Latin America or any other place. Recognizing Christ as ancestor is never intended to place Christ on equal footing with these human ancestors or substitute his name for their practices. Only the ancestry of Jesus is divine and authentic for worship and the Source and Sustainer of all life. Human ancestral worship is ignorant idolatry.

- There is also the danger that visualizing Jesus Christ as an Ancestor may inadvertently encourage some people to think of their human ancestors as intermediaries. It must be taught repeatedly that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim 2).

- The desire to argue for Christ as our Ancestor is latent with risk of some reducing Him to the level of an ordinary human being instead of the God-incarnate [9, 68].

CONCLUSION
Some people still hold on to the belief that their dead relatives have transitioned to another life where they continue to participate in what happens on earth, and are able to influence the affairs of the living. There is no need for this once you realize that Christ is our ever-living ultimate Ancestor. He is all you need and He is sufficient for every situation. He is our Redeemer and Mediator representing us in heaven and watching over us like a “hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Matt 23:37). We are unforgettably inscribed in the palm of his hands (Isaiah 49:14–16). “His eyes are upon the sparrow and He watches over us.” Nothing can separate us from His love. He is our ever companion.

Jesus is the everlasting Father, the embodiment of the nation of Israel and spiritual Israel. He is the Special representative salvific Seed of Genesis 3:15. He is the firstborn, first begotten and first-fruit. Christ perfectly fits the role: our Ancestor.

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