AOSIS

Reconsidering the place of Christ in Trinitarian mission in the African Divine Church of Kenya

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African Divine Church (ADC) is an African Instituted Church affiliated to the Organisation of the African Instituted Churches, which shapes African Instituted Churches' (AICs') theology through theological education. ADC has both lived, and sung-narrated theology and it originated from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, hence Pentecostal with experiential undertones. Selected leaders of ADC in Vihiga County contributed to the study. The de-emphasised place of Christ was investigated to establish his place in ADC's Trinitarian and missional Theology. The study articulated theological principles regarding Trinitarian ecclesiology, to assist the ADC in reworking its Christology. The historical approach of the early church, medieval, reformation, and modern periods regarding the place of Christ as the second person of the Triune God were investigated, to formulate guidelines for a paradigm shift in understanding the place of Christ in Trinitarian ecclesiology and the missional community that ADC may use in reworking its Trinitarian Mission. The study employed a mixed-method that followed three steps, namely interviews, questionnaires and observation. The study population was determined through purposive sampling. A coding method safeguarded the identity and confidentiality of participants. The results were classified as historical, practical and theological. ADC derived its name from John 15:1–17 through meditation, vision and revelation. The colours red, white and green symbolise its mission and growth, while its experiential and charismatic liturgy was derived from 1 Samuel 6:1–4, with evidence of hermeneutical deficiency. Theological findings included the undeveloped relationship between God and ecclesial mission, emphasis on the Holy Spirit, healing, and prophecy with a lessened place of Christ in the Trinitarian mission, as well as the blend of ancestorology with Christology that threatens the hypostatic Christology and Trinitarian economy. The study implied a call for reworking hermeneutics, Trinitarian theology, and reconstructing the relationship between God's mission and that of the Church and a reworked Christology, distinctive from ancestorology.

Contribution: African Divine Church's narrative theology is exposed especially the Trinitarian mission to a constructive critique and further study. It has advanced mixed-method in progressing narrative inquiry as an alternative methodology.

Keywords: African Divine Church; African Instituted Churches; Christology; Pneumatology; Trinity; Ecumenical creeds; Ecclesiology; Missional community.

Introduction

Reviews of the literature reveal that the African Divine Church's (ADC) theology of Trinitarian mission had not been explored yet. However, the historical background (Nandi & Kima 2015) examination of the *Roho* [Spirit] churches where the ADC is located (Padwick 2003:97–100), and an analysis of the ADC's worship, faith-healing, and prophecy (Kima 2016:114) point to the need for an assessment of its Trinitarian ecclesiology. Since ADC's theology is both lived and sung (Kima 2016:114), it was necessary for this present research to document both the lived and the sung theology. This documentation helps to respond to the problems revealed by the study, which was concerned with the articulation of proper theological principles concerning Trinitarian ecclesiology and the missional community.

This work emerged from interaction and engagement with the ADC's leadership and its members. A common emphasis on the Holy Spirit, with the conspicuous de-emphasis on the Person of Christ, sparked academic interest in the research. The Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), the umbrella of all AICs, subscribes to the Trinitarian doctrine, but shows more emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit (OAIC 2010:Art. 8:1) and rather acknowledges the Apostles' Creed

than other creeds (OAIC 2010:Art. 8:3). The concept of Christological Sonship is problematic in most of the African Independent Churches (AICs) with which the ADC is affiliated. It is already known that there is a less developed Christology in the AICs. The less-developed Christology was the gap that this research attempted to bridge. The notion of the inclusion of ancestors in worship (Makhubu 1988:59–62) and the centrality of the Holy Spirit through dreams and visions (Oduro, Nussbaum & Born 2008:113–114) show a significant gap concerning the place of Christ in the Trinitarian mission. A further gap is expressed through the emphasis on the Holy Spirit's economic functions in the study of the *Roho* (Spirit) movement (Padwick 2003:66–134) which confirmed the less developed Christology. This problem is connected to Nyende's (2008:44) argument, that in the African enchanted cosmology, the air is always full of spirits. The perception of these spirits has influenced the spirituality of AICs and the general practice of African theology.

The conceptual framework for this study was built up through an extensive historical analysis of the development of Trinitarian ecclesiology, and the missional community through the history of the church. The following works are essential: Calvin's *Institutes* Book IV; the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566; the Belgic Confession of 1561; and Pawl's (2016:12–16) study on conciliar Christology. These works benefited this study in two ways. Firstly, they helped to establish the Trinitarian foundation of the Reformed tradition from which this research was done. Secondly, the works affirmed the centrality of Christ in the Trinitarian mission, including the equality, coeternity, and consubstantiality of the three Persons of the Trinity, ontologically and economically. This therefore, provided the framework for evaluating and developing the ADC's Trinitarian ecclesiology. On this basis, guidelines could be formulated for a paradigm shift in the ADC's understanding of the role of Christ.

Research methodology and design

The study followed three steps: interviews, questionnaires, and in-person observation. The three steps were concurrent. The study employed a mixed-method research paradigm. This was important, because it ensured a synergetic component, which enhanced credible effectiveness through accommodating diverse paradigmatic approaches to the evaluative process (eds. Mertens & Hesse-Biber 2013:7–8). The mixed method warranted maximised findings (Pearson et al. 2015:122), in the sense that the findings gathered informed the direction of the theological practice.

The nature of the study was interactive, which is an important part of narrative inquiry-based research (Rosenthal 1993:63). Narrative inquiry was favourable to this study, because it maintained the originality of the primary source of the data and examined the content, the structure, and the performance of the narratives as an entire whole (Wells 2011:7). Narrative inquiry placed both the narrator and the listener in a cultural

context (Horsdal 2011:5), consistent with the study. Since this study considered the emotions and feelings of the participants relevant, the inquiry was advantageous because it embraced the virtue of emotional quality as an inherent and integral feature. Thus, this approach unlike scientific inquiry, is open to competing interpretations. That is, 'while a logico-scientific text would have to demonstrate and prove the difference between the two, a narrative can simply put the element close to one another, exhibiting explanations' (Czarniawska 2004:18,19).

The narrative inquiry leads to constructing how people draw meaning from experiences around them (Sharam 1998:6), and how such experiences are felt and lived out. The study's qualitative approach was determined by the inquisitive nature of the study, which prompted empirical research into the doctrinal beliefs of ADC members. This qualitative study was largely an investigation of ADC's leadership and laypeople. The theoretical framework of the study informed the interviews, questionnaires, and the in-person observations. The tools enabled the acquisition of various perceptions from the participants, which helped to draw various insights about the place of Christ in the ADC's Trinitarian mission. These perceptions resulted in five suppositions, but because suppositions three and four expressed a close relationality, they were combined into one. The study referred to three main ecumenical creeds, namely the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, as a theological framework for developing the principles that could be used by the ADC in developing its view of the place of Christ in Trinitarian mission. The creeds are rooted in Scripture and are nondenominational, hence preferred.

The setting, population, and participants

The setting of the study was the ADC of Kenya, located in Vihiga County in the Western region of Kenya. Vihiga County borders Nandi County in the east, Kisumu County to the south, Siaya County to the west, and Kakamega county in its north. The research was carried out in the five sub-counties, namely Sabatia, Hamisi, Vihiga, Luanda, and Emuhaya. The ADC headquarters are located at Gamalenga sub-location, Tiriki West Division, Himisi sub-county in Vihiga County, along the Kisumu-Kakamega highway. The ADC uses these political and administrative boundaries to demarcate its ecclesial boundaries. The researcher worked with the gatekeeper to gain entry to the site and coordinate the programme in the ADC's Vihiga County.

Of the participants, 55 were involved in the research. Of them, 25 participants were interviewed, and 30 people responded to the questionnaires. The participants of the study population were determined by purposive sampling. This is because the researcher was interested in a target group that would provide reliable and relevant information to the study (Kombo & Tromp 2006:81–82). Age was important, for it gave the participants an advantage to provide historical information. Moreover, age enabled the participants to

critically present their viewpoint regarding the ADC's theological praxis. The researcher considers gender as significant for diversified views. Both the respondents and the participants who took part in the study were significant authorities and long-serving leaders in the ADC of Kenya. Secondly, some were certificate-level graduate pastors from the ADC Theological College. Thus, the information they volunteered was key and reliable in determining ADC's belief system.

The participants provided information through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and in-person observations. The questionnaire was structured in a simple way that enabled the participants to give information with ease. Participants' identity was safeguarded through the coding method. The gatekeeper drew them from the leadership and the laity. The inclusion of leaders and laity provided a more balanced picture of the ADC's historical, practical and theological aspects. The observation method was included, which enabled the acquisition of practical aspects of the ADC's lived theology, and it added relevancy to the information. The General Secretary of the ADC was deliberately included as an information confirmation agent for the data that the participants volunteered.

Measures, procedures and analysis

The qualitative data collection methods in this study consisted of three parts: interviews, questionnaires, and in-person observations. The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview schedule. The researcher and the participants interacted face to face in the field research context, to enable the in-person interviews, discussions and observations (Kombo & Tromp 2006:100). The procedure was drawn from the perspective of Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006:10), which requires both the researcher and the participants to engage in personal and direct interaction during the on-site fieldwork.

The interviews and discussions were recorded. Triangulation ensured proper transcription. The researcher followed the precautions of Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016:85) regarding the possibility of the recording devices causing changes in the behaviour of the participants. The researcher addressed this through a prior discussion with the participants and he again used the gatekeeper's written permission, which reduced the erosion of confidence. Scheduled services of the ADC were observed, enabling the researcher to put the participants' behaviour into context, and safeguarding an in-depth understanding of the ADC's lived theology. The observation was unstructured since the approach was descriptive (Kombo & Tromp 2006:96). Observation proved advantageous, because it enabled the researcher to obtain actual first-hand information (Tomal 2003:28). Moreover, it provided the researcher with a real situation of the participants in a relaxed and non-suspicious context where pretence was minimal compared to other tools of data collection. The gatekeeper assisted the distribution and return of the questionnaires.

The collected data was analysed thematically. Since the participants' feelings were important, the researcher used a continuum approach. The steps followed in the analysis were Creswell's (2014:197–200) six steps of analysis. Firstly, a transcription; secondly, the researcher obtained the impression of the participants' views; and thirdly, the coding process ensured the organisation of the data. The coding system was important, because it enabled the researcher to identify topics or major themes (Kombo & Tromp 2006:119). The fourth was the generation of themes for analysis; the fifth, was the conveyance of the findings narratively; and the sixth was the researcher's in-person interpretation of the findings. The researcher constructed meaning through the identification of repeated patterns and themes from the data by reading and rereading, listening and re-listening to the data (Gay et al. 2006:468–9). The meaning of the respondents' views was attained through the process of data organisation, involving the categorisation of the data into related themes, to obtain the intended purpose.

The narrative nature of the study was maintained through the telling and retelling of the stories (Clandinin 2016:22, 34). The researcher preserved the narrativity of the study, because it enabled the consolidation of the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the participants, which enhanced the achievement of the purpose of the study (Gilbert 2002:224).

Key findings

The ADC of Kenya is a spiritual (*Roho*), church. All participants link its originality to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), which affirms its Pentecostal category. The faith statement of ADC is taken from the basic faith of the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) as a member church. Thus, the basic faith is expressed as one God revealed in three persons, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God the Father is understood as the creator who sustains the world. God the Son, as incarnated through the Virgin birth, as the Redeemer of the world. God the Holy Spirit, who speaks to people through the prophets, empowers people with gifts of healing, prophecy and preaching for the service and witnessing. The findings establish varying undertones, thus while the statement of faith seems abstract, ADC's lived theology places greater emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit.

The findings categorise ADC's theology as lived, expressed in daily practices, and songs, with emphasis placed on the Holy Spirit and faith healing. The findings show that they still held strongly to their traditional practices relating to death. Since ADC is a member of OAIC, which is the umbrella of all AICs, its theology of Christ is predominantly challenged by the strong traditional practices related to death to some extent. A blend of ancestorology in their lived and experiential practices in effort to develop theology, more so Christology, confirms it. Thus, the article assumes that since ADC theology is lived and dramatised in demonstrative singing, the likely resultant possibilities would be an overemphasis of one theological practice over the other, either consciously or unconsciously.

The study did not de-theologise or deconstruct the ADC theology, by suggesting a Western approach as the standard, neither is the study suggesting a replacement approach of ADC theological development on Christology, but it suggests a framework as a basis to develop its contextual theology. The creeds, although developed by using westernised tools, render a balanced framework, since it is both biblical and broadly accepted in the history of Christianity.

The findings of the study were categorised according to the research tools used in the process of collecting data. Findings from the semi-structured interviews were thematically grouped into three. Firstly, the interviews confirmed the ADC's historical connection with the PAOC. Regarding the question on the origin of the name and the vision of the church, interviewees said that God revealed it to the leaders during their silent meditational prayer of John 15:1–17. In their interpretation of the passage, ADC is the branch of the Vine, thus letter A is the acronym for Africans, D (Divine as the Vine) means that ADC is a branch of a tree planted at the riverside which cannot wither, thus bearing fruit in all seasons and letter C represents the denomination. Regarding Christology, only one interviewee mentioned Jesus Christ as the true Vine, of which ADC is a branch. The questions on practical aspects dealt with how ADC worships, their understanding of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and the symbolic meaning of the denominational colours. In their response, they alluded that ADC's liturgy was guided by the Holy Spirit, for example the loud singing, exorcism, divine healing, clapping of hands, and stumping of the feet from Ezekiel 6:1 was attributed to the Holy Spirit. Baptism and church colours (red, white, and green) signify the Trinitarian mission. On the theological aspect, a question on the ADC's understanding of the role of the Trinitarian persons reveals that the ADC's doctrine of salvation is Trinitarian; however, the economic roles of the members of the Trinity are confused. The question about the 'mission of God', received diverse opinions as many of them perceived it as a physical place of denominational administration, with evangelical open-air meetings as a church programme. Equally, an important question to the ADC is the role of the prophetic ministry. The predominant position is that prophetic ministry is still active under the watch of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to people in dreams, visions and meditation. Some, however, debunked the continuity of the prophecy as the reason for the commercialisation of the contemporary prophetic ministry. In their view, true prophetic ministry ends with the genuine ministry of ADC pioneers. Concerning the place of ancestors in prayer, most of the participants show they have not abandoned their traditional view about the influence of the ancestors in prayer and the direction of important matters. Some cited Acts 2:27 to support the relevancy of the place of ancestors, who argue that since God values the graves of the departed righteous, they should keep remembering them. They argue that ancestors relay benevolent information through dreams and vision. This precipitates an interpretational challenge of isolating Scripture from its original context, which in turn affects the intended meaning

and its contemporary application. However, some demystify their role and termed them as enemies to the living. The influence of ancestors emerged as significant in prayer.

Findings from an in-person observation show that ADC liturgical worship is charismatic and dynamic as directed by the Spirit. Rhythmic handclapping, stamping of the feet, and loud preaching are attributed to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The findings from the questionnaire confirm a Trinitarian involvement in salvation, divine healing, and baptism, as is the case with findings from the interviews. On the question about the relationship between God's mission and the church, out of the 30 respondents, 27 agreed that the church's mission is the same as God's mission. However, mission was viewed as a place. Regarding the question about the ancestral influence in prayer and worship, 20 out of 30 put a 'yes' and 10 denied with a 'no'. In the relation to the question of whether ADC is a *Roho* church, 25 respondents out of 30 agreed that the ADC is a *Roho* (Spirit) church, but five denied it. Twenty-nine out of 30 agreed that the African community is related to the Trinitarian community, but one denied it. All the respondents agreed that the ADC's three colours (red, white, and green) signify mission. Similarly, all 30 respondents agreed that the Holy Spirit has a place in songs, prayer, and preaching.

From the empirical findings, four specific suppositions emerged that suggest theological guidelines for the ADC in addressing the place of Christ in the Trinitarian mission:

1. A call to re-establish a missional hermeneutic using the ecumenical creeds' theological framework.
2. A call to rework a Trinitarian theology based on the theological principles drawn from the ecumenical creeds' framework.
3. A call to rework the relationship between the Trinitarian community and the missional community through the theological framework of the ecumenical creeds.
4. Lastly, a call to reconstruct a balanced Christology using the theological principles of the ecumenical creeds.

Discussion of key findings

The discussion of the key findings does not intend to replace ADC's theology with church history. However, it uses and develops the ecumenical Creeds in history to suggest theological pillars that ADC can use to rework its weak theological areas. Creeds are both rooted in Scripture and are largely acceptable in arriving at the authenticity of any doctrinal development. The ADC context, however, was preserved.

African Divine Church to rework its missional hermeneutic

This hypothesis arose from a misinterpretation of Scripture: to establish a responsible missional hermeneutic, it was necessary to examine the hermeneutical development through four periods of church history. In the early church period

(AD 100–470) useful works include the epistle of Barnabas (chapters VII–VII), and the Christological and salvific missional typologies of Justin Martyr (1885:380–382). Origen's (1936:2–3) work, *On first principles*, on the pre-existence of Jesus Christ as the one sent to invite the Gentiles, is useful because it shows the ecumenical creedal preservation of the Father and the Son in mission. However, Origen's literal typology and allegorical methodology (Rogers & McKim 1999:3–4, 12) lack the two main exegetical backgrounds of historicity and genre that the ADC needs in reading the Scripture with attention to the context, to work out the original meaning of the author. Proper preservation of the two contexts, provides better means for locating the perichoretic and distinctive economic functions of the Trinity, in the flow of the narrative that the ecumenical creeds attest to.

The medieval hermeneutics (AD 476–1453) of Gregory the Great – reading the Bible as one salvific story, within the right historical and literary backgrounds (Mayeski 2009: 87–89) – speaks to the intent of preserving the originality of the message. If this is an argument to go with, then the redemptive story begins with creation in Genesis, through to Revelation where everything is restored in the new city where the members of the Godhead equally participate as one God who exists as Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, as expressed in the creeds.

In the Reformation period (1500–1750), Calvin's principle of the sufficiency and inspiration of Scripture is useful for the ADC. It brings the idea of Christ as the Word incarnate, and the Spirit as the Inspirer, together. After all, to interpret the Scripture is the work of the Spirit (Calvin, I, IX, i). The incarnate Word that Calvin proposes, affirms the Apostles' Creed's defence of Christ's humanity, his conception by the Spirit, and the birth from the Virgin Mary; the Nicene Creed's definition says: 'he came down from heaven and was incarnated by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and made man' and the Athanasian Creed's statement 'the Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created but begotten'. This can benefit the ADC to rethink its overemphasis on the Spirit towards the development of a Spirit Christology. Zwingli's concept of the perspicuity of the Scripture, the need for biblical languages, the centrality of the Holy Spirit in revealing the Scripture, and the *regula fidei* (Sargent 2014:328–334) are helpful, with the *regula fidei* being a common and practical concept in the ADC.

In the modern period (17th century to the present) Zinzendorf's approach to the Bible in light of the sufficiency of the atoning death of Christ, his wounds, ascension, and the notion of the Bible as entirely concerned with Christ (ed. Lindberg 2008:209–214), enables the ADC to locate Christ's humanity. However, this endangers the ecumenical creedal defense of the hypostatic nature of Christ that the Bible expresses, which will disadvantage the ADC's process towards a missional hermeneutic. Wesley's emphasis on searching the Scripture prayerfully, including the centrality of the Holy Spirit (Koskie 2014:60), can be helpful to the ADC.

However, the danger also in this methodology can arise, when the ADC emphasises the place of the Spirit over the Word. This can be addressed by embracing the ecumenical creeds' expression of the pre-existent relationality of the Son and the Spirit, in terms of perichoresis and economic interrelation. The authority of the Scripture, the lived experiences, the notion of restorationism completed in the Latter Rains, viewed as complete salvation, and the fivefold full gospel of experience and supernaturalism as the basis of Pentecostal hermeneutics (Oliverio 2012:31–32), are like the practical experiences of the ADC. However, what is missing in this approach, is the collaboration of the Trinity that the ecumenical creeds point to. In addition, the historical and literary backgrounds are missing, and these are important for responsible hermeneutical development.

African Divine Church to re-establish its Trinitarian theology

The harmonisation of the ADC's three missional colours (red, white, and green) is possible through the construction of a Trinitarian theology of mission. From the Apostles' Creed, three principles are drawn from the early church: Origen's rule of faith maintains one Father as the maker of the earth, Irenaeus' Christ as the Son of God, and Tertullian's Word incarnate, and the role of the Spirit in Christ's conception (Schaff 1876:35–37). These provide the ADC with a framework to distinguish the economy presented by the three colours without mixing them up. The Apostles' Creed preserves Trinitarian ontology and explains the coexistence and coequality of the Godhead. The functional Godhead shows a perichoretic relationality that accomplishes the salvation plan. An overlap that exists in the ontological and economic Trinity is important, because it preserves the unity and inseparability in the Godhead (Torrance 1996:8) that the ADC needs in developing a concept of an undivided and coexisting Trinity. The Nicene Creed offers essentials for reconstructing the ADC's Trinitarian theology. Irenaeus' Trinitarian economy, which confirms God as the Father of Christ the begotten Son, reveals collaboration in creation. In the incarnation, the Son accomplishes redemption through death, resurrection, and ascension (ed. Schaff 1885:873–874), and the Spirit's role is evident in the birth of Christ and his earthly mission, including his ascension and return (Schaff 1876:876). Gregory of Nyssa's (1892:109) work on *the Holy Trinity*, book XII, describes the divinity of the Holy Spirit as 'the unction of the only-begotten, who is also called the Anointed of the Lord' (Nyssa 1892:613); this proves that the Three are equally involved in salvation. The Athanasian Creed supports the unity of the Godhead as formulated by Bray (1984):

> [O]ne person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty coequal. (p. 177)

In the medieval period, Aquinas' concept of the indivisible Trinity in *Summa Theologica* Question 11, article 1 (Aquinas 1912:47), Ambrose's view of the equality of the Spirit with the

Father and the Son, in his work *the Holy Spirit* (Book 1, chapter 1, sections 23–25; chapter II, sections 27–30) (Schaff 1893:237–239), affirms the creedal language of consubstantiality, coeternity, and equality of the Godhead that is important for the ADC's theological reconstruction.

Augustine's *City of God* (1871:333) portrays the economy of the Father as the creator, Jesus as the fulfilment of the Abrahamic seed who provides the universal blessing, and the Holy Spirit as the divine Spirit. In his work, *On the Holy Trinity* (Book I, chapter 4, section 7), Augustine proclaims the unity and divinity of the Godhead of three persons, not three gods but one, and the ontological relationship where the Father is unbegotten, but the generator of the Son, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit belongs to the Father and the Son; this balances the unity, needed for the ADC's theological process. Further, the confusing theological economy of the ADC can be addressed by embracing the Augustinian Father, who is not the Son nor the Spirit; the Son who is not the Father nor the Spirit; and the Spirit who is not the Father nor the Son (Augustine 1963:10–11), to maintain the functional distinction. Moreover, Aquinas' (1947:331–335) double procession of the Holy Spirit in *Summa Theologica*, confirms the Nicene Creed's *homoousios* coeternity, coequality, and consubstantiality that can root the ADC's Trinitarian theology in an orthodox position.

In the Reformation period, Calvin's view of Christ as the begotten from the Father, and the coeternity of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son (*Institutes*, I.XIII.vii & xiv), indicates equal divinity, which affirms the Nicene Creed. The economic interrelatedness is a tool to reshape the ADC's passive Christ into an active participant in the Trinitarian mission. Similarly, the Helvetic Confession (chapter 3) is essential, because it acknowledges the oneness of God, in essence, nature, and coeternity, reminiscent of the Athanasian Creed's clause, which declares 'we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity' (verse 3). The needed distinguishability of the Godhead is consistent in the expressions 'indivisible' and 'inseparability without confusion'. The theology of the begottenness of the Son, and the double procession of the Spirit implies the creedal affirmations of ontological relationality.

In the modern period, Moravian theology is drawn from Zinzendorf's teaching of the heart experience, the motherhood of the Spirit, and the wounds of Christ (Atwood 2004:43–64), but this is insufficient for the ADC to use to develop its Trinitarian theology. Firstly, it lacks the support of the ecumenical creeds' definition of the Godhead. Secondly, it is centred on a single Christology from below. Thirdly, the feminine language used for the Spirit is problematic, because it is not biblical. The Wesleyan experiential and altar theology, although orthodox, emphasises experience rather than doctrine (Dieter 1996:17–23). The concepts of second and third blessings (Robinson 2013:14; Ruth 2005:39–40) are built around the economy of the Spirit who enables experience. The 19th century's post-salvation manifestations (Robinson 2013:3–4) and the dominance of the Spirit's economy (Hollenweger 1997:182–183), confirm experience over doctrine. This theology needs a dialogical approach between philosophical and experienced or lived theology. The twentieth-century experiential theology of Parham (Wilkinson 2009:17–18) and Seymour's Azusa Street experience (Synan 1997:105), which have a similar connection to the 19th century, also need a synthesis of philosophical and practical theology, because overemphasised, philosophy will empty human experience. Similarly, overemphasised experience hinders the needed philosophical elements that preserve both the ontological and economic Trinity, that is key to the ADC.

African Divine Church to rework the relationship between the Trinitarian and missional community

This urgency emerged from the ADC's mixed understanding of the mission of the church and that of God. The relevancy of this is to bring ADC's separate understanding of the mission, from being a place, to being the act of sending, where the Church is the agent of God on mission. While this does not rule out ADC's theology of mission, it suggests a means to broaden and makes better its view of the *missio Dei* and the ecclesial mission. The relevancy of the creeds is in their elements of the Trinitarian sending, to the world where the church is located. The Apostles' Creed 'I believe in the one holy catholic church and the communion of saints', and the Nicene Creed's 'I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church', shows a similar emphasis. For the ADC to develop relationality between the Trinity and the church, it needs to perceive the catholicity of the church from the universality of the body of Christ's universal reconciliatory mission. Apostolicity connects to the apostles' role of proclamation (Harned 1981:101–102), and such apostolicity must be under one Godhead, because the Triune God is the one worshipped equally (Redmile 2006:33) by the church. The two creedal phrases show a functional Trinity (Torrance 1996:252), which agrees with Clément's view that the holiness of the church is drawn from the Holy Trinity (Glimm 1947:33). To believe in the universal church, implies belief in the economy of the Godhead (Sullivan 1988:4–5). Augustine's (1954:66) *the City of God*, chapter 8, can address the ADC's understanding of ecclesial mission, because Christ is the founder, the Lord, and the saviour of the city. The context presents the church as a tool for expanding the kingdom of God (Ladd 1959:15). This interrelationship of the Godhead and the church helps to demystify the ADC's mission: it is not a place of ecclesial and denominational administration. The Athanasian Creed (vv. 3–28) can enable the ADC to establish a perception of the Godhead, who exist in each other and for each other. As such, the Father functionally sends the Son on the salvation mission through the Holy Spirit, who continues the mission through the church (Schaff 1877:38). The relationality that the ADC should arrive at, is one in which the ecclesial community worships one God in Trinity (Bray 1984:177). The phrase, 'forgiveness of sins', speaks to the ADC about the *oikonomia* of the Trinity, which is at the centre of the biblical story

(Harned 1981:103, 105). Ignatius's support of the active Trinity, in his letter to the Ephesians 1:5 and 9, speaks of the dependence of the church on the Trinity, such that the church is one with Jesus Christ, as Jesus is united with the Father (Walsh 1947:87–91). The relationship between Christ and the Church is predicated on the unity that the Son and the Father show. This helps to root out the ADC's revealed passivity regarding Christ in human providence.

Anselm's *First Meditation* (V) rooted the relationship of the Trinity and the church in its ecclesiology, as the body of Christ, where the church is mandated to speak the truth on his behalf. Thus, the unity of the church is determined by that of the Father and the Son (Anselm 1872:15–17). No Trinitarian member can function alone in the redemption of humanity into the body of Christ. Augustine, in *On the Holy Trinity* (Book 1, chapter IV, section 7), argued for the mutual dependability of the Godhead (Augustine 1963:11). The Trinitarian and ecclesial relationality that the ADC needs to acknowledge, can be established on the perichoretic and economic distinguishability, that is characteristic of the Godhead (Augustine 1887:534).

Calvin's *Institutes* (1845:IV, I, ix–x) identified the Father as the maintainer of the power and faith of the church, through proclamation, anointing and consecrating the servants through the Spirit, and through connecting the mission of the church to his promises; this speaks to the relationship between the Godhead and the church. Calvin's view of the relationality of the Godhead and the church, benefits the ADC. Firstly, Calvin (1845:V, I, vii) put forward his view of the economy of the Godhead in adopting and sanctifying the church as the sons of God into the body of Christ. Secondly, Calvin (1845:II, XII, i & ii) also acknowledged the incarnation of God into the begotten Son, to redeem humanity, which qualifies him, as both God and man, to mediate the church into the kingdom. This relationality is expressed in the intent of the Godhead towards the church.

The emphasis on the ecumenical creeds in the modern age seems less, and this can be predicated on the inadequate theology of the church, that has given less attention to the being of the Triune God (Gunton 2003:56) and the rise of experiential Pentecostalism (Newberg 2012:20–21). Since the ADC exists in the context of these traditions, what is of benefit, is theological preservation of the equality of the Godhead, that constantly participates in the movement in which God the Father is the sender of Christ and the Holy Spirit (Moltmann 1977:53, 55).

African Divine Church to rework out a balanced Christology

The study arrived at the need for a balanced Christology, which emerged from the tendencies of ADC theology that showed elements of ancestorology. Since historical creeds present a framework rooted in the Scripture, it helps to shape ADC's mixed Christology. Thus, ADC needs the Apostles' Creed's preservation of the theology of incarnation – Christ's

conception by the Holy Spirit through the virgin birth. This is foundational to the earthly mission and the passion of Christ, that the creed refers to later. The Nicene Creed roots Christology in terms that establish Christ's eternal relationality with the Father – terms such as 'coessential', 'coeternal' 'begotten before all the world, begotten not made' (Schaff 1876:36). The Christ that the ADC needs to arrive at, is the second Person of the Trinity (Pawl 2016:12–15). Thus, the characteristic model of Christ established here is incomparable to African ancestral Christology. This model of Christ sees him as presently active in the mission of God and human affairs, as opposed to alleged passivity. Irenaeus uses Nicene language in *Against Heretics* (Book I, chapter IX, section 2): 'begotten, creator of all, the true light who illuminates men'. Tertullian's construct of Christ, who is of the same nature, coeternal with God and divinely conceived by the Father's Spirit (*Apology,* chapter XII), balances the hypostatic nature. The Athanasian Creed affirms the Trinity, consisting of three distinguishable persons in one (Bray 1984:177–179), resulting in an interrelated and coequal Godhead.

Calvin (1845:621) (*Institutes*, IV, IX, viii) expressed the key concept of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father. This is also necessary for the ADC's Christology. Christology without the same substance with the Father, denies Christ the deity that is important in understanding the satisfaction of God's justice to sinful humanity. The fact that Christ is God, gives him an 'ex-officio'[1] place and role in human affairs, which African ancestral Christology has tried to capitalise on, but this article deconstructs such an attempt. The eternal generation, *kenosis* (Phlm 2:7), and *Theotokos* in the Belgic Confession 1566, article 10 (ed. Bratcher 2020), complete the salvation story.

Regarding the modern period, the theology of the wounds of Christ (Atwood 2004:43–44) provides the sense of Christ's humanity, but less of deity. The wound theology is common in the ADC's concept of divine healing, which emphasises the Holy Spirit and the patient's faith, and spiritualises the stripes of Christ for divine healing. The wound theology should not stand alone but be developed considering Christ's deity and consubstantiality with the Father. The pietistic experientialism, witnessing, perfection, and the second blessing (Dieter 1996:17–18), the prominence of the Spirit and higher life (Hollenweger 1997:182–183), make a balanced theological system when developed according to the ecumenical creedal theology, that acknowledges the equal coexistence and economic collaboration of the Godhead.

The kind of African Christology into which the ADC falls, requires a continued reworking to eliminate ancestral inclinations. The task is to clarify the person of Christ, who since Vatican II has been viewed as a member of the African community (Maina 2009:84). This is where conceptions of the African spirit-world (Nyende 2008:44) have influenced the development of ancestor Christology, which does not fit

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1. The author uses the term loosely in the sense that Christ is always present, neither passive not partially active, but constantly involved in human affairs. This is opposed to the ADC's overemphasis on the Holy Spirit, rather than Christ in their experiential theological enterprise.

well into the theological framework that the ecumenical creeds provide.

The framework drawn from the ecumenical creeds' points to the need for a paradigm shift. The above four suppositions from the empirical study need to be addressed. Firstly, the proposed missional hermeneutical shift corresponds to the Apostles' Creed's Trinitarian focus, and the economic functions that preserve the collaborative distinctions. A hermeneutic that is rooted in the Nicene affirmation of the double procession of the Spirit, locates the Spirit in the shared divinity of the Father and the Son, through a common consubstantiality. This is reinforced in the Athanasian Creed's affirmation of the 'one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity', which preserves the perichoretic existence in the missional economy of the Godhead.

Secondly, the shift in Trinitarian theology should be anchored in the oneness of the Godhead. The Apostles' Creed's economic Trinity, and the Nicene Creed's hypostatic nature, deal with the theological crisis of the de-emphasised place of Christ. The Athanasian Creed reinforces the oneness concept, by referring to 'the equal glory' and coeternal majesty.

The third shift is in the relationship between the Trinitarian community and the missional community. This development is to be predicated on the doctrine of the church, detailed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, that affirm one holy, catholic, apostolic church, and the communion of saints. The church draws its holiness from the Godhead. The catholicity of the church is connected to the universal new covenant in the body of Christ. Thus, the economy of the Godhead produces the church, as the Athanasian Creed affirms (Articles 21–23; 30–39), and the Godhead enables the church to participate in God's mission.

The shared deity of the Trinity in the Apostles' Creed, places Christ as God the Son, which qualifies his divinity and consubstantiality with the Father. Humanity is drawn from the Father's will, in accomplishing the salvation plan, through Spirit Christology, which the Creed establishes through his birth, earthly mission, death, resurrection, ascension, and his second advent. Christ is neither passive nor partly active, thus, the Nicene Creed establishes Christ active in his place in the Trinity, through his equality with God the Father, who is constantly at work. Richardson (2016) indicates that The Nicene Creed declared Christ as:

> [O]ne Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father … God of God, Light of Light, very God of Very God … one substance with the Father. (par. 2)

The ontological relationality of the Athanasian Creed establishes the pre-existence of Christ and the economic component as bearing the truth of Christ's incarnation (Art. 29–41). This kind of approach to Christology fixes the African ancestor Christology, which limits Christ to a human person, weakens his divinity, and thus obscures his deity.

Conclusion

To develop a Trinitarian mission, it is imperative to establish the place of Christ as a central theological pillar. This is worked out through the framework of the ontological Trinity, and its movement to the world as equal members of the economic Trinity in mission. The theological content of the ecumenical creeds offers a fundamental ground to develop ecclesial doctrines, especially the place of Christ in the Trinitarian mission. Today most AICs express a less developed Trinitarian theology, with much emphasis given to Pneumatology, and with the place of Christ remaining passive. African Christian theology, whose context is African traditional religion that subscribes to the spirit world, together with the AIC narrative and demonstrative theology, has had a significant influence on the perception of the Trinity, particularly so regarding the place of Christ. However, this article provides an alternative approach to the already existing ancestral Christological approach, which has had a tendency toward recognition of the ancestors in its practical theology. Ancestor Christology leaves significant gaps in the development of a balanced Christology and affects the construction of beliefs about both the ontological and economic Trinity, because Christ is confined to his humanity so that after his ascension, he is absent in human affairs. This is not a biblical Christology.

This article has attempted to provide a balanced place of Christ in the ADC's Trinitarian mission through suppositions from the empirical study, and through the framework of the ecumenical creeds. Additionally, it has attempted to open the ADC's oral theology to a wider scholarly hermeneutic.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

T.M.I. did the conceptualisation of the study, worked out the methodology, the analysis, and the writing of the original draft. C.G.S. was the leader (the Promoter) of the study and she offered guidance and leadership in the planning and completion of the study. A. le R.D.P. offered guidance and leadership as a co-promoter in the planning and completion of the study. A.D.P. offered the needed guidance and leadership to the study.

Ethical considerations

The study was done, following the ethical guidelines of the North-West University, acknowledging the preservation of the participants' confidentiality, respect, and the information voluntarily given. The researcher obtained access to the research site upon acquiring the following documents: the ethical approval permission from the North-West University (NWU) (0190-19-A6), a clearance letter from the NWU's study promotors, and the clearance permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI/P/19/3074). Other documents included a clearance letter from the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government from the County Commission of Vihiga (CV/ED.12/1VOL.III/63), a letter of permission to research from the Ministry of Education, State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education (CDE/VC/ADM/VOL.2/39/159), and a letter of goodwill from the ADC. The researcher treated the participants' information with confidentiality through coding.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

This article relied on the empirical findings; data sharing is negligible since no new data were created or analysed in the study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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