1.1 Objectives of the Study: Christology and the Quest for Social Transformation

This study explores the subject of Christology and social transformation. The study sets out to answer the Christological questions: Who is Jesus Christ in Nigerian Christianity today, and what elements of Christology can be developed from that interpretive investigation as forms of mission theology to aid and translate the quest for peace and mutuality\(^1\) in Nigeria? There is a truism among Nigerians that goes, Jesus is the answer. Reflecting upon this Christological truism raises the question, if Jesus is the answer, what is the question? The starting point for understanding the above questions is to return to the foundation to inquire into the identity of Jesus Christ.

A good number of writings have emerged on Christology and its appropriation in various cultural contexts among African societies. The person of Jesus Christ has not only been interpreted as the Savior of Africa, the revealer of God and His incarnate image, but also the person who identifies with the poor and afflicted in view of their existential worries. Most of the earlier studies focused on the missiological elements and implications that can be derived from Christology. The present study develops aspects of Christology as a possible way of restoring peace to the Nigerian situation. This is done for notable reasons. First, there is the current experience of the developing Christological conversation in both the academy

\(^1\) ‘Peace’ is considered in this study as a state of conviviality, without any suspicion, strife, acrimony, and violence across political and religious lines in a way that paralyzes the social, economic, and religious space. Mutuality is a condition in which cordial understanding exists among persons. Peace, coexistence, and mutuality will be used synonymously and interchangeably in this research.
and the Nigerian church. These are attempts to interpret who Jesus Christ is today. The churches are emphasizing different faces of Christology that complement their ministry focus. In the academy, there are increasing titles on the themes of Christology by academic theologians. Second, in spite of the blossoming Christological studies, Christology has not been considered as a plausible alternative to settling the conflict situations in Nigeria. This makes it appear to be a forgotten perspective in relation to the challenges that Nigeria is facing. More so, most writings and efforts aimed at proffering solutions to Nigeria’s difficulties concentrate on interreligious dialogue. This raises the consideration of whether Christology as a Christian alternative can be an impetus to peace and mutuality in Nigeria. If yes, what would be the approximate of that Christology and what are the issues surrounding its workability?

Nigerian Christianity has witnessed massive resurgences leading to an era of breakthrough, characterized by birthing of new churches, building of megachurches and parachurch ministries, and trans-nationalization of Nigerian brand of Christianity. This is part of what scholars in religious movements, global Christianity, mission theology and history, have both foreseen and postulated with caution, as a substantial shift in the center of gravity of Christianity from the global North to the South. The discussion of this demographic shift became prominent with the *World Christian Encyclopedia* edited by David Barrett in 1982. Since then, some scholars including Andrew Walls, Philip Jenkins, Lamin Sanneh, Kwame Bediako, Alistair McGrath, and others have pointed to different factors responsible for the demographic shift. The inculturation of relevant Christological themes is a major factor that has legitimized this growth.

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2 I will use the phrase ‘Nigerian Christianity’ in this study to describe Christian faith in Nigeria with its uniqueness and vitality as a segment of African Christianity. It is difficult to actually claim an exclusive view of Christian faith in a part of Africa that does not have a similar outlook elsewhere because of the prevalence of similarities in cultural and religious worldviews. Nonetheless, it may be used interchangeably with the word ‘African Christianity’. At some intervals, I will be using the term ‘Nigerian Christianity’ synonymously with the phrase Nigerian church or the church in Nigeria. The use of the church in this sense shall be with the understanding of the New Testament *ekklesia*, the called out ones. Reference to church means a single entity but when I occasionally use ‘churches’ it will be with an understanding of denominational affiliation or ecumenical gathering.


Nevertheless, the Nigerian nation continues to face the many problems of which lack of peace and mutuality is fundamental. The frequency of violence experienced at different times and the means devised to manage the violence experiences have brought Nigeria onto the international scene in the discussion among the academic and religious specialists. Various strategies aimed at settlement and proffering lasting solution to these conflicts have been quasi-effective. The situation above has warranted further research into whether peaceful coexistence and mutuality can be fostered using a Christological framework.

Christology has continued to play a major role in Nigerian Christianity as theologians and lay Christians seek ways to appropriate features of Christology in view of their existential realities and cultural worldview. This presupposes that the Christology of any people can create the possibility for a useful discussion within and outside theological circles. This is because Christianity derives its self-understanding from Christology. Hence, it is deserving to understand who the person of Jesus Christ is, and what His mission means for the Nigerian nation today. In spite of the existing religious plurality, there is an increasing consciousness on the need to develop models for re-establishing mutual coexistence among peoples of various cultural milieu and religious affinity in different parts of the world and particularly in Nigeria.

1.2 Who is Jesus?: Reinventing Jesus from the Gospels to the Current Human Condition

Every Christological enquiry has a foundation. The first question that I seek to answer in this research seems to be the starting point for every Christological exploration. There are internal evidences in the gospel accounts which suggest that the immediate followers of Jesus and the

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5 See for example, the following works Ukachukwu Chris Manus, Christ, the African King: New Testament Christology (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993). Enyi Ben Udoh, Guest Christology: An Interpretative View of the Christological Problem in Africa (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988).

6 See for example, Robert J. Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 1-21. Schreiter states that the importance of theology reflects when it is shaped through contact with the specific circumstances of the theologian. Theological expression in a local context will take one of ‘translation models’, ‘adaptation models’ or ‘contextual models.’

7 My emphasis is on Nigeria but it must be underscored that other nations in the world are also affected by similar problems. For instance, the increasing nature of the Islamic migration to Europe and America and the ideal relationship between Islam and other faiths has equally raised a great deal of concern. The Osama bin Laden terrorist attack of September 11 2001 on the Twin Towers in the city of New York, the listing of various countries of the world as dangerous nations and having terrorist tendencies by the United States, the sporadic violence in the Middle East are some of the examples of the jeopardizing consequences of the increasing significance of the violence that is religiously and politically inclined in the world. In all those places, authorities are devising means to acceptable ways to foster peace and mutuality.
people who interacted with Him were curious to know His identity (e.g. Mt. 11:3, 21:10). The gospel writers provided us with records of faith, events and how such events were interpreted to answer the question of Jesus’ identity – who is Jesus? Hence, Jesus Christ remains ‘a mystery’ that the first communities of faith and their observers, the academics, and Christians of different generations try to comprehend. The mystery of Christ has been outlined in theological scholarship as the Christ-event and the universal significance of that specific historical event for interpreting life and human experiences. This latter point is crucial to this study and I will return to it later.

All Christological explorations have focused on both or either of these sides to understanding the life of Christ. The three options available to understanding the person of Jesus Christ are worth mentioning without developing them further but focusing on how every Christological inquiry should influence human conditions today. First, the four gospels may be interpreted as having a direct link to the life of Jesus and all that needs to be said and known about Christ. Primarily, Christians know about Christ through the study of the testimonies of the earliest Christian communities as written in the gospels and other New Testament books. But following this method has raised arguments about the historical reliability of the gospel records. Second, since the investigation about who Jesus is has initiated an initial doubt about what has been written in the gospels, another option is to go behind the gospel records to locate the real historical Jesus. This search birthed the popular liberal quest of the historical Jesus in the late 18th and the 19th century which was aided by

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8 Colin J. D. Greene, *Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking out the Horizons* (UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 4-5. Some of the evidences include different postulations about Jesus: as the coming Messiah, as John the Baptist, as one of the prophets, as Elisha, as Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, as the Son of God/Son of man. Greene goes as far as to suggest that even Satan was not sure about Jesus’ identity and that is the reason he puts it to him, ‘if you are truly the Son of God’ while tempting him. Marinus de Jonge, *Christology in Context: The Earliest Christian Response to Jesus* (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1988). Jonge describes various responses of the earlier Jesus’ followers to the question of Jesus’ identity and argues that these responses cannot be understood apart from the contexts and circumstances under which those individuals lived.


10 Prior to the end of the eighteenth century the popular assumption was that the gospel records were accurate and that the Jesus of faith believed and proclaimed in the early church as Lord and Christ is synonymous to the historical Jesus. Herman S. Reimarus, a German professor of oriental languages challenged this assumption and spearheaded the Quest of the Historical Jesus. Reimarus argued that it was possible to embark upon an historical reconstruction from the Christ of faith or dogma to the real Jesus of history. He set out to discover who Jesus was by means of rational and historical documentation. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* trans. W. Montgomery (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1956). John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Collin Dove ed.: North Blackburn, Australia, 1993).
natural sciences and later the ‘new’ quest. Each of the stages of the quest of the historical Jesus has yielded certain conclusions about the person of Jesus and what could be known about Him. In the first quest, the real identity of the historical Jesus is seen to be very difficult to establish. The second quest under Rudolf Bultmann refuted the possibility of establishing anything concrete about the life and personality of Jesus in as much as the early Christian sources make no such details available. The third quest, however, among many differences agreed that Jesus was firstly a Jew and that He was an apocalyptic prophet who heralded the arrival of the kingdom of God.

The third option to discovering the mystery of Christ is, however, sandwiched between the first and the second, the gospel narratives are considered as having a reliable historical link to Jesus. This approach argues that since the gospels were delivered through historical narratives they have implications ‘for the role of memory, culture, worldview, and tradition.’

The explorations of the meaning of Jesus did not end with academic quests but also in the forms of arts and movies that concentrate on painting a specific image or dramatizing a trait of Jesus’ life and what that means for our time. Further Christological investigations in recent years have taken their points of departure from a cultural viewpoint. These scholars justified their cultural location of Jesus within the diverse and cultural plurality and responses which the investigation of the person of Jesus enjoyed in its New Testament background.

11 There are three stages in the historical Jesus research: the first is championed by Reimarus, the second is represented in the work of Rudolf Bultmann, and the third stage also known as the “new quest” or the “third quest” is represented in the works of scholars such as Ben Witherington, N. T. Wright and John Dominic Crossan.


15 Neufeld, Discovering Jesus, 42.

16 Reference can be made to recent movies such as The Da Vinci Code and The Passion of the Christ. See for example, Alan F. Segal, “Christology in the Dark”: The Da Vinci Code and The Passion of the Christ – What They Tell Us about American Religion Today” in Jesus in Twentieth Century Literature, Art and Movies ed. Paul C. Burns (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), 211-222. The Passion of the Christ illustrates a very high Christology; it pictures a divine Jesus who had to suffer to atone for the sins of the world. In contrast, the Christology of the Da Vinci Code is low. Jesus is presented as an ordinary human who got married and had a child. Dietmar Neufeld, “Imaging Jesus Then and Now: Nino Ricci’s Testament” in Jesus in Twentieth Century Literature, Art and Movies, ed. Paul C. Burns (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), 19-35.

17 See Jonge, Christology in Context. Jonge argues on page 213 that, “Everywhere we find an abundant variety of expression. Terms and concepts are used alongside one another. They are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, because they answer different needs and address different aspects of the situation.” Charles
From Latin America to Africa, and to Asia, many scholars have developed Christologies that resonate with their own contexts and needs. The other argument upon which these several explorations on Jesus along cultural lines can be founded is that if Jesus would truly be recognized as the universal Savior of humanity, who unites women and men of all ages from east to west, from the dominant Euro-Christian culture to other world cultures, clear connections must be established between the proclamation of the gospel of Christ and the immediate context where Jesus must dwell as the Christ of all. This task of theological reflection has been undertaken by western and non-western theologians.

The above developments in the ways that people have endeavored to discover the identity of Jesus, which I have outlined, point to one crucial argument regarding Christology and the human situation. All methods of inquiry into the mystery of Christ leave us with the question: what is the significance of Jesus for a specific human and historical situation? That is, having examined the life of Jesus through gospel narratives or historical means, we are faced with the question, what impact does it have upon us now? This is because various attempts to discover the hidden faces of Jesus have yielded diverse results. An attempt to answer this question either from a western or a non-western Christological perspective must apply Christology to human concerns. Until this is done, there would be no correlation between the person of Jesus Christ and the value He delivers to humanity everywhere. One such engaging reflection is made by L.H. Lalpekhlua in his Contextual Christology: A Tribal Perspective. This research was intended to develop a tribal theology that focuses “on the soteriological or liberative aspects of the significance of Jesus Christ for tribal Christians” - the Mizoram tribal people of Northeast India. Lalpekhlua’s work is an attempt to develop a contextual Christology from the perspective of the experiences of a tribal people of India. Such a work needs to be encouraged in different contexts until the theologians become more resolute to contend adequately with faces of Jesus that can be developed in their contexts and

H. Talbert, The Development of Christology During the First Hundred Years and Other Essays on Early Christian Christology (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2001). Talbert makes a similar claim that the Christological development among the first Jesus’ followers and up to the first one hundred years evolved within different cultural backgrounds which raised diverse responses.


what Jesus Christ means for such contexts. Christology must be allowed to give meaning to every human situation in ways that reinvent the mission of Jesus Christ anew for the modern times.

1.3 State of Research

The current directions in missiological and Christological research in Nigeria point to three key areas. First, there are theologians who take cultural equivalence on different issues to express Christological ideas. The focus of these researchers is the inculcation of the Christological themes in African categories. A good example is the ancestral Christology of Uchenna A. Ezeh. Writing in *Jesus Christ the Ancestor*, Ezeh situates his Christology within the context of the Christological controversy leading to the decrees of the Councils of Nicaea in 325 and Chalcedon in 451. The council’s use of *homoousios* to express Jesus’ natures in relation to God, a term from a pagan and philosophical background, was very helpful for Ezeh. His conclusion was that an example set by expressing Jesus’s nature with cultural and philosophical symbolism in earlier Councils should propel Africans to express their Christology using their own cultural and religious symbols.

The second area relates to those researchers who focus on how Nigerian churches are emphasizing Christological elements. Their assessments underline how concentration on certain aspects of Christology is aiding the growth of churches and how Nigerian Christians are responding to it. The works of Victor I. Ezigbo and Christopher Aigbona Aigbadumah are representatives of this view. Victor Ezigbo engages critically with the interpretative approaches to the Christ-event in Nigerian Churches. Ezigbo is right in stating that most Christological expressions in Nigerian Christianity are solution-oriented. Hence, a relevant Christology in the context of Nigeria needs to present Jesus Christ concurrently as a question and an answer to the yearnings of the Nigerian people. He observes that solution-focused

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21 Uchenna A. Ezeh, *Jesus Christ the Ancestor: An African Contextual Christology in the Light of the Major Dogmatic Christological Definitions of the Church from the Council of Nicea (325) to Chalcedon (451)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003). There are two issues that influenced Ezeh’s Ancestor Christology; the Nicean-Chalcedonian Christological development and the centrality of the ancestral cult to the African religious traditions.

22 Ezeh, *Jesus Christ the Ancestor*, 200.

Christology emanates from the African indigenous view of humanity as occupying the center of the universe. All other creatures revolve around humanity. Ezigbo’s conclusion is that: “This view of humanity is idolatrous and also distorts Jesus’ perception of human beings as creatures who are to continually negotiate their being, identity, purpose and destiny (within their contexts) in God’s acts of self-giving.”

A rethink of this Christological perception will enthrone Christ at the center of the worship of humanity rather than seeing humanity as the reason for the existence of universe.

Christopher Aigbadumah focuses on how Christological appropriation has brought tremendous growth to a Nigerian Church, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM). Aigbadumah concludes that the MFM growth revolves around the triumphant Christology: Christ as the Victor or conqueror, power encounter, emphasis on prayer and deliverance from evil forces and so on. This kind of Christological emphasis which concentrates on the divine-human encounter in practical aspects of life is evident in the Nigerian churches. Recent studies are considering how Christological emphases are reflected in the mission engagement of Nigerian churches and how they use Christology to negotiate local identity within the changing global Christianity.

The third area can be seen in the group of theologians who propose that Christological emphasis in Nigerian Churches can aid social transformation. The current study belongs to this third category. A prominent work - in this category is the Ukachukwu Chris Manus’ *Christ, the African King.* In this work, Jesus is portrayed as the King against the background of the African leadership challenges. Manus recommends that African leaders should emulate the kingship of Jesus that is neither domineering nor self-centered. If the church in Nigeria dwells more on the “Christ the King Christology” it will transform the society and create a solution to the problems in leadership perception, performance, and responsibility.

One of the recent excellent attempts that focus on the Nigerian peace challenge is the work of Chentu Dauda Nguvagher, entitled *Conflicting Christologies in a Context of Conflicts: Jesus, the Isawa, and Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria.* The uniqueness of this work is seen in Nguvagher’s linking his research to the context of interfaith dialogue and

25 Aigbadumah, “Jesus the Healer..”, 159-168.
28 (Jos: ACTS, 2010).
Islamic Christology. Nguvugher proposes the concept of Jesus found among the Isawas of northern Nigeria as a model for peaceful co-existence in Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria. He argues that the pacifism of the Isawas, their single mindedness and unalloyed allegiance to the person of Jesus (which informs their acceptance of Christians and peaceful disposition to them) can be a panacea for mutuality in Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria. This is one major work that creatively attempts a solution to the problem of peace, coexistence, and mutuality in Nigeria from an interfaith perspective.\(^{29}\) Whilst it is useful to draw insights from this group, further attempts need to be made to explore other possibilities that Christology offers and how it can be expressed as a contemporary missiological theme. This is what this study aims to do.

The fields of inter-faith dialogue, violence, and conflicts related to politics and religion in Nigeria are well researched to date. Most scholarly works in these areas provide both historical backgrounds to their emergence and notes on various individuals who have been active pursuers of peaceful co-existence at various levels of national and religious interactions. Toyin Falola’s two books; \textit{Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria} and \textit{Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies}\(^{30}\) offer elucidatory explanation that most of the ongoing strife or those witnessed in decades past are offshoots of colonial violence. The dichotomy and favoritism created through the policies of the colonizers resulted in the Northern and Southern divides and became inimical to an ideal space for national integration and mutuality. Chima J. Korieh traces the roots of violence into the independence informing that the colonialist supported a religious based political party in the North which eventually became a rallying point for an Islamic political campaign in the early period of independence.\(^{31}\) Other scholars have given deserved attention to the issues of interplay between religion, violence and politics in Nigeria from different perspectives.\(^{32}\)

\(^{29}\) The \textit{Isawas} constitute a minority tribe in the north. Little or nothing is known about them in most parts of Nigeria. The \textit{Isawa} movement is traced in various traditions to Mallam Ibrahim as its founder. The movement is dated to the second half of the 19th century with the spiritual experience encountered by its founder. He was considered a rebel and nonconformist amongst other Mallams of the time. Part of the difficulties involved in proclaiming \textit{Isawa} doctrines are that it contravenes the orthodox Islamic doctrines. For instance, orthodox Islam believes among other things that Jesus is just one of the prophets, and Prophet Muhammad is the seal of prophethood but the \textit{Isawas} believe Jesus is more than just a prophet but a superior figure to Prophet Muhammad both in person and revelation. As a result it becomes increasingly difficult and also sensitive to promote such views among the Muslims.


The implications of the areas of Christological and missiological research are glaring. There is a gap in the writings on how Christology can be appropriated regarding the growth of the church and the need for social transformation. Most of the known studies disengage the Christology and the church from the vital issues affecting the nation. If Christology has been an impetus for the growth of the church, how can it affect the life of the nation? There is not much on this subject yet.

Michael L. Cook observes that the theology which proceeds from the African experience of Jesus is rich to the point that it entails "the mediating institutions of church and society that seek continuing social renewal of legal systems in order to reflect basic human rights. Both community building and nation building are integral to a theology that liberates."33 Exploring Christology will give some insights into handling the Nigerian problem of peace. As Gustavo Gutiérrez also points out in an article entitled, "The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ", there is an immense benefit which the poor derive from Jesus Christ. This is what Gutiérrez calls "the preferential option for the poor" that gives "vitality and shape."34 The hope of following Jesus is deployed in three areas including "the following of Jesus, theological work, and the proclamation of the gospel."35 The poor derive their identity and hope from the Gospel. Many Nigerians, like those in the Latin American situation where Gutiérrez writes, are mostly interested in how the person of Jesus Christ and His mission confront their challenges on a daily basis. The ultimate meaning of life and human existence always have Christological dimensions. This presupposes that since hope is present for the poor in the person of Jesus Christ, it is appropriate to seek to re-interpret who Jesus Christ is today to their corporate concerns.

Press of America, 2005), 113-118.
1.3.1 African Christianity and Christology

African Christianity is a descriptive terminology for the Africans’ response to God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and how such response is evident in their religious universe through liturgy, worship, and daily experiences. It encompasses the use of cultural elements for Christian faith and expression. Many scholars would prefer to talk about Christian Africa knowing well that some parts of Africa, especially in the north, are still predominantly Muslim.

I will use the term ‘African Christianity’ in specific reference to the sub-Saharan region. Christianity in its cradle and the development of orthodox Christian doctrines found solid root in Africa. African Christianity expresses its faith making use of African worship and liturgy and spirituality. Oral traditions as well as lived experiences are used to proclaim the faith in line with other cultural embellishments.

“Christology’ according to Leander E. Keck, “is a comprehensive term for the statement of the identity and significance of Jesus.”\(^{36}\) The heart of Christology is the need to first establish the critical question who is Jesus Christ? It is also a “systematic reflection on the basis of apostolic witness to Jesus Christ along with its expression and application throughout the history of the church.”\(^{37}\) Christology is a broad subject. Different aspects of Christology can be selected depending on the purpose. In view of this it is imperative to clarify the meaning of Christology in this study.

Besides adopting Keck’s definition, I will define Christology as an exploration of the meaning of Jesus Christ that is being reinterpreted within a particular context. Christology is subject to reinterpretation on the bases of the history of human experience and context. It is in the messianic functions of Jesus that the essence of Christology is fulfilled. African Christology in the same way is how the person of Jesus Christ is both experienced and expressed among Africans. It also relates to the manner in which Africans have interpreted the person and mission of Jesus Christ bearing on their culture, experience, and history.

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1.3.2 African Theology versus African Christian Theology

Josiah U. Young III is right when he observes that “the term “African theology” can be misleading.”\textsuperscript{38} Which terminology is appropriate for this study, African theology or African Christian theology? Is the description only a matter of semantics or content? These two terminologies can be taken as referring to one idea, yet they can be viewed differently. John S. Mbiti is frank in his definition: “I will use the term ‘African Theology’… without apology or embarrassment, to mean theological reflection and expression by African Christians.”\textsuperscript{39} Harry Sawyerr proposes that “African theology must be built on a philosophical basis… not to be a ‘native’ product, but a searching investigation into the content of traditional thought-forms with a view to erecting bridgeheads by which the Christian gospel could be effectively transmitted to the African peoples.”\textsuperscript{40} Most of the earliest writers intentionally used the term African theology with strong emphasis on the African culture and religiosity as the case of Mbiti. For this reason, Sawyerr warns that African theology must “avoid any over-readiness to adopt African indigenous ideas and practices merely because they fascinate foreign theologians …or on grounds of nationalistic patriotism.”\textsuperscript{41} With this warning, one wonders why Sawyerr did not opt for African Christian theology as an alternative term since he is critical of some indigenous elements unlike most of his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{42}

It was J. K. Agbeti who draws a line of demarcation between the two terminologies. African Christian theology, writes Agbeti, is based on God’s revelation in Jesus Christ whilst African theology generates from general revelation. The distinction is further evident in that the latter is theocentric whilst the former is Christo-centric.\textsuperscript{43}

Aylward Shorter prefers the term African Christian theology. But his own understanding is that “African Christian Theology must grow out of a dialogue between Christianity and the theologies of African Traditional Religion.”\textsuperscript{44} For Shorter, Christian

\textsuperscript{41} Sawyerr, “What is African Theology?”, 20.
\textsuperscript{44} Shorter, \textit{African Christian Theology}, 1.
theological expression in Africa should embrace the values, beliefs and practices present in the traditional religious systems. This is the sense in which he uses the concept of dialogue.

My understanding of the above conceptual investigation is that perspectives on an appropriate term for theological expression in Africa attempt to answer the question of how God in Jesus Christ speaks to a context in ways that is responsible to the African mind from different viewpoints. The earliest theologians, for instance, took their point of departure for theologising from the religio-cultural analysis. They attempt to Christianise elements of culture for theological expression. It appears as if one can differentiate African theology and African Christian theology in the matter of their respective contents. As one speaks of Islamic theology or theology of Hinduism, it is also possible to have a notion of African theology.

The development in theological reflection in Africa shows that recent authors prefer to use the term African Christian theology with the Bible as their starting point. For this reason, I will use African Christian theology in this thesis and will sometimes refer to African theology when it is inevitable to do so.

1.4 Aims of the Research

The task of Christian theology is to re-interpret the revelation of God in Jesus Christ for the human situation in every age. In this research, I will identify aspects of Christology that may contribute to peace and mutuality in Nigeria. This is in response to the research questions which I will explore: (1) Who is Jesus Christ in Nigerian Christianity today, and (2) Which contextual Christological notions can be developed in Nigeria to foster peace and mutuality? I will reflect on and critique the available Christologies in Nigerian Christianity. I will argue that the current dominant Christological notion in Nigeria, ‘solution-oriented Christology’, is more individualistic in nature and, therefore, not sufficient to address the problem of peace and mutuality. Other Christological constructions such as culture paradigms and feminist Christologies are also explored to see what their contributions might be. The research questions inform why this study is important.

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45 Young III, African Theology: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography, 3. Young III categorises the theologians in Africa to three groups: the old guards, the new guards and black theology.

46 Shorter and Agbeti as discussed above very much implied this notion.

47 See for example, Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, African Christian Theology (Nairobi: HippoBooks, 2012). Kunhiyop does not attempt a definition of African Christian theology but admits that it should resonate with the African situation and at the same time, uphold the infallibility of the entire Bible and witness to it accordingly. It should also affirm the positive values in African culture.
First, the desire for a peaceful nation is a national challenge for which Nigeria has been yearning for over a long time. This struggle has generated proposals from political, economic, religious, ecumenical, and governmental strands for implementation over the years. These suggestions have had little or no positive outcome. The search continues for a credible solution. This research will be a contribution to this debate from a Christian perspective.

Second, the Christian church has a mission to the world in every age. The context of the church will determine what that mission is – in addition to making disciples. How to carry out that mission needs to be identified. I will argue and propose that an essential component of the mission of the Nigerian church in the twenty-first century is to create a space where tranquility and mutuality is encountered. If the church in Nigeria will do this effectively, there must be a working model to accomplish it. I will argue that some aspects of Christology can provide the framework or models for this task. In Nigeria and Africa at large, there is so much emphasis on religion. There is a strong religious attachment to everything: politics, economics and governance to mention but a few. The quest of many in Nigeria today is that the uniqueness of the revelation of Jesus Christ gives Christianity a greater measure of influence in different strata of the society. However, there exists a gap between the Christological concepts and how they can contribute a solution to the perennial African problems. Whilst many theologians have proposed various ways of interpreting Jesus within the African cultural milieu, there are no signs of how such Christological images are wrestled with at bringing transformation to the specific situation like that of Nigeria. It is hoped that this study will bridge this gap.

1.5 Methodology and Scope

This study is primarily a library-based research. The nature of this study requires an interdisciplinary methodology. This study is in the field of missiology but it obtains a theological framework. The study draws insights from historical data, theology of religions, social sciences, and contextual theology. I obtain the following methods in carrying out this research.

a. Critical Hermeneutics Method

Within the range of methods used in conducting this research, one appears dominant. This is critical hermeneutics method. As a research method, hermeneutics deals with the principles or theories and practice of interpretation. Critical hermeneutics is concerned with “a theory of meaning, a theory of action, and a theory of experience.”49 It positions hermeneutical analysis in a social, economic and historical background through dialectical or deconstructive technique.50 These parts are woven together in an exploration of the meaning of Jesus in a specific situation. In this research the aspects of the meaning, action and experience are used to understand the research questions in the context of Nigeria. I seek to know how Jesus Christ is understood today in Nigeria and the specific, conceivable imagery that can be constructed from that understanding. This will help not only to seek understanding alone but how such an understanding can be applied to a specific context. The end result is that hermeneutics will function as an epistemological foundation for this study and it will also function as “the art of interpretation as transformation”51 so that an application of the knowledge of Christology can result in social transformation. A critical hermeneutic approach is specifically helpful to this research in five ways. It “(a) seeks understanding rather than explanation; (b) acknowledges the situated location of interpretation; (c) recognizes the role of language and historicity in interpretation; (d) views inquiry as conversation; and (e) is comfortable with ambiguity.”52

The value of knowledge starts with what is known and goes to how what is known can be applied to improve upon the human situation. This hermeneutic is critical because it bears the burden of searching for knowledge with the consciousness of a specific historical situation. Hence, it attempts to fuse two horizons of knowledge together in a way that a new understanding can emerge. This is particularly evident in Chapters Five and Six where I attempt to formulate Christology as paradigms, and in Chapter Six where I propose that the Christological paradigms formulated in the preceding chapter can function as models for doing mission to restore peace and mutuality in Nigeria.

Critical hermeneutics method as a philosophical theory and practice of interpretation was initially applied to biblical interpretation. In this regard, it takes note of the biblical text in relation to the language, word, culture, context and such factors that may affect the interpretation of a text. More recently hermeneutics has been applied to various disciplines other than philosophy and biblical hermeneutics. Missiological studies especially the development of theology of mission has also benefitted from critical hermeneutics method. David J. Bosch employed critical hermeneutics in his book *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Bosch applied a frame of knowledge in the paradigms developed in science, theology and church history in the formulation of his ‘elements of emerging ecumenical paradigms’ which Bosch asserts would influence the understanding and the practice of mission in the world.

*b. Historical Method*

History aids an understanding of past events and how such events connect to the present situation and in what ways those events may lay a foundation for future developments. I use historical method to uncover the incursion of Islam and Christianity into Nigeria, to evaluate the dynamics of religious interactions, and to identify the reasons behind the instances of disturbance of peace that manifest itself as religiously motivated violence and crises. It was also necessary to trace the contours in the development of Christological thoughts in Nigeria and Africa through historical assessments. The historical sections of the thesis can be found in Chapters Two and Three.

*c. Theological Method*

Theology offers a background for investigating the themes and concepts which mirroring the human situations and contexts drawing insights from the scriptures, the church traditions, and the human experience. This study explores theological themes as the bases for engaging in a contemporary missiology. Theology contributes in no small measure to missiology specially

by offering a framework upon which missiology flourishes. This scheme of mission theology also makes the study missiological. The research addresses how to do mission today within the Nigerian context so that the Christ-event can give meaning to the human experiences, and constitute a yardstick for an authentic mission today. I search the theological implications of the Christ-event to understand what they mean for the Christian church in all ages including orthodoxy. The nuances of Christology from an orthodox, from a western, and from a Nigerian-African background show avenues for understanding the diversities as well as commonalities in interpretive analyses of theological themes that I propose to be expressed as a new way of doing mission in the face of the socio-economic, political, and religious apprehensions of the Nigerian people.

Doing mission from a Christological perspective will foster Christian appreciation of the mission of Jesus Christ to humanity and enhance Christian commitment to that mission within a specific context. The richness of the theological method in a missiological study is unquantifiable as it serves as foundation for reflecting upon missiology. This is the reason why most literatures on mission/missiology always devote one of their initial chapters to the biblical foundations for mission. Theological method reflects in my analysis in Chapter Five.

This kind of study cannot be conducted without appealing to historical and theological methods. These methods give meaning to the context of this study and they seek to merge the existing knowledge with the new with a view to transform the human conditions.

1.5.1 Research Materials

Materials for this research are gathered in two major ways.

a. **Library Sources**: The historical explorations provide resources for considering the Nigerian religious history, African Christian theology, and a series of religiously motivated crises in Nigeria. The available researches in areas relevant to this study helped to access the grassroots or oral Christology and to explore the Nigerian-African Christology in the academy. Printed interviews in books and reputable periodicals contributed to the current thoughts in the field of this research. I used hermeneutical analysis for the materials to probe into various Christological interpretations in Nigeria-African Christianity, and how Jesus Christ can be

interpreted today to engage the mission of the Kingdom of God. Though this study is not a comparative study of religions, a brief comparative analysis is done where necessary.

b. Internet Sources: I used some news items and print media sources via the internet. I also consulted dailies, church bulletins, and websites.

I identify, discuss, compare, and critique the available Christological categories in Nigerian Christianity and African Christian theology. In the long run, I propose two Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality\(^\text{56}\) for Nigeria, and suggest how these paradigms can be applied to represent the mission of the church in modern-day Nigeria.

It is appropriate for me to delineate the scope of this research. This research is not a comparative religious study or critical study of Christological concepts among Nigerian religions – Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religions – since there is no adequate ground to do so, not even in Islam. Nevertheless, I will refer to Islam and traditional religions where necessary. This study is not about interfaith dialogue but I will consider the impacts of other religions and how they affect the Christological paradigms proposed in this study.

The scope and methodology of this study may also impose some limitations. The research neither obtained nor analyzed ethnographic data. This may pose challenges as the available literatures may not totally reflect the views of local Christians. This research will consider possible ways of opening a fresh window of interaction between Christians and

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\(^{56}\) Thomas Kuhn, an American physicist and science historian was famous for having proposed the theory of a paradigm shift in the field of science in his The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Kuhn argues that scientific advancement is not evolutionary but rather revolutionary through a series of intellectual discoveries that take over and replace the existing knowledge or conceptual worldview. A paradigm breaks with previous concepts or theories and opens new ways or perception. However, Hans Küng applied the concept of a paradigm shift to theology by dividing the history of Christian thought into six major epochs drawing inspiration from Kuhn. Each of these eras, argues Küng, corresponds to a considerably different theological “paradigm” from any of the other periods. See Hans Küng, Paradigm Change in Theology (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989). David Bosch further applied the notion of a paradigm to missiology. Bosch developed the “paradigm changes in missiology” following Küng’s categorization, by arguing that since Christian understanding of mission is historically progressive from one era to another, a new way of understanding and practicing mission needs to emerge so that it becomes an imperative to consider what mission might mean for us today. Bosch, Transforming Mission:, 185-194. Hence, Christological paradigms as used in this study will be understood as frameworks for understanding or “models of interpretation” that may aid Christological articulation in the form of mission theology in such a way that it breaks away from traditional understanding of mission as conversation to mission as social transformation which may be expressed to foster the quest for peace and mutuality in Nigeria. It is intended to create a new way of thinking about and of doing mission in Nigerian Christianity today.
other Nigerian religions as its outcome might be insightful for smooth interfaith relations for mutuality in Nigeria.

1.6 Overview of the Study

The focus of this study is to construct a missiological response to the Nigerian situation in relation to peace and mutuality. To do this effectively, I will examine the prevalence of Christological views in Nigeria. This will include the notions, beliefs, and practices among Nigerian Christians. To undertake this task fruitfully and faithfully, I will locate Nigerian Christology within the broad overview of African theological circles. This will enable me to interact with the writings of Nigerian theologians and church leaders and their other African counterparts.

This thesis is divided into three parts of seven chapters. Part I, comprising Chapters One to Three, is devoted to a general introduction to the thesis. Chapter One introduces the focus of the thesis. It clarifies the need for this research, basic concepts and terminologies used in the research. Chapter Two has two segments. The first part provides the social, cultural, religious, economic, and political contexts of Nigeria. It should acquaint the reader with a background to and the need for this research. Thus, it will elaborate on the religious overview of the context of the study and how religion has impacted different sectors of the Nigerian nation. The second segment of the chapter sheds light on the representatives of various forms of violence which are partly politically and largely religiously motivated. The chapter will not analyze these crises but it only spells out what the perceived remote and immediate causes were, and the role played by the Muslims, Christians, and government with its agencies at the start or in the process of curbing the crises.

I explore how various thinking on Nigerian Christology evolved in the context of African Christian theology in Chapter Three. This continues with a brief historical description of the development of the African theological framework and how Nigerian theologians shaped this discourse. I interacted with various notions that have influenced the development of Nigerian-African Christology such as the quest for solutions and life-changing attitudes among Nigerian peoples. I devoted special attention to the various Christological images or categories developed by Nigerian theologians in their attempts to contextualize the gospel message within their cultural and religious milieu. This chapter
examines the idea of solution-oriented Christology as the dominant Christological presupposition relevant to Nigerian Christians today. I critique this notion and show its inadequacies and strengths in relation to biblical Christianity, African culture, and the concern of God for all nations and the mission of God in the world.

Part two comprises Chapters Four and Five. The foundational issues regarding the multiplicity of religions and ideologies in Nigeria are treated in Chapter Four. The chapter considers the issues such as the relationship of Christianity to other religions and how that may challenge the Christological paradigms proposed in this study. The chapter explores further questions that confront Christology in a pluralistic and multi-cultural context.

Chapter Five is the core of this thesis. The chapter contributes to the search for peace and mutuality in Nigeria. It fills the existing gap that I pointed out in Chapter Three on the basis for development of Christological paradigms for peace, coexistence, and mutuality. I propose how Jesus Christ can be interpreted today in Nigerian Christianity to enable Christological paradigms to respond to the problem of peace, coexistence, and mutuality in Nigeria. Two Christological paradigms are developed from Christian interpretations of Jesus Christ in Christian theology. First, Jesus Christ is portrayed as the inaugurator of the Reign of God. Jesus was revealed as God incarnate to create a new humanity which is peaceful with God and by extension with one another. The creation of a new humanity becomes conspicuous in the Reign of God and its implications for the Nigerian situation. The second paradigm revolves around the notion of reconciliation of humankind to God. Jesus is portrayed as an exemplar of reconciliation, whose life and mission can be reinterpreted today in Nigerian Christianity to restore peace. I examined these concepts in such a way that one leads to the other. What these analogies meant from Nigerian cultural and religious views are also attempted.

The third part consists of two chapters, Six and Seven. Chapter Six reflects further on what is likely to be the contributions of the Christological paradigms in Nigerian Christianity and nation. It advocates that these Christological paradigms may be applied as the mission of God in the world to which God is committed and needs the church’s partnership to carry out. I advocate two contemporary missiology themes, prophetic dialogue and prophetic Christology, as paths to articulating the proposed Christological paradigms.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by summarizing the research findings, providing some perspectives, and recommending areas for further studies.