

An Exposition of 2 Corinthians 5:20 from a Ghanaian (Akan) Perspective

Ernest Nyarko

ABSTRACT

2 Corinthians 5:20 belongs to a long chain of verses beginning from 5:11 to 6:13. These verses at large deal with the subject of reconciliation. A concept that emerges from Paul's teaching is that God through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross is restoring the whole world to himself and has given us also this ministry of reconciliation. However, this paper focuses on three Greek words extracted from the text: *Christou*, *presbeoumen*, and *katallasso*. The study is done mainly through literary activities from existing materials such as Biblical and Akan literature. It first examines, in brief, the background data on Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians to provide a historical milieu for understanding the issues Paul raises. It then continues to discuss the above-mentioned Greek words. It will also be seen that the explanation of the text has been looked at from Akan (Asante Twi) reading of the same text and then engages them within the Akan context. The paper concludes with an invitation to see ourselves as key players in what God is doing in the world.

Keywords: Abɔfoɔ, Christou, Katallasso, Mpata, Nana, Presbeoumen.

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E. Nyarko*

Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology,
Mission and Culture, Akropong-
Akuapem, Ghana

(e-mail: enyarko@aci.edu.gh)

**Corresponding Author*

I. INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul begins his discussion in 1 Corinthians 5 by contrasting our "earthly tent" (human bodies) and "a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands" (our future resurrection bodies). In making this contrast, Paul talks about the groanings we often suffer in our human bodies and our desire "to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling" (vs. 1-2 NIV). For Paul, while we groan in this "earthly tent" we are still expected to please God by fulfilling our God-given mandate here on earth through the help of the Holy Spirit. He alludes that our task is to "persuade" people about the redemptive work of Christ resulting from his death and resurrection (11-15). Thus, the task is about the message of reconciliation that Jesus Christ brings to all people (vs. 18-19). And those who have been reconciled to God, for Paul, are given the privilege to partner with God in his reconciliation ministry to the world. Levison (1993) affirms this when he says, "The dominant theme (...) is that believers, who themselves have been reconciled to God, must continue by the apostolic ministry of proclamation and witness to bear testimony to the reconciliation of the world to God, which God inaugurated through Jesus" (pp. 189-190).

It is on this basis that Paul in verse 20 says, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (NIV). This paper discusses three Greek words; *Christou*, *presbeoumen*, and *katallasso* extracted from 1 Corinthians 5:20 which provide a foundation as well as content for this study. It first looks at the background data of Second Corinthians with the aim to offer a historical setting for understanding the selected text.

II. A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF 2 CORINTHIANS

Speaking about 1 and 2 Corinthians, Carson *et al.* (1994) aver, "Paul is identified as the author in the opening verses of both epistles" (p. 262). Again, it is believed that "Both Corinthian epistles are occasional letters, that is, they are real letters addressed to specific people and occasioned by concrete issues; the letter form is not a mere literary device by which the author shapes his views for general publication" (Carson *et al.*, 1994, p. 259). This is to say that Paul's letter to the Corinthians is situational in character in that it mirrors tensions in the Christian community Paul founded and thus deals with specific happenings or incidents. Price (1987) avers;

It is a popular view that in the Corinthian letters Paul fought against "a Gnostic perversion of the Christian message which attributes to 'the spiritual,' as those liberated from 'the flesh,' a perfect redemptive state and an unconditional moral freedom." Some have gone so far as to conclude that since Paul himself distinguishes between those who are 'mature' and those who are 'babes in Christ,' between human natures that are 'spiritual' and others that are merely 'natural,' one can infer that the Apostle's theology was affected by

Gnostic tenets. It is a controversial question whether the presuppositions and positions of Paul's opponents can be properly described as 'Gnostic' or 'pre-Gnostic,' but it is highly impossible that Paul, wittingly or unwittingly, countenanced such ideas (p. 317).

However, Price continues to argue that;

Paul did not have a simple gospel for 'babes' and a different wisdom-gospel for 'the mature'; the distinction was in the degrees of comprehension on the part of those receiving the kerygma. It is noteworthy that Paul called upon the Corinthians to stand with Apollos and himself under 'the word of the cross,' under the same norms of judgment: the gracious calling of God and the Parousia of Christ (1987, p. 317).

Therefore, the issues about to be examined are things that are practical and not abstract. Paul identifies the need to encourage and invite his audience to see themselves first and foremost as ambassadors working to reconcile the sinful world with Christ.

Corinth is an ancient Greek city colonized by the Romans after it had been rebuilt by Julius Caesar "and from 29 B.C. on, it served as the seat of a proconsul and the capital of the senatorial province of Achaia. The new city was populated by people from various parts of the empire, doubtless not a few of them retired soldiers" (Carson *et al.*, 1994, p. 263). There were also "many (...) freemen from Rome, whose status was only a cut above slaves. Jews were certainly included in the new citizenry..." (Carson, *et al.*, 1994, p. 263). In drawing the attention of his audience to the ambassadorial work, Paul may have been aware of his cultural diversity. That winning over the Corinthian people to Christ would probably mean winning over a multitude of cultures to Christ. This is perhaps in direct fulfillment of the Great Commission preserved in the two Synoptic Gospels – Matthew and Mark. Again, the various missionary journeys of Paul are possibly his bold attempt or zeal to win different cultures or peoples over to Christ and as we journey together into the chosen text, we will realize that this is at the very heart of our divine ambassadorship.

III. A DISCUSSION ON 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20

This section reflects on the Greek words *Christou*, *presbeoumen*, and *katallasso*.

A. *Christou*

Christou is the genitive of *Christos* from the Greek verb *chrío* which could mean "to anoint", "to rub", "to smear", or "to appoint". Thus, *Christos* is identified as a person who has been anointed or appointed for an office. *Christos* is translated in Hebrew as *Mashiach* and in English as Messiah. Witherington III (1993) affirms this when he opines, "The Greek verbal adjective *Christos* (which came to be used as a noun) and its Hebrew analog *masiah* are terms which were used in early Judaism and Christianity to refer to an anointed person set apart for a special task and, in particular, to a royal and/ or messianic figure" (p. 95).

Masiah was used in the political realm for kings from the Davidic line. Thus, there was a strong messianic hope of a king from the Davidic line who would save Israel from its bondage. In the New Testament (NT) *Christos* is used only as a noun, either as an appellative (the Anointed One, the Christ) or a personal name ("Jesus Christ" or "Christ"). According to Ladd (1974), in Pauline epistles, "*Christos* has become almost exclusively a proper name (...) The simplest formula, 'Jesus the Messiah,' has altogether disappeared, while 'Jesus Christ' and the full expression 'our Lord Jesus Christ' are frequently used" (p. 409). In other words, Ladd appears to be saying that Paul never used the phrase "Jesus the Messiah" in his writings. What is used more often is Jesus Christ or sometimes Christ Jesus or even the Lord Jesus Christ or our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, *Christos* is not used as a title or descriptive term in Paul's letters, instead it is used as a second name for Jesus. Ladd continues to explain that "Paul's understanding of the messiahship of Jesus involves a transformation of traditional messianic categories, because it is not as an earthly monarch that Jesus reigns from a throne of political power, but as the resurrected, exalted Lord. He has been exalted to heaven (Rom. 8: 34), where he has taken his seat at the right hand of God (Col. 3: 1) and now reigns as king" (p. 411). In other words, it can be said from Ladd's position and in the broader context of the passage under discussion, that Paul distinctively uses *Christos* to refer to the one who died on the cross once and for all, and was raised:

(...)so that those whom he has redeemed might live for him. These events bear witness to the self-sacrificial love that Christ expressed for his people and which they in turn are to emulate. Christ then is the great reconciler of humans to God (2 Cor. 5:19) (...) and of humans to each other (Gal. 3:28). It is the climatic salvific events at the close of Jesus' life that (...) cause Paul to call Jesus the Christ (Witherington III, 1993, p. 96).

In 2 Corinthians 5:20, Paul is undoubtedly reminding his audience of their privileged position of working for this Lord and King under whose authority all things are subsumed. It is as though they were being told that they were the right-hand persons for Christ and they might be fully aware of the privileges that position accorded them.

B. *Presbeuomen*

Unfortunately, *presbeuomen* is often translated as “we are ambassadors” in many of the English Bibles. The word in its literal sense is a Present Active Indicative First Person Plural. The singular verb *presbeuo* is explained as “to be elder or eldest, prior in birth or age(...) to be an ambassador” (Vine, 1966, p. 53). It is from the base of the Greek adjective *presbuteros* which is variously used to denote the “...age” of an elderly person, “... rank or positions of responsibility” (Vine, 2000, p. 195). *Presbeuo*, “I am an ambassador” was the regular word in the Greek East for the Emperor’s legate” (Moulton & Milligan, 1976, p. 534). This is to say that *presbeuo* is an ancient word used for those respected as trustworthy or loyal who were on an embassy to the emperor or speaks for the emperor. Among the Jews, the term is used for “those who were the heads or leaders of the tribes and families, as of the seventy who assisted Moses, Num. 11: 16; Deut. 27: 1, and those assembled by Solomon (...) members of the Sanhedrin, consisting of the chief priests, ‘elders’ and scribes, learned in Jewish law” (Vine, 2000, p. 195), and “(...) those who managed public affairs in the various cities, Lk. 7: 3” (Vine, 2000, p. 195). However, “in the Christian churches,” it is used for “those who, being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches” (Vine 2000, p. 195). From the ensuing argument, the term *presbeuo* or *presbuteros* has a dignified meaning or indicates a position of great dignity. Today, we may compare it with terminologies that are frequently used in our political landscape such as honourable, members of parliament (MPs), excellences, etc. Undoubtedly, the mention of these aforementioned terms commands respect and instills fear in people.

As a present verb, *presbeuomen* instructs us to see the word “ambassadors” more as a functionality than as a mere title. Paul speaks of his apostolic work as an ambassador for Christ or as having been authorized to speak as God’s messenger of His kingdom. It is possible that some may be only interested in the title and the privileges that accompany it but may not be interested in the responsibilities that are tied to it. For Paul to have used the verbal expression suggests that he may be aware this possibility exists and therefore decides to take the minds of his audience from it. Today, people are chasing after “big” titles but have abandoned the work those titles define for them. Christians must desist from any practice or culture that will make them a title-lover or title-chaser. We are called to work and that is why our designation is “ambassador”.

Again, the preposition *huper* that precedes *presbeuomen* is translated in a variety of ways in many of the English Bibles. For instance, the BBE translates it as “So,” the NIV and ISV as “Therefore,” or the KJV as “Now then.” However, according to Wallace (1996), whenever it is used with a genitive as the case is in the above-chosen text (because the genitive is *Christou*), *huper* assumes the following shades of meaning: “on behalf of, for the sake of (...), with reference to (...), in place of (...)” (p. 744). If these meanings adduced are adopted to explain the text it would appear that Paul is inviting us to see ourselves as working as ambassadors on behalf of or for the sake of Christ. Thus, to accept or to be called to work as an ambassador, means to work in a representative capacity. This suggests that our work is being assessed by the appointing authority who is the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

C. *Katallasso*

The main function that the previously considered word *presbeuomen* imposes on us is reconciliation. “Reconciliation is necessary between two parties when something has occurred to disrupt fellowship and cause one or both parties to be hostile to the other. Sin has estranged man from God. It has broken fellowship and become a barrier” (Ladd, 1974, p. 450). According to Setsoafia (2016), “Reconciliation in a soteriological sense points to God’s work of love to bring about a harmonious relationship between God and others” (p. 46). Setsoafia (2016) further explains this by saying that reconciliation is “rooted in the salvific work of Christ that brings about *new creation*” (p. 46). The Greek word that is used to denote reconciliation in the chosen text is the verb *katallasso* which “properly denotes to change, exchange, (especially of money); hence, of persons, to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile” (Vine, 1996, p. 260). Vine further explains that,

with regard to the relationship between God and man, the use of this and connected words shows that primarily reconciliation is what God accomplishes, exercising His grace towards sinful man on the ground of the death of Christ in propitiatory sacrifice under the judgment due to sin (p. 260).

With the use of *katallasso* Paul is perhaps driving us to the Fall of humanity and also to the Ransom of Christ. Though these two are opposite in character, *katallasso* brings them together whereby the Ransom paid by Christ defuses the effect of the Fall. The *katallasso* makes us know that sin is real because it actually took place and alienated humanity from its Source or Maker. In the same vein, it makes the propitiation of Christ and its intended removal of enmity between us and God real. This is to say that Christ is the agent through whom God initiates reconciliation and forgiveness.

Again, a careful look at the way Paul has used the word “reconcile” or “reconciliation” reveals that it is a second aorist passive imperative second person plural. Both the passive and the imperative show the agency as well as the seriousness with which the *presbeuomen* is to see the work of reconciliation.

But this work of reconciliation is God's own initiative even though he is the offended, it is not something left to human discretion or will. In reconciliation, therefore, God is the subject and man the object; it is God who gives and man receives. The human being cannot do anything to bring about reconciliation, all one has to do is allow him or herself to be saved by accepting the gift of reconciliation which God offers freely. Ladd (1974) affirms this when he says,

God is always the subject of reconciliation and man or the world is the object(...) Christ through the cross has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God(...) Reconciliation is thus the work of God and man is its object. Man cannot reconcile himself to God; he must be reconciled to God by the divine action (p. 451).

Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 5:17 of the believer becoming a new creation in Christ. And for him, the process of this new creation is attributed to "God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (v. 18). This is to say that, God through the death of Son Jesus Christ has made us new creatures in the sense that there has been a change of relation from enmity to peace with God. Paul then draws attention to the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to all those who have had the privilege of being reconciled to God and commissions them to entreat people on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. It is the ministry of proclaiming to everyone that they can be reconciled to God; all that is needed is to accept this gift of reconciliation and appropriate it in faith. Ladd (1974) elaborates on this when he says,

(...)reconciliation is not primarily a change in man's attitude toward God; it is, like justification, an objective event that is accomplished by God for man's salvation. Reconciliation was wrought first by God for men, not in men...Therefore reconciliation is a gift that is to be received (Rom. 5:11). It comes to man from God and is not directly or indirectly due to any act of his own. The objective character of reconciliation is further illustrated by the fact that it is a message given to the apostle to proclaim to men. God in Christ has reconciled men to himself and has given unto the apostles the ministry of reconciliation. God has given man a message to proclaim to man; it is a message that reconciliation has been accomplished. It is the proclamation that God has done something for man. It is by virtue of an accomplished work that Paul would beseech men to be reconciled to God. Because God has effected a work of reconciliation for them, men are in turn to respond in loving submission to the gracious overture of a loving God and so are to be reconciled to God (p. 452).

Briefly, reconciliation is the good news about what God has already done through Christ for humanity and the need to proclaim this good news to the world. The good news is that we are no longer God's enemies and that our sins are no more counted against us (v. 19).

IV. REFLECTING ON *CHRISTOU*, *PRESBEOMEN*, AND *KATALLASSO* FROM THE AKAN PERSPECTIVE

A. *Christou* as *Nana*

The Twi text makes use of the loan word *Kristo* to translate *Christou* however, *Kristo* does not exist in the Akan pre-Christian worldview. It was previously discussed that the title *Christos* refers to a person who has been anointed for an office to undertake a special task, especially as a king. Ofori (2022a) explains that within the Akan context especially among the Asante, an *adehyee* (royal) is anointed to take up a kingly rule through a ceremony called *Adae* which literally means "resting place" (Ofori, 2022a, p. 61). During this ceremony, some deities are celebrated and the spirits of the departed rulers and ancestors are venerated through the *nkonwa tuntum* (black stools) which are cleansed and then smeared with animal blood. Samuel Ofori affirms this when he says that the *Adae* ram (*Adae dwan*) "is slaughtered and the blood is used to smear the stools to preserve them" (Ofori, 2022a, p. 66). The *nkonwa tuntum* are believed to be the "resting place" and possess the spirits of the departed chiefs. (Ofori, 2022a, p. 61). In his "Christianity Encounters the Asante Chieftaincy Institution", Ofori further opines that during the installation of a new chief, with the help of *Nkonwasofohene* (Chief of stool carriers), *Okyeame* (linguist or the spokesman), and the *Ohemaa* (Queen mother), "he is lowered for his buttocks to touch the stool three times." (Ofori, 2022b, p. 61). This is very crucial as it marks the end of the entire enstoolment rituals and officially introduces the new chief to the spirits of his ancestors and is thus endowed with the power to take up the special task of a chief to reign in the service of his people. In other words, for a chief to have legitimacy, he has to be "anointed", in a proper sense, to be enstooled, that is, be put on the *nkonwa tuntum* which is the symbol of his authority.

The question then is, how would the Akan person who comes to faith meet *Kristo*? Would *Kristo* fit into the Akan concept of *Nana* in its etymological sense? It is obvious that the Akan who comes to faith comes to meet *Kristo* as *Nana*. Danquah (1968) affirms this when he submits that, "Akan knowledge of God teaches that God is the Great *Nana* (Ancestor)" (p. 27). But the question again is whether Christ fits into the Akan concept of *Nana* in its etymological sense. According to Christaller (1933), the word *Nana* among others denote "(...)forefathers; first parents" (p. 328). Christaller further states that *Nana* could mean "a title of respect or honour used in addressing kings, great fetishes" (Christaller, 1933, p. 328). Thus, the Akan may meet *Kristo* as *Nana*; that is as ancestor and king. It was earlier discovered that *Christou* is a title for one who has been anointed for a special task, and its Hebrew analog *masiah* means one sent to redeem God's people.

That means that the *Christou* is “a royal and/ or messianic figure” (Witherington III, 1993, p. 95). Danquah (1968), in looking at the concept of Messiah from an Akan point of view says:

The Messiah is a Hebrew conception of a personage expected to come as the divine agent to fulfil a promise or covenant of delivery and triumph, and the Akan Nana (ancestor or elder) may, in a certain sense, be said to be a Messiah, the anointed of the Akan people, king and exemplar. But there is a tremendous difference between the conception of a Nana as anointed and the original and hopeful Hebrew idea (p. 120).

From Danquah’s position, there is a sense in which the Akan *Nana* can be described as Messiah, one who has been anointed to serve his community towards redemption and be a role model for them. However, as Danquah (1968) further avers, “the Akan *Nana* is not an expected but a discovered or revealed Messiah” (p. 120). Based on his adherence to the moral standards of the Akan community. Thus, the royal who is discovered or selected to be the Akan *Nana* is expected to be a “dignified Akan.” (Danquah, 1968, p. 120). For the Akan therefore, *Kristo* becomes the *Nana* Messiah who served and died to redeem the community, and as a resurrected *Nana* he functions as a great living ancestor to whom *Onyankopon* (God) has given many assignments to undertake on behalf of all humanity. This explains why *Onyankopon* has relinquished to Him His *ahennie* (kingdom) with all its power and splendor. Thus, *Kristo* is not just *Nana* or *ɔhene* (king) but, He is the *ɔhempɔn* (Great King) or *ahene mu hene* (King of Kings) and *awura mu awura* (Lord of Lords), implying that He will judge all other ancestors and kings. He is the true king to the dead Kings who have now become ancestors and the true Lord of the Lords who has also died to become ancestors. He is not at par with them but, as King and Lord, He stands over and above them, He rules them and He owns them. About Jesus’ kingship, Nyamiti (1984) says:

His Kingship is one of sonship. It is, in fact, through His pastoral office that He reveals to men and brings into their hearts the kingdom of heaven, which is the object of His kingship. This is the reason why the just are called to share in this kingdom(...) and to share in it one has to believe in Jesus, to be reborn (Jn. 3:3ff.) and interiorly converted, as well as to suffer as He Himself suffered (p. 39).

As the *Nana* (king), He is the *ɔsagyefo* (deliverer), *obrempon/otumfo* (Almighty or owner of power), *okokuroko hene* (powerful chief), and *ɔkatakyi* (hero). But will the Akan accept Jesus’ claim to kingly rule since they trace their kingship to the matrilineal and patrilineal lineages? Opuni-Frimpong (2012) have suggested that the Akan traces their kingship or inheritance to the matrilineal or patrilineal lineage. Opuni-Frimpong (2012) for instance says:

The inheritance systems vary in Akan society. There are matrilineal and patrilineal systems of inheritance. The assumption behind the matrilineal system(...) is that, mothers possess and, therefore, transmit royal blood. Men are considered to transmit... sunsum (soul) and, therefore, do not share their blood with their children as women do. Identification and association with a person’s maternal family, therefore, determine access to inheritance in the matrilineal communities. Such royals inherit the properties of their uncles, mothers, bothers and great grand-mothers and great-uncles. An Akan, who belongs to the patrilineal system, however, inherits the property of his fathers (p. 124).

This claim may qualify Jesus Christ for Akan kingship. Thus, the difficulty of accepting Jesus as an Akan *ɔhene* (king) can perhaps be resolved by finding an Akan mother or father who is an *ɔdehyee* (member of the king’s family) for Christ to be able to become an Akan *ɔhene*. It is commonly believed that the *ɔbaahenmaa* (female queen) is the mother of all. In that sense then, the *ɔbaahenmaa* can also become a mother to Christ. Some scholars are of the view that Jesus’ right to the Davidic throne can be traced through his mother’s royal lineage. Reckart (2004) and Bromiley (1979) are examples of scholars who share this view. They argue that Christ’s right to rule on David’s throne is via his mother’s *abusua* (clan).

B. *Presbeuomen* as *Abɔfo*

The Twi translates *presbeuomen* as *abɔfo* and according to Christaller the singular form *ɔbɔfo* literally means, “messenger, ambassador (...) angel (...) missionary” (Christaller, 1933, p. 35). In other words, within the Akan traditional milieu, *abɔfo* (plural) can be used for either messengers, ambassadors, angels, or missionaries sent from God or man. In instances where the *abɔfo* is used in reference to God, the term is qualified with *ɔsoro* (heaven) as in *ɔsoro-abɔfo* and thus referring to the ministry of angels or men as messengers of God or heaven. Thus, for the Akan, *ɔbɔfo* could be used in reference to a person who has been sent to *bɔ kasee*, “to deliver a message” on behalf of God or a person or a group. For instance, in Akan customary marriage, before marriage is contracted, a representative from the would-be husband’s family is sent on behalf of the family to present a drink to another family to ask for their daughter’s hand in marriage for their son. Additionally, in Akan court of arbitration, *ɔhene* (king) may send an *ɔbɔfo* with *mena* to summon *mmratofo/menatofo* (transgressor of law) to appear before the king in the palace. According to Christaller, *mena*, is the plural form of “*mana*, *mmara* or *mra*” and it is “a broom or fan made of an elephant’s tail used by the *ahoprafo* or *mmratofo*... before the king.” (Christaller, 1933, pp. 310, 312). This suggests that *mena* is a symbol of authority from the *ɔhene* that the *ɔbɔfo* carries to the *ahoprafo* or *mmratofo* (transgressor) and thus a refusal to appear before the *ɔhene* will incur his anger. Even though the Akan believe that God can send *ɔbɔfo* in the form of man to offer help to a person or group, it appears in most instances *ɔbɔfo* is used for a messenger; that is, one who delivers a message. There is also a related

word that the Twi text has not given attention to and that is *ɔsomafoɔ* which appears to have a similar meaning as *abɔfoɔ*. However, *ɔsomafoɔ* goes beyond just transmitting a message to engaging in an act of service. *ɔsomafoɔ* is a compound word derived from *ɔsom* “(...) service, servitude(...) office (...) duty, trust or charge conferred by authority” and *soma* “to send [a person (...) to transmit a thing]; to dispatch an agent or messenger” (Christaller, 1933, p. 468). It means *ɔsomafoɔ* is a person who has been sent with authority to transmit a message and administer a special kind of service to the people among whom he or she is sent. Thus, *ɔsomafoɔ* is not just to communicate a message but to serve. Paul may have used the term *presbeuomen* because it embraces not only the respected or loyal who speak for the emperor but also those in “positions of responsibility”; who are entrusted with the administration of the public activities of the various cities. It means that Paul, from an Akan point of view, may not only be focusing on just transmitting messages but also on the various activities that the *presbeuomen* may be engaged in as he or she seeks to carry out the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, *ɔsomafoɔ* carries the weightiest meaning of what Paul seeks to describe in 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Though the Akan understanding of *abɔfoɔ* may not strictly agree with *presbeuomen* in its literal sense, it also conveys the intended meaning *presbeuomen* brings to bear upon the text. Thus, Paul’s voice within the Corinthian Church finds resonance within the Akan religio-cultural context as well. In other words, Paul may not struggle at all addressing an Akan as *abɔfoɔ*, *ɔsomafoɔ*, or *presbeuomen* who has been given special instruction, order, decree, or authority by Christ who is now the *Nana* Messiah of the Akan. Thus, an Akan person who comes to faith in Christ must see his or her *abɔfo-dwuma* or *ɔsomafoɔ-dwuma* (ambassadorial duty) as one that carries or makes the bearer of the divine message of Christ.

C. *Katallasso as Pata*

The word used in the Twi text is “*wɔmpata*” from the verb *pata* with a range of meanings such as,

(...) to adjust, settle, compose; to assuage, appease, allay, soften, sooth, quiet, pacify; to reconcile, conciliate, propitiate; to expiate, atone for; *pata asem*, to adjust a law-suit; *mepataa won nanso*, I reconciled their difference ‘but’; *wapata chene*, he has propitiated the king; *wapata ne mfomso*; *ne fom a ɔfom chene no*, *wapata*, he has expiated his transgression against the king (Christaller, 1933, pp. 378-379).

From the definition given above, the word *pata* is about restoring a broken relationship to normalcy. In other words, *pata* is bringing back the right relationship that used to exist between two individuals, groups, or communities who have been enemies or at war. Thus, it is an imagery of people at war and the deliberate effort to bring them back together. Ekem (2005) affirms this when he submits that *mpata* “serves as a means of reconciliation following a previous state of alienation” (p. 62). Many years ago, before the coming of the Christian faith to the Akan soil, the Akan people treasured communal harmony and peaceful coexistence. The Akan, just like other Africans still have well-structured and ordered religious and cultural systems that deal with issues related to *bɔne* (evil or sin) and *mpata* (reconciliation). The point being made here is that the Akan community is a moral entity with moral codes of ethics that direct individual behaviours and patterns. Thus, the Akan are moral persons and are expected to act and conduct themselves in morally good ways while avoiding that which is *bɔne*. A breach of any of the Akan moral code and any infringement of it is deemed as *bɔne*, which earns the displeasure of *Onyankopɔn* (Supreme Being), *abosom* (deities), and *nananom nsamanfoɔ* (ancestors). In other words, *bɔne* creates dissonance and imbalance in relationships not only among members of the community but also between man and the supernatural. And thus, leads to calamity not only for the offender but also for the whole community, hence *mpata* is needed to ensure social harmony among the living and also with their benevolent spirits which include *Onyankopɔn*, *abosom*, and *nananom nsamanfoɔ*.

For the Akan, *mpata* always involves all the parties concerned and it is the offender who takes the initiative to restore a broken relationship. The process is subject to many factors; the offender must admit that he or she is guilty and be willing to confess. Once the guilt is admitted by the offender and confession is made, the process to reconcile the differences begins. The process of restoring the right relationship is dependent on the nature of the offense committed and sometimes the offended. Normally, offenses against an individual may not involve the central authority and in that case, may require small rituals. However, where the central authority is involved, elaborate ritual performances are required to ensure that the offender is reconciled with the *ahonhom pa*, the community, and with oneself. And this *mpata* is needed as and when the need arises, meaning that it is repetitive.

The Akan believe that human existence can be better appreciated within the context of *abusua* (clan) or community life and without *mpata* it can be impossible for the realization of this goal. Thus, Paul may not struggle at all speaking to an Akan about the same issue he speaks about in the above passage to the Corinthian Christians. This suggests that humanity which is at war with God is being brought into a peaceful relationship with God by God’s own design which has been perfectly executed through the death of Christ. As clearly demonstrated by Paul, we are an integral part of the reconciliation exercise.

V. CONCLUSION

The text we have just looked at invites us to see ourselves as partners in God's ministry of reconciliation. He wants to have a peaceful relationship with humanity; therefore, He does not come with a condemnatory approach but with open arms of love anticipating a warm embrace. It also means that we are not to discourage or turn these sinful people away by our actions, attitudes, and so on. As Christ's ambassadors our basic function is to clearly present His unadulterated word so his treasured creation can be saved. As indicated earlier, the Akan who comes to faith meets Christ as *Nana*, which means that Christ now exists in his or her religious consciousness as an ancestor and a king. Christ as an ancestor shows that He is still connected to the *abusua* (clan), and as king, he oversees the entire *oman* (community). But as the scriptures affirm, He is the King of kings and Lord of lords which means that he judges all other ancestors and holds the entire *oman*. Again, as *Nana*, he has *ahennie* (kingdom) into which only the Akan who has a relationship with him and is living in the recognition that he or she is a bearer of the divine message of Christ and is carrying out his or her *abɔfo-dwuma* or *ɔsomafoɔ-dwuma* (ambassadorial duty) can be admitted.

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Ernest Nyarko, Ph.D. is an ordained Minister of the Methodist Church Ghana. He is a Research Fellow at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana, and doubles as Acting Director of the Center for Gospel and Culture Engagement (CEGACE) at the Institute. Rev. Dr. Nyarko is an African Christian theologian whose research focuses on the contribution of the New Testament to Gospel and Culture Engagement in Africa, especially the writings of Paul. His other areas of interest are Biblical Studies, Christian and African Ethics, and Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics.