CHAPTER THREE

ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES IN CHRISTOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NIGERIA

3.0 Introduction

The African perception of Jesus Christ pervades every aspect of the Christian’s life in Nigeria and it influences the various ways of appropriating Christology. Jesus Christ is central to African Christianity but Africans have a particular way of seeing Jesus. The current chapter will explore and develop this particular African insight and expression of the Christ-event. For this purpose the chapter considers how Christology has developed in Nigerian Christianity, locating it within the broad spectrum of the historical development of the African theological framework. The chapter begins by underscoring the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ for African Christianity. Then the chapter explores how Christology develops in the quest for identity among African Christian theologians. This chapter ends with a discussion on the dominant Christological themes in Nigerian Christianity. The current chapter is important because it helps to understand the development that has taken place in Christology in Nigeria and Africa and to assess whether or not any of these developments would be useful in addressing the issue of violence and mutuality in present day Nigerian society.

John S. Mbiti, a notable Kenyan theologian, has argued that one of the greatest features of Christian theology is Christology. For Mbiti, Christology helps theology to engage human situation and context. He proposes that, “Christian Theology ought properly to be Christology, for Theology falls or stands on how it understands, translates and interprets Jesus Christ, at a given Time, Place and human situation.” There is a strong connection between the Christian faith and how it is translated in different human situations, times, and contexts.

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1 South African theologian, Willa Boesak has justified the importance of history in constructing theology: “To write a critical contextual theology requires a serious encounter with history.” God’s Wrathful Children: Political Oppression and Christian Ethics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 52. History particularly helps to understand and interpret the past events and it channels a new direction for the future.

A relevant theological enterprise synthesizes the proclamation and transmission of the faith in diverse contexts and it safeguards the unique place of the person of Jesus Christ in the process. Other precursors of African Christian theology, J.N.K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa have likewise underscored the centrality of Christology:

Christology is, in the final analysis, the most basic and central issue of Christian theology. The faith, the hope and the praxis of love that Christian theology attempts to explicate, and which Christians endeavour to witness to by their life, must have Christ as their foundation and goal. Without Jesus Christ as the cornerstone and final aim, nothing in Christology counts; nothing in theological thought is of any significance from the Christian point of view. In fact, to be precise, theology is not Christian at all when it does not offer Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the answer to the human quest...3

Like Mbiti, Mugambi and Magesa are convinced that the crucial place of Christology in Christian theological reflection emanates from the Christ-event. This becomes glaring when considering how African people respond to the Christ-event. African Christians profess Jesus Christ and seek to encounter Him on a daily basis in their world. Although, the heyday of African Christological discourse is only dated by most scholars to the last three decades of the twentieth century, the profound 'vernacular' Christology predates the said period.4 In assessing the contemporary African Christology, Diane Stinton seeks to know whether the advancement of current African Christology is a crisis or an act of confidence. After a careful examination, Stinton concludes that it is a mixture of crisis and confidence. “Christological confidence abounds in the perceptions of Jesus Christ "through African eyes", as operative among indigenous believers ever since Christianity arrived on the continent.”5 A close examination of the survey of African Christology further reveals that Africans have naturally responded to the Christian revelation "in the light of their own cultural heritage". And yet, a crisis because, despite the prevalence of oral Christology, “not until very recently, there is hardly a concretized, systematic reflection on Jesus Christ by Africans in light of their own cultural inheritance and identity.”6 This difficulty is closely related to the literary problem and super-domination of the North Atlantic theological framework that the African theologians sought to break in the beginning.

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4 Vernacular ‘Christology’ is also known as oral or local ‘Christology’.
However, the major difficulty of African Christology is its descriptive nature. Bénézet Bujo, a Congolese Christian ethicist, has reminded us of this limitation:

> You cannot define Christology as such in Africa unless you describe it. You cannot define it as in classical philosophy, because I think African Christology is not yet shaped like that in Europe. We are trying to open many ways for African Christology of African understanding of Christ.\(^7\)

This problem requires attention if Christian theological expression will reflect selfhood among Africans and will be able to contribute to the theology of the church universal. Kwesi Dickson has suggested that to solve the problem confronting Christology, modern African Christian theology needs to pay a close attention to local theologies. These are informal ways of theologising that serve as the true expression of the mixture of theology and every day experience.\(^8\) Kwame Bediako of Ghana avers that ‘implicit theology’ and ‘vital Christian experience in various African communities’ need to be studied.\(^9\) It is in this way that the theology will be responsible to the situations of theologians in Africa.

The emergence of Christological discourse in Nigeria can be summed up under the quest for a distinct identity. It evolves in the contexts of how missionaries interpreted Jesus Christ, the reactions to and interpretations of the missionaries’ theology by African intellectuals, and further developments in African Christian theology. I will explore this quest for identity and how it aided Christological development and emerging issues from that quest.

### 3.1 The Question of Identity (1): From the Missionary Christology to the Post-Missionary Contexts of the Emergence of African Christological Discourse

I will employ the term ‘missionary Christology’ as a designation for the presentation and appropriation of Jesus Christ as offered by the early missionaries in Nigeria.\(^10\) The basic

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\(^7\) Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 15.

\(^8\) Kwesi A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Darton, Longmann & Todd Ltd, 1984), 108-116. The local or informal theologising that Dickson reflects upon includes songs, prayer and preaching. Kwesi A. Dickson (1929-2005) a clergyman, was the seventh President of the Methodist Church Ghana. He was a professor of theology at the University of Legon, Ghana.


\(^10\) There is a difficulty in a search for ‘missionary Christology’ since the missionaries did not write books on their own Christology. But as far as I can identify in the literatures on Christianity/missiology in Africa, various
assumption of the early missionaries to Africa was a divine commission by God to conquer ‘the ends of the earth’ for Him. This affected their presentation of Jesus. The Jesus presented by the missionary is a conqueror of the souls of men, culture, and the land. Whilst examining the shortcomings of missionary Christianity, John Parratt has noted that despite the importance of Christianity, “the form in which it had been presented had failed to penetrate to the African personality.”

Parratt linked this failure to two crucial factors which have formed the background to the questions leading to current Christological themes in Africa: the proximity of colonialism to the missionary movement, and the missionary’s inferior perception of the African culture.

The nineteenth century European Colonial expansion in Africa coincided with the new era of the mission frontier in Africa and therefore affected the picture of Christ that the missionaries were bringing. When Christianity came to Africa during the colonial era, its growth was not without the support of the foreign mission agencies in providing the leadership and funding. Besides, the commonality of historical origin and the various injustices associated with the colonization became black spots of mission expansion. This background made Christianity interpreted as a white man's religion. The colonizers and missionaries are considered as same entity, the one being an ally of the other. This is the view shared by a group of Third World Theologians.

In the early phases of Western expansion the Churches were allies of the colonial powers. They spread under the protection of the colonial powers: they benefited from the expansion of empire. In return they rendered special service to western imperialism by legitimizing it and accustoming their adherents to accept compensatory expectations of an eternal reward for terrestrial misfortunes, including colonial exploitation.

scholars have found some faults in the ways that the early missionaries appropriated the person of Jesus Christ in Africa.


13 In most parts of the British West Africa, the expansion of missions is so close to colonialism that it was sometimes difficult to dissociate them. In some instances, the mission preceded colonization and in other places, colonial annexation began first and invited missionaries. Joerg Rieger pursues this notion of how the image of Christ has been shaped and bound to the advancement of the empire (manifesting notably in crusades, conquest and commerce) so that beginning from the Roman Empire to the British Empire and up till the modern times how people see Christ, interpret him cannot be separated from the empire. Rieger sees this as an inconsistency because Christ cannot be conjoined to the existence of fallen or modern empire. See Joerg Rieger, Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). See Andrew F. Walls, “British Missions” in Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1220, eds. Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchison (Aarhus, Denmark: Forlaget, 1982), 161.

There is a strong interplay between the colonial agenda and missionary endeavour. The reasons for this are not far-fetched. Both the colonizers and missionaries shared at least similar political, cultural, economic ideologies and worldviews. The presumed alliance between the missions and colonialism is evident to the point that a writer in the *New York Time*’s writing in 1897 could not separate whatever advancement anticipated in the 19th century Africa from missions and colonialism.

It is unlikely that the most momentous change on the face of the earth in the next century will occur on the continent of Africa. Civilized nations are getting out of patience with its obstinate barbarism and making preliminary assaults on all sides that must sooner or later break down the barrier, that has from the beginning of time guarded the mysteries of the interiors and kept out the regenerating influence of civilization. Science is eager to know the secrets of its geography, its geology, its zoology, its ethnology, and governments and learned societies are ready to promote and push on its investigation. Trade is importunate for new realms to open up, and anxious to get at the unexplored treasures of the vast tropical regions in which intelligence and enterprise are yet to begin their work. Christian zeal is ready to lend its powerful aid in behalf of the salvation of those dusky millions that still bow down to wood and stone.15

The above shows the prevailing perception of the Africans by the colonizers and the missionaries. The hegemonic relationships between the colonialists and the missionaries resulted in mutual accomplishments. This mission is to be realised in what Waibinte Wariboko called three “Cs” of mutual accomplishment; civilisation, commerce, and Christianity.16 The colonialists were interested in commercial exploration and civilisation whilst the missionaries centred on the conversion of the human heart. Further, the missionaries enjoyed the protection of the colonialists whilst the former were to promote the latter using ecclesiastical channels among African converts, a perfect symbiotic association.17 The mission expansion also became a strong avenue for European civilisation. The

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missionaries used different strategies in different places which included presentation of the gospel along with social ministry. For instance, they established good educational and health care systems that attracted the natives to embrace the gospel. They saw this as a way of “preaching Christ”.

The highpoint of this mission of social reconstruction in African societies is the imposition of “Western cultural values, while simultaneously attempting to supplant African indigenous cultures and identities.”18 This was a ‘benefit’ in some ways as it exposed Africans to European culture, civilisation, education, and Christianity. But the grave effect of this was that it gradually disintegrated the African identity and cultures. It results in what Nigerian historian Chima Korieh has called “a hybrid identity” between how an African Christian views himself or herself and other yet-to-be converted Africans. Another effect of missions and colonial conquest is seen in a constant conflict of living in a dual world of the missionary and the African.19

Modern African Christian writers have continued to portray the missionaries’ presentation of Jesus Christ and the missions’ affiliation to colonialism as a gallant betrayal of the motif of Christian mission. J. N. K. Mugambi is particularly worried about the mutual influence of colonialism and missionary Christianity with its implications for the Christ-event and Christianity in Africa nowadays. Mugambi expressed this concern over the contradiction between the negative appreciations of the African people vis-à-vis the missiological and Christological implications for the modern Christian mind.

I am wrestling with a contradiction: The gospel proclaims good news in specific cultural and historic terms (Lk 4:16-22). Yet missionary Christianity has reached Africa as terribly bad news, in which people have been taught in church to despise their culture, their ancestry, their history and their knowledge. How can Jesus the Son of God, Who created Africans in His own Image, condone such dehumanization? Either this negative teaching is theologically erroneous (heretical); or it is imperialist ideology rather than theology; or the God this teaching proclaims is an idol created in the image of its proclaimers. The implications of this concern are far reaching and it is too early to predict the outcome.20

The main confrontation for the missionary theology is how to transmit the gospel message to enable the gospel have its dwelling place among Africans. This major question was not properly handled by the early missionaries. It is evident in three major areas. First is the area of African identity which has been highlighted. Thus, the question of identity is closely tied to the second, the worldview of Africans and third, the spirituality of Africans. The missionaries failed to understand and synthesize the core of the Christian gospel with the African worldview and spirituality. Theology and worldview of the missionaries could not accommodate the essential aspects of the African worldview. The foremost Nigerian church historian Emmanuel Ayandele decried this situation in 1966 by submitting that;

…missionaries’ activity was a disruptive force, rocking traditional society to its very foundation, producing disrespectful presumptions and detribalized children through mission schools, destroying the high principles and orderliness of indigenous society through denunciation of traditional religion without adequate substitute and transforming the mental outlook of Nigerians in a way that made them imitate European values slavishly whilst holding irrational features of traditional religion.21

Again in 1968, Bolaji Idowu captured this enigma in an essay entitled “The Predicament of the Church in Africa.” According to Idowu,

It was a serious mistake that the church took no account of the indigenous beliefs and customs of Africa when she began her work of evangelization. It is obvious that misguided purpose, a completely new god who had nothing to do with the past of Africa was introduced to her people. Thus there was no proper foundation laid for the gospel message in the hearts of the people and no bridge built between the old and the new, the church has in consequence been speaking to Africans in strange tongues because there was no adequate communication.22

The missionaries assumed that coming to faith in Christ, is a necessary condition to strip an African Christian of his or her African-ness. This results in the tension between the African Christians and their religious past on the one hand and the missionary Christianity on the

Christ, in other words, was presented as a “savior” who would free them from their traditional false beliefs.

John Parratt describes the creative tension arising from the initial missionary projection of the relationship of the gospel to the African culture when he argued that some could break totally from their African heritage (because of their faith), but others who could not break totally from these two worlds are left to struggle in a state of schizophrenic disorder. Furthermore, “the Jesus Africans received from the western European missionaries,” affirmed Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, “was a Jesus who had been clothed in many layers of cultural realities.” He is perceived differently by the African converts “as an imperialist, racist, and … religious colonialist, and as hierarchical and patriarchal in his relationships with people.” The interpretation of the missionary’s presentation of Jesus Christ to African people is different to how the missionaries understood their own missions’ activities.

However, there are salient considerations that are often left out in most of the analyses of the early missionary activities and their transmission of the gospel message in Africa. Writing about the activities of the missionary era, some mission historians have emphasized what the missionaries did wrong and what they failed to do. These historians give not much prominence to the positive aspects of the missions in their analyses. This raises the question about the intention of the modern African mission historians. They aimed at deconstructing the histories of African Christian missions that were earlier written with emphasis on the role of missionaries at the neglect of the socio-economic and political contexts of the African communities. The first account of mission histories – which were written by the missionaries - focus on the “heroic” activities of the missionaries such as the conversion of Africans and how they influenced civilisation and modernisation in various African societies.

23 Osadolor Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Achimota: African Christian Press, 1983), 12, 68-86. The way Jesus was presented to Africans was deficient in adequate demonstration of the inherent power of the gospel to handle the existential challenges of Africans which is closely tied to their worldview. There were prescribed means of dealing with these challenges in African Traditional Religions (ATRs), which were condemned by the missionaries as ‘unChristian practices’ without providing corresponding alternatives. Thus, when a young Christian is faced with similar challenges as those faced before coming to the faith in Christ Jesus, such a person is tempted and more often than not, falls into that temptation of going back to the ATR means of handling the perennial challenges of life. Again, this lies in the foreignness of the terms in which Jesus was presented to the African mind.


In response to the first historical accounts, African historians and sociologists wrote to de-emphasize the role of foreign missionaries for the perceived correctness of the role played by the African indigenes in the evangelization of their own people.\(^{26}\) This method of historical analysis pays much attention to the socio-political change impelled by the missionaries’ contact with their host communities.\(^{27}\) It investigates the inner dynamics of the missions, blames the missionaries for their unsympathetic perception of the African culture. This is sometimes linked with the colonization and its impacts on the Africans. Walbert Bühlmann, for instance, has catalogued such accusations and ill-willed responses against the missions in different parts of Africa using past historical data in a form of political fiction in the settings of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Following a series of presentations of the accusations against the missions and the defence from the missionaries, Bühlmann states that “the phenomenon we know as the missions is so complex that even Solomon in all his wisdom would not have been able to make a clear distinction between the good and the not-so-good.”\(^{28}\)

The intricacies of the missions and colonialism are so complex to the extent that no single experience can be cited as an overarching demonstration of that relationship. To support this assertion Waibinte Wariboko has followed Adiele Afigbo to argue that “(T)hough the Christian missions and secular administration were probably the two most important bastions of British colonial rule in south-eastern Nigeria, the two were often locked in conflict.”\(^{29}\) The dynamic relationship of missions and colonialism varied from one period to another, from one mission agency to another, and from one location to another. There are undeniable evidences as pointed out by Ogbru Kalu and John Bauer that the early missionaries did not assent absolutely to all of the colonial policies and ideologies.\(^{30}\) Sometimes, the

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\(^{26}\) For instance, different literatures are proliferated with history of Christian mission in Nigeria with major emphasis on the role played by an individual like Bishop Ajayi Crowther whilst little or nothing is said about those missionaries who co-laboured with Crowther from the beginning.


\(^{30}\) Ogbru U. Kalu, “Ethiopianism in African Christianity” in African Christianity: An African Story, ed. (Pretoria: Department of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2005), 260. John Bauer, 200 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62-1992 (Nairobi: Paulist Publications-Africa, 1994), 282. Bauer confirms that missionaries exercised mitigating influence among the colonialists in the earliest times of missions and colonial relationships. With the various examples of Lutherans in Tanzania, Anglican and Presbyterians in Kenya, and Baptists in Congo, the missionaries’ relationship to the colonial authorities can be explained in terms of periodization. For instance, Bauer goes on to observe that the criticism of colonial policies before 1920s was
missionaries expressed reservations for, and even criticised some of the economic and political policies of the colonial government. This may be viewed as a presentation of a Jesus who was not just passive to the situation in which He lived. The missionary Christology cannot be adjudged in an entirely negative way.

Conversely, a good knowledge of culture among Africans is necessary to grasp the concerns voiced by modern African intellectuals in their interpretations of the missionary Christology. The reconstructionist writers that I cited above rightly consider culture as a vital fabric of human existence in the African society which the initial presentation of Jesus affected. “Culture stands at the gates, market squares and gable ends of each community. As a new religion comes, the tensile strength of the culture of the people may determine the prospects.”31 Culture plays an active role in the identity formation and worldview of the Africans. It is from this overview that the missionaries were considered to have violated Africans of their cultural rights, deprived them of their cultural values and identity by imposing foreign culture and worldviews upon them in the process of gospel transmission.

If the question was asked: in what ways did the ‘missionary Christianity’ or ‘missionary Christology’ appear inconsistent with the Bible? The only credible answer will point to the cultural disengagement of the missions and the European theories of imperialism and cultural superiority, Christianity being a part of that culture. Some argue fairly that the expansion of the European empire and initial missionary movement operated on cultural negative assumptions.32 The unconscious relation of the imperialism and subjective cultural perception between colonizers and missionaries led to the failure of some class of the missionaries to engage the African culture and worldviews appropriately. Ogbu Kalu, for instance, attributed this failure to the contrasting worldviews between the Africans and the missionaries. The worldviews of the missionaries “consisted of a dualistic mind-set, scientific racism and the verdicts of arm-chair theorists who disengaged the dreamy origins of primitive religion from Christianity. It was decorated with ethnocentrism and hubris.”33 The African worldview involves spiritual, ethical and sociological principles undergirding human

very different to its criticism after that period. Before that period, the missionaries were more independent and highly critical of the colonial virulent abuse. But after this period the missionaries refrained from criticizing the colonial administration publicly but in a diplomatic way.

existence in relation to the universe. It is impossible that the two opposing worldviews would be fused together without some visible negative effects on both sides. The conundrum that modern African writers have identified results from the fusion of these two horizons. To cite Kalu again,

Reasons for the nineteenth-century revival of the missionary enterprise include scientific discoveries, voyages of exploration, new and aggressive mercantalist economic theories, scientific theories of racism, and competition for plantation colonies, as well as humanitarianism, anti-slavery movements, resettlement of liberated slaves, and the desire to convert souls allegedly headed for perdition.\textsuperscript{34}

There are multiple motivating factors for the missionary movement. An analysis can centre on one of these factors but cannot provide an overview of the significant events in the contacts of missions and reactions from Nigerians. Therefore, any careful, unbiased analysis has to focus on a specific aspect of the missionaries’ and native’s interactions. Emmanuel Ayandele sought to do this well by concentrating on the social and political analysis, and Ade Ajayi focused on the roles of the missions in the making of a new elite.\textsuperscript{35} Whilst Ayandele stated that the missions' influence on the traditional, social, and religious institutions was a 'disruptive force,'\textsuperscript{36} Ajayi noted that the relationship of the European missionaries to their parishioners was such that at some points they became like gods to their subjects in which a possibility of dialogue was totally excluded.\textsuperscript{37} However, Ajayi did not hesitate to conclude, having analysed carefully the effects of Christian missions on the natives, leadership in cities and villages, social institutions and Nigerian nation in general that,

In this way the labours of the missionaries, African and European in the fifty years before 1891 provided abundant fruit for the Church in the fifty years after. It is also possible to argue that much of the later harvest was made possible precisely because the earlier missionaries had placed so much emphasis on education and civilization, and because this continued to affect the work of later missionaries who would have liked to see much less emphasis placed on these things.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{34} Kalu, “Church Presence in Africa”, 17.
\textsuperscript{36} See note 23 above.
\textsuperscript{37} Ajayi, \textit{Christian Missions in Nigeria}, xiii.
\textsuperscript{38} Ajayi, \textit{Christian Missions in Nigeria}, 270.
The missions gave birth to a new group of Nigerian élite – through re-organisation of the political structure, educational mission for Christians and non-Christians, civilisation, a new social and religious order, and the emergence of the African nationalism.  

As grave as the issues of cultural identity and European imperial theories are for the Africans, it is only with caution that the bright side of the missions will be considered, too. Most writers are not objective and progressive in their assessment of Nigerian and African missions history. This makes them deflect into over-generalisation. It must be noted, however, that there are different periodizations in the charting of the Nigerian missions historiography. For instance, the main issues or challenges in the first fifty years of the missionary activities cannot be used to assess the following fifty or one hundred years of missions history in Nigeria.

The relics of the earliest periods of the European contacts with the African people, however, persisted to other phases of Nigerian missions historiography. Some of the missionaries carried the derogatory notions forming their view about Nigerian people. In the same way, the negative appreciation must have been predisposed by works of anthropologists who were ignorant about African peoples and their culture. For instance, this ignorance even persisted until after the Edinburgh Conference, of 1910. Western knowledge about Africa and appreciation of its culture has increased tremendously during the Le Zoute Conference of Belgium in 1926. The Le Zoute Conference resolved and urged the mission boards and agencies that they

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40 Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, xiii. Different periodization can be attempted in the Nigerian mission historiography. The key events in the mission and Nigerian nationhood may help in the periodization of Nigerian mission history. The first period covered the first fifty years from the date of arrival of the first missionaries at Badagry (1841-1891). The second period continued from 1891-1914, when the Southern Colony of Lagos was amalgamated with the Northern Protectorate. The third phase was from the 1915-1960, from amalgamation to the Nigerian independence and 1961 downward.

41 It is certainly inappropriate to form an opinion about missionaries in general on the basis of an experience in some areas as the general or representative view of the entire period of the missionary era that spans over one hundred years. Most of these missionaries spent their adult life serving missions in Nigeria, risking their lives under a totally different climate, culture, etc. whilst very many contacted horrible diseases from which they never recovered, others were able to return to their home country.

42 One major conclusion of the Edinburgh Conference was that African culture had no preparation for the reception of the gospel. See Brian Stanley, The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910 (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 235-244.
Provide full opportunity and time to African missionaries by means of recognised courses at home or on the field, to study native languages, customs and religions, that they may make an effective approach to the African mind.\footnote{Edwin W. Smith, \textit{The Christian Mission in Africa, A Study Based on the Proceedings of the International Conference at Le Zoute, Belgium, September 14\textsuperscript{th} to 21\textsuperscript{st} 1926} (London: The International Missionary Council, 1926), 109.}

Prior to this time, the well-trained missionaries were set aside for China and India whilst “the leftovers, a sort of celestial cannon fodder”\footnote{Walls, “British Missions”, 160. Cf. Smith, \textit{The Christian Mission in Africa}, 46.} were sent to different parts of Africa. Those missionaries would have presented an image of Jesus who had little or nothing to do with culture in some parts of Nigeria, due to their lack of requisite knowledge of cross-cultural missions and anthropology. Such a cultural engagement that is expected in the missionary Christianity and African relationship is intoned in John V. Taylor's \textit{The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion},\footnote{John V. Taylor, \textit{The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion} (London: SCM Press, 1963).} which has been quoted extensively on the subject of African religion and Christianity.

History does not consist only in what happened, who the active players were and their actions. It also involves a comprehensive reportage of a series of events, when they happened and how such events are interpreted by the historian. The response of African historians is to classify the missionaries as culturally iconoclastic and imperialistic in their estimation of Africans. Unfortunately, this interpretation of the missionaries’ insensitivity to Africans and their culture formed the missionary Christology in the perception of most African elites.

In the second scheme of historical interpretation of missionaries’ engagements, many analysts have left behind the specific mission agency under consideration, and the particular part of Nigeria under consideration.\footnote{Ajayi, \textit{Christian Missions in Nigeria}, xiii-xiv. Ajayi pointed out that as early as the period 1841-91, there were five major missionary societies in Nigeria: the Anglican Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), whose missionaries were mostly Germans; the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, a committee of the English Methodist Conference; the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland; the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention of the USA and the Catholic Society of African Missions (The Société des Missions Africaines, S.M.A.) of France. These missionary societies from varied backgrounds have different emphases and approaches. Considering the circumstances under which they operated, it is very difficult and inappropriate to reach a conclusion for the missionary movement in Nigeria on the basis of the activities of one of the mission organizations.} Most of what has been written over the last four decades has been selectively written as various forms of native responses.\footnote{This response downplayed the work of the missionaries and magnified their shortcoming.} Even when Bühlmann has creatively analyzed the impact of missions in different parts of Africa, projecting into the future, he concludes that “what counts nowadays is not separation,
isolation, spiritual and material impoverishment, but encounter, living together, spiritual and material enrichment. What counts more than anything is unity, the reduction of opposites and of bitterness, the building-up of unity.  

Paying attention to the specific mission agency and part of the country will help to avoid overgeneralisation and aid a thorough exploration and understanding of how Jesus was presented by the missionaries in different parts of Nigeria.

There are no clear indications that the missionaries really presented Jesus to Nigerians in an inconsistent way with the Bible. In all materials I have consulted, I could not locate a single reference that enunciates a negative presentation of Jesus Christ by the missionaries to Nigerians. It is unconvincing whether such a material exists at all. The key issues that the Africans wrestle with are those of cultural identity, and imperial theories originating from Europe. In fact, the negative estimation of Africans did not emerge with the missionaries. The trans-Atlantic slave trade, European subduing theories of racism and discrimination, and their massive effects on social, political, economic, and religious experiences of Africans and the African personality informed the responses of the African intellectuals. In Bediako’s view; “it is the African reactions to that cumulative Western impact on African life and on African self-identity which have shaped and conditioned the twentieth-century perception of the problem.”

A few recent analyses of the interplay of the missions, colonisation, Nigerian church, and society corroborate what Ajayi identified several years ago. The missionaries should be celebrated for their giant strides, sacrifices, resilience, and positive initiatives in education and civilisation of Nigerian societies not neglecting the fact that the missionary class regrettably fell into common pitfalls of their time. Nigerian church and the Nigerian people cannot separate themselves from their history: both the good and the ugly. The rest of the

48 Bühlmann, The Missions on Trial, 154.
49 Bediako, Christianity in Africa:, 75. Bediako states that the very conditions under which the nineteenth century missions was carried out, such as slavery, were sufficient to make African thinkers question the integrity of missions and the missionaries.
50 Bediako, Christianity in Africa:, 5-6.
history will be written in the future with emphasis not on the dark side of the missions alone but on the bright side, too.

It is within the above milieu that the early Christian theologians in Africa sought to reconstruct a distinct notion of Jesus Christ from which African Christians are to derive their new identity. One of the first generation of African theologians, John S. Mbiti early in 1967 observing the dawdling level of commitment evident in the scanty materials available in Christological studies in Africa, declared unequivocally that, “an African concept of Christology does not exist”.\(^{52}\) Mbiti meant that Christological ideas were not being harnessed in the Sub-Saharan Africa in relation to the challenges of the people.\(^{53}\) E.W. Fashole-Luke, a Sierra Leonean theologian also raised a similar observation later. Fashole-Luke observed that “there are no signs that Christological ideas are being wrestled with by African theologians”.\(^{54}\) These challenges and others posed by insiders became propelling forces for Africans in the academy to handle the destiny of the African church in their own hands. They took up the responsibility of researching notions of Jesus which correspond to the African cultural categories and worldview. I will address some of these categories later in the chapter.

### 3.2 The Question of Identity (2): Theological Contexts of the Emergence of the African Christological Discourse

The theological presupposition upon which the late nineteenth and twentieth century missionary movements thrived was an exclusive view of salvation: Jesus is the universal saviour of humanity and all other religions are aberrations. This is the bedrock of the missionary theology. Besides, the European anthropologists and sociologists developed religious theories which portrayed African traditional religious beliefs and practices with derogatory concepts.\(^{55}\) Geoffrey Parrinder is one major person who has studied and written extensively on the content, structures, and symbols of African religions (ATRs). Parrinder


\(^{53}\) This statement by John S. Mbiti is not to be interpreted at face value. The statement does not negate the possibility of a coherent African Christology. Rather, he was disappointed because Christology being the heart of Christian faith and church was not being researched with deserved attention by the theologians of his time.


\(^{55}\) See for example, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965). Some of these derogatory terms from which sociological and psychological theories were formed are discussed by Evans-Pritchard.
dismissed some earlier descriptive terminologies used for African religions such as animism, voodoo, juju, animatism, and fetishism, which he found misleading and inaccurate. Despite the uncritical attitude toward the Nigerian religious views, where he has lived, he was left with no choice in his investigation than to conclude that African religion is polytheism – a term unacceptable to an African religious advocate. Parrinder notes;

It is in West Africa, however, that we find fully-developed polytheism. Here are pantheons of nature gods, with their temples and priests, like the polytheisms of Egypt, Greece and India…. Polytheism is a stage through which many peoples of the world have passed. It is not logical, but is the outcome of belief in the manifold spiritual powers in nature.

There are two problems that those who describe ATR as polytheism try to avoid. First is how best to describe the belief in a Supreme Being (God) simultaneously with the myriads of divinities (who are considered lesser beings to the Supreme Being) without equating them. The second is the need to delineate the functions and nature of the Supreme Being to the lesser divinities. Hence, they are left with no choice other than to treat them differently with an indicative terminology that, in their view, harmonise the structure of African religions.

The response of the early African Christian theologians to the missionary theology and western estimation of African religious systems can be described in two major ways. First, Christian theologians developed theological expressions that reflect their own cultural worldview and the perennial struggles of Africans. They explored concepts in pre-Christian religious heritage (such as God, spirit world, and divinities) to justify the traditional religious notions amongst Africans. The late Nigerian Methodist theologian, E. Bolaji Idowu stands out amongst the precursors of African religious concepts. Idowu combined anthropological methods with theological tools to debunk the missionaries’ and western anthropologists’ derogatory notions about religion and God in Africa. In his *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, Idowu vigorously defended the ATR against the negative terminologies some anthropologists have used to describe it. Idowu’s defence and analysis led to a proposed definition:

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I conclude that the religion [ATR] can only be adequately described as monotheism. I modify this ‘monotheism’ by the adjective ‘diffused’, because here we have a monotheism in which there exist other powers which derived from Deity such being and authority that they can be treated, for practical purposes, almost as ends in themselves. The descriptive phrase ‘implicit monotheism’ will serve as well as ‘diffused monotheism’.

The basic reason behind Idowu’s definition is that among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, God is regarded as the highest, omniscience, omnipotent and described with other qualities which correspond to the Christian attributes of God. Hence, the pre-Christian religious ideas provide a preparation for the reception of the gospel. Despite the thousands of the divinities in the traditional religions, Idowu sees the Yoruba religion as a diffused monotheism, in which the Supreme Being ‘interacts’ with the universe through other lesser divinities. The universality of the gospel message makes the gospel transcend any human culture. Therefore, “the Supreme Being of the primitive culture”, Idowu argued, “is a genuinely monotheistic Deity, described as Father, Creator, eternal, completely beneficent, ethically holy, and creatively omnipotent.”

Osadolor Imasogie, another Nigerian theologian, attempts to explain the relationship between the Supreme God and the divinities by proposing the term ‘bureaucratic monotheism’ to preserve its peculiar expression and hierarchical structure.

To what extent can one question the validity of African religious concepts? The contention of Idowu, Imasogie and other writers is that the pre-Christian religious notions should be harmonised for Christian engagement with the traditional religions. But these scholars sometimes overstretch their arguments to the point that they almost equate the traditional religions with the biblical revelation. African theological scholarship of that time focused on finding a common ground between the culture and the missionary theology of the twentieth century. These scholars were interested in examining the spiritual content of the

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61 Osadolor Imasogie, *African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: University Press, 1985), 23. He used the word ‘bureaucratic monotheism’ to explain the relationship between African concepts of God and the divinities. Of particular interest to Imasogie is the fact that Africans conceive God as having ‘deputies’ who act on his behalf through whom the humans may contact or connect with him. By this, he meant that the divinities are intermediaries between the Supreme God and humankind. Osadolor Imasogie (b. 1928) is a Nigerian Baptist theologian professor of African theology, a former president of The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Nigeria.
African religious past, present, and what lies ahead. They considered the content of the religious past as part and parcel of the identity of African Christianity. Andrew Walls captures the core of the initial theological enquiry in quest of an identity by early theologians in Africa when he states that

…no question is more clamant than the African Christian identity crisis. It is not simply an intellectual quest. This massive shift in the centre of gravity of the Christian world which has taken place cannot be separated from the cultural impact of the West in imperial days. Now the Empires are dead, and the Western value-setting of the Christian faith largely rejected. Where does this leave the African Christian? Who is he? What is his past? A past is vital for all of us – without it, like the amnesiac man, we cannot know who we are. The prime African theological quest at the present is this: What is the past of the African Christian? What is the relationship between Africa’s old religions and her new one?62

The consideration of the relationship between the African past and the present in transposition to Christianity is vital. This is the missing point in the missionary theology which led to “a theological Problematik in missionary theology.”63 Unlike the apostolic pattern of mission, which sought to retain some measure of cultural relevance in the context, the Western missionaries’ emphasis was more on detaching the Africans from their culture. The “theology of mission” of the Western missionaries which supported the missionary understanding of “heathenism” in Africa, has been suggested as the factor that rendered the Western missionary endeavour somewhat of a “Judaising” exercise.64

The second response of theologians in Africa to missionary theology was to converge to articulate their thoughts in pursuit of distinct Christological notions. One way that this desire was expressed was the various academic conferences held by African theologians with the collaboration of the clergy and laity. These academic and ecumenical avenues played an active role in the development of an African Christian theology.65 A group of Catholic priests in francophone Africa met for a symposium in Paris to contend for the possibility of an African theology that resonates with the African heritage. Protestant theologians boosted this effort with a similar consortium in Accra, Ghana in 1955. The presentations of this

64 Bediako, Theology and Identity, 251.
conference were later published as *Christianity and African Culture*. When All African Council of Churches (AACC) was formed, it became a defining moment as a major force in promoting the course of an African Christian theology. The AACC’s consultation of theologians held at the Immanuel College, Ibadan, Nigeria in 1966 stands out amongst its works. Presentations at this conference were published in the English language as *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* in 1969.66 Writing the introduction to the book, Bolaji Idowu, who also chaired the consultation affirmed incisively the task of an African Christian theology:

> We seek, in effect, to discover in what way the Christian faith could best be presented, interpreted, and inculcated in Africa so that Africans will hear God in Jesus Christ addressing Himself immediately to them in their own native situation and particular circumstances.67

This is one of the first indigenous theologian’s efforts to itemize an agenda for an African Christian theology. Judging from the historical records of African nations, it was an era of struggle for independence among the many African nations. Those that had attained self-government were still nascent. The Christian faith was struggling for relevance in Africa. The relevance of Christianity in that context was perceived from the question of how much it would contribute to the emancipation of the people via proper Christological articulation. This presupposition was accepted by many theologians as charting a direction for theology and the church in Africa.

The quest for an African Christian theology was the background for Christological development. This view is grounded on the conviction that since Christology is central to theology Christological reflection cannot be embarked upon in isolation from human situation. A representative of this view is evident in the writing of Douglas W. Waruta:

> I contend that Africans have every right to formulate their own christology, their own response to who this Messiah really is. I also contend that Africans understand Jesus Christ in the context of their own religious consciousness.68

The situation is now changing as there are several African theologians who are now seeking to apply Christological categories to the Christian faith and life situations in Africa. The


involvement of a number of theologians working on this project touched directly on the development of Christian theology in Africa.

As theological conversation continued to gain momentum in search of identity, John S. Mbiti identified four cardinal sources for an African Christian theology. These are: the Bible; the Christian tradition as embedded in the theology of older churches; traditional African worldview and the living experience of the churches in Africa.\(^{69}\) This awareness has also increased with time.\(^{70}\) The meeting of a group of the Third World Theologians in 1977 in Accra, Ghana, enhanced the movement for an African Christian theology. These theologians reflected on how “to rescue theology from the shelves of the universities and the sanctuaries of the churches and make it a living, dynamic, active, and creative reality in our society.”\(^{71}\) The events of this conference were published in the book *African Theology En Route*. The communiqué issued thereafter built on the intention of these theologians. It stated among other things:

We believe that African theology must be understood in the context of African life and culture and the creative attempt of African peoples to shape a new future that is different from the colonial past and the neo-colonial present. The African situation requires a new theological methodology that is different from the approaches of the dominant theologies of the West. African theology must reject, therefore, the prefabricated ideas of North Atlantic theology by defining itself according to the struggles of the people in their resistance against the structures of domination. Our task as theologians is to create a theology that arises from and is accountable to African people.\(^ {72}\)

The conference corroborated the debate on the sources for an African Christian theology and further added other criteria that should be involved in its development. These are the liturgical elements of the African Independent Churches (AICs), African anthropology, and other African realities.\(^ {73}\) John Mbiti, in the same conference, identified three main areas of expressing an African Christian theology, namely; written theology, oral theology, and

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\(^{70}\) See also, Kwame Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2004), 22. Bediako gave further insights on the earlier presentation on Mbiti by stressing the biblical profundity of the doctrines to conform to criteria for African theology.


\(^{73}\) “Final Communiqué” Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, 192-193. African realities here referred to the issues associated with socio-economic and political transformation, experiences such as racism, sexism and cultural oppression that must impact on African theology.
symbolic theology. Written theology is identifiable with the works of the educated elites who have had the privilege of western education. Their thoughts have been presented in books, articles and scholarly monographs. Oral theology is the popular trend especially among the local practitioners as evident in liturgy, songs, sermons, prayer and so on. The symbolic theology is the artistic communication of human beliefs and thoughts in the field of religions. This is in the form of art works, symbols, rituals, dance, and sculpture. The last value that this conference added is an affirmation that African theology “must be contextual theology”, must “be liberation theology”, and must be given “contextual expression” within that cultural milieu. Each of the areas of expressing African Christian theology is significant for Christological development. They encapsulate the African experience and expression of Jesus Christ, their spirituality, and the worldview within which the Gospel is proclaimed.

The 1980s marked a new beginning as different titles on the subjects of African Christianity, theology, and Christology began to appear. Most of these materials were put together to articulate the basics of African theologies. By 1989 the writings on Christology had developed so that Charles Nyamiti assessed Christology as the most developed theme in African Christian theology. This shows the developments that have taken place since the awareness of Africans was drawn to this urgent task.

In the debate on the concept and content of African Christian theology, most of the early theologians in Africa equally share the sentiment of Idowu and Mbiti on the relationship of Christian theology to African religious traditions. They agreed that theological reflection must be conscious of its contexts. However, they did not hesitate to digress on how much the theology should rely on the cultural and traditional religious content of the African past. For instance, Kwesi Dickson states that, “African theologians who are searching for an African Theology can … hardly afford to base their exercise solely on African religion and culture

75 “Final Communiqué” Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, 194.
76 It is possible to refer to various titles which appeared to ‘sell’ African thoughts in the field of theology and Christology but specific mention will be made of the two volume collection of John Parrat’s A Reader in African Theology, 1987 and 1997.
78 Some of the major publications that have captured the subject of African Christology penetratingly are the following: Robert J. Schreiter, Faces of Jesus in Africa., Diane B. Stinton, Jesus of Africa, and J.N.K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa, eds. Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and Diversity in Christology.
and Western theology”. Akin to Dickson’s thought is the need to make the Bible the starting point and the judge for the validity of sound African Christian theology.

Bénézet Bujo differs in his thinking about the task of Christian theology in Africa today. For Bujo, a relevant modern theological framework should not be preoccupied with the old African religious past. It should present itself as a holistic discipline that is relevant through a multidisciplinary approach to the modern day challenges of the Africans. The modern theological conversation should contain “not only the problem of culture as ethnology but also the new problems that came to Africa with colonialism and with the new civilization.” These new problems include an endless list of technological, economical, religious, and those ongoing challenges posed by globalisation and lack of peaceful coexistence. Hence, the essence of theological discourse today should be to adequately reflect upon the specific human situation and the role that theology can assume in giving a right response. The emerging culture must also be given a reasonable and suitable theological response.

3.3 Modern Christological Constructions

My argument in this section is that to understand the question who is Jesus Christ in Nigerian Christianity today warrants an exploration into various Christological constructions among Nigerians theologians and local Christians. The imaginative efforts aimed at responding

79 Bediako, Theology and Identity, 1, citing Kwesi Dickson.
80 Stinton, Jesus of Africa, 16.
theologically and christologically to cultural, sociological, political, and economical circumstances have resulted in what may be described as modern Christological constructions. These Christological reflections focus on the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth in relation to modern African conditions. These predominant Christological categories will be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

J. N. K. Mugambi has suggested twenty-seven Christological paradigms that could influence the formulation of African Christological themes in the light of the New Testament. Mugambi’s paradigms are particularly useful as they entail some biblical concepts which may impact upon the African understanding of Jesus Christ. In an essay entitled “Christology and Inculturation: A New Testament Perspective”, Nigerian Catholic theologian Justin Ukpong discusses approaches to Christology and inculturation. Ukpong is convinced that Jesus used what we popularly call inculturation today since “he proclaimed the Good News to the Jewish people from within the perspective of the Jewish culture.” Modern Christological construction has been shaped by so many factors in Africa. Some of these factors include the influence of the missionary theology, the desire for liberation, inculturation, and the quest for contextualisation. All these factors are associated with the new directions in theological scholarship in Africa. It is very crucial to look into these modern Christological constructions as they constitute various creative attempts by the Nigerian theologians to examine the Christological question, who is Jesus, from academic perspectives bearing in mind the socio-cultural, religious, political, and economic conditions of the people. I will now explore how Nigerian theologians have interpreted Jesus Christ focusing on these factors.

3.3.1 The Solution-Oriented and Life Changing Christology

Victor Ezigbo has accurately observed that “the majority of the constructive and grassroots Christologies that exist in Nigerian Christianity are solution-oriented.” There is a theological presupposition in Nigerian Christianity that affirms that there is power available to the believer through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to solve all problems of life.

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84 Ukpong, “Christology and Inculturation”, 40.
This Christological presupposition lays hold onto the potency of faith to subdue difficulties of life. The Christology that emanates from this theology may be described essentially as the solution-oriented and life changing Christology.

Solution-oriented Christology directly springs from the emphasis of traditional religious practices – dealing with life and how to cope with its challenges. Hence, it may be considered as the first theological presupposition in African Christian theology which has only been studied academically in recent time.

The dominant Christological notion among Nigerian Christians and other African nations today is geared towards solutions and life changing. There is a great desire for a change in the situation of the Nigerian people. The identity of Jesus Christ in the view of the proponents of solution-oriented Christology is first in terms of what He has done for humanity and how that can be translated to better the life of the Christian from social, economic and spiritual perspectives. Jesus Christ is portrayed as the healer, bondage breaker, and solution provider in difficult times. Victor Ezigbo cited such a view,

Jesus is the living Son of God. What he does in my life is numerous. There are at times when it seems as if I may not live, if I call upon Jesus he does not waste time, he answers me immediately. Before I came into this Christ Holy Church, I was seriously sick. I was told that if I would abide in Christ and to believe in him that the sickness in my body would disappear before three months. I stayed [in the church] and before three months I walked into the church unaided and shouted ‘hallelujah’. And I said, ‘God is that how you are?’ When I call upon God, he answers me. God is with me; Jesus is beside me now I am talking to you.86

It is customary in the thought of the ordinary theologian87 to devise strategies to cope with their existential needs as they come to faith in Jesus Christ. When people are invited to accept Jesus’ offer of salvation, they come as they are. They come with their joys, sorrows, sicknesses, and other perennial needs. People come with an expectation that as they accept Christ’s invitation should make them and their challenges encounter the God of the Bible. Such a view is expressed in a research on African Cultural Hermeneutics:

Faced with some peculiar problems as African Christians, we searched the Bible consistently with our own eyes in order to discover whether there could

86 Ezigbo, “Contextualizing Christ-Events:”, 124.
87 The term ordinary theologian is used with the assumption that in as much as theology is simply defined as the discourse about God, everyone ‘can do’ theology though the level will always be different. Hence, it refers to Christian or untrained people who only reflect on who God is on the basis of their daily experiences.
be anything in the Bible that could solve our problems. We discovered in the process of reading the Bible with our own eyes, we discovered in the scripture great affinities with our own worldview and culture. We discovered in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament resemblances to events similar to African experience, especially painful experience. When most Nigerian Christians profess faith in Jesus, it is not only to qualify them for salvation. They consciously expect that their faith will have overbearing significance on every aspect of life. The roots of the notion of solution and life changing can be located in two concentric understanding of life in the African worldview. Life is holistic in nature. There is no division between the civil and religious life. There is a perfect harmony between different aspects of life. Hence, the religious life is an extension of civil life. Again, its development may also be traced to the desire to combat the existential challenges that threaten the realization of a free humanity. The desire to overcome suffering, pains of various forms and degrees, economic backwardness, ill-health, and the threats of the evil spirit, have lead Nigerian Christians to seek alternative ways of coping with the situation. When the missionaries presented the Christian faith, David Tuesday Adamo contends, it was not a ‘total gospel’. The missionaries discarded the pre-Christian cum traditional ways of coping with life situations without prescribing a relevant alternative, except that the Bible offers the solution. The indigenous believer then embarked on the search to make the Bible speak directly to every aspect of life. This method is common to the ‘vernacular hermeneutics’ of the Third World.

How beneficial has the solution Christology been to the Nigerian nation? A critique of the perspectives shared on inculturation and liberation motives of the solution-oriented Christology will reveal answers to that enquiry.

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3.3.1.1 The Challenge of the Contexts of Faith Expression and Theologizing

I have argued earlier that the context of Christian faith expression has influenced the pattern and focus of theologising in Nigeria. This has been the fertile soil upon which solution Christology has developed.

Solution-oriented Christology as a form of ‘social gospel’ penetrated into Nigerian Christianity using an advantage of the context and experience of Nigerians. The context of faith and theologising is that of poverty, inequality in the distribution of the nation’s wealth, massive unemployment, poor and unaffordable healthcare delivery. In view of these factors, solution Christology appeals to the people as a source of liberation from the social, economic, political, and religious ills. But how much liberation has it delivered to the people? Several studies have assessed the impact of the solution oriented Christology in the present-day Nigerian Christianity leading to different conclusions. Wellington Wotogbe-Weneka points out the denigrations that have been witnessed in Nigerian Christianity due to social vices, crimes, and so on perpetrated by church leaders in the name of providing solutions to the living conditions of the people. It is impossible to disassociate the promise of financial abundance as a replacement for poverty in the quest for solution. The theology of ‘sow a seed’ and get it multiplied for wealth and health has been sternly criticized for its capitalistic drive. There is also an abuse of prophetic gifts, sexual misconduct, duping, and malaise in the name of proffering solutions to the desperate gullible people. Indeed the solution theology has led to the proliferation of churches and para-church organizations. But it has equally

91 Wellington Ornyezinuchimm Wotogbe-Weneka, “Religion: Modern Denigrators and Rehabilitators in National Development” 98th Inaugural Lecture (Department of Religious & Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities), 29th November, 2012. Wotogbe-Waneka is an Anglican clergyman and professor of African and Comparative Religion. Weneka cited various instances……and in particular the case of one Rev King which is common knowledge in South-western Nigeria: 51: “In 2006 also, a Lagos High Court found one Rev. Pastor Chukwuemeka Ezeugo (alias Rev. King) guilty of murder of late Anna Utor King, a member of his church, who was also said to be his “sex partner”. He burnt her to death amidst a plea for mercy from the late Anna. He was also sentenced to 100 years for attempted murder of 7 others whom he also burnt with the use of petrol and matches, accusing them of various offenses.”

92 Dominic Umoh, “Prosperity Gospel and the Spirit of Capitalism: The Nigerian Story” African Journal of Scientific Research 12, no. 1 (2013): 653-688. The greatest criticism of financial liberation of the prosperity gospel is simply two-fold; it is meant to promote finance of the church and the income generated is mostly controlled by the pastor. Rimamsikwe Habila Kitause and Hilary Chukwuka Achnike, “A Historical Discourse on Tithing and Seed Sowing in some Nigerian Pentecostal Churches” IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) 18, Issue 3 (Nov. - Dec. 2013): 07-19. “The Pentecostals of Nigeria by employing creativity and craftiness have designed their theology of prosperity to gain a financial empire. Their constant promotion of breakthrough seminars and teachings which encourage cheerful giving to win a greater income in the future, whether such a method is in line with the scripture or not, has succeeded in not only reawakening the interest of the mainline churches toward tithing, but have equally been seen to influence even, the theology, stability and commitment of the classical Pentecostals pastors and members… there are still some handfuls of Pentecostal preachers that are uncompromisingly preaching sound doctrines, steadily living puritanical lifestyle, and are enthusiastically modelling their followers to adopt same in Nigeria.”
brought yet-to-be answered questions in the areas of moral sanctity in Christian ministry. All the above issues make solution-oriented Christology a subject of debate among some Nigeria Christians and scholars today.

3.3.1.2 The Challenge of being Truly African and Authentically Christian

There is no disagreement among theologians and church leaders on the need for a responsible and an engaging theology in Nigeria today. Such a theology needs to be mindful of the Bible as its source and how to respond to its immediate context. This necessity may also be traced to the solution-oriented Christology. In a way, it seeks to remove the feeling of foreignness of the gospel message through inculturation and liberation processes. It also attends to the existential needs of the people. But in doing this, it faces the major criticism of how can the solution-oriented Christology be truly African and still, authentically Christian?

The notion of solution-oriented Christology, as observed, dwells so much on African realities. In fact, it vividly condemns, and breaks away totally from the theology of mission churches.\(^\text{93}\) To be authentically Christian in content is to be consistent with the biblical revelation and Christian orthodoxy. Those who have been influenced deeply by solution theology sometimes go to the extreme to the extent of violating principles of biblical interpretation. In Nigeria, most of those people who place a strong emphasis on solution Christology always have a shallow interpretation of the Bible. Sometimes they derive literal meanings from or imposing unwarranted meanings on the biblical text.

The question here is to what extent can the solution Christology be African and still be authentically Christian in outlook? It is African because it is in Africa and is being propagated by Africans. The challenge of being authentically Christian will continue to dominate the thought of professional theologians and Christians as long as the content of the Christian faith receives a contextual re-interpretation. It is evident from the foregoing that any theology that will be need-oriented in Nigeria must be contextual. It must take into account

\(^{93}\text{Although I have stated that the solution-oriented Christology is prevalent in Nigeria, its emphasis and some practices associated with it are more prominent in some churches than others. Some of those churches who organise their churches around solution-oriented Christology often discredit other churches who have moderate emphasis on it. For instance, the one church that frequently talks about the solution-Christology in Nigeria, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church (MFM), has it as part of its vision/goals and aims “to bring together the children of God who are lost in dead churches.” See Christopher Aigbona Aigbadumah, Jesus the Healer: A Theological Reflection on the Roles of Christology in the Growth of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in Nigeria (PhD Thesis Presented to the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2011), 77. Such a statement is often made because of the less emphasis on the power encounter in some of the churches.}\)
the way Nigerians interpret the universe and its realities, dynamics of the human experiences, and progressive culture. Without this, it will fall short in its capacity to adequately respond to the questions arising from Nigerian context. That is why the need to strive for a balance is an ongoing task.

Besides, when considering the growing status of Nigerian Christianity and the engagement that such growth ought to have on the country’s situation, a solution-oriented and life changing Christology is found lacking. The emerging context in Nigeria is that which needs an input from the church through a theology of encounter. Solution Christology is self-centred and individualistic in outlook. Relevance of the church is and will continue to be at stake if the theologians of the church continue to distance themselves from what is happening in the nation. In the long run, it will betray the nature of the spirit of the gospel.

My analysis of the solution-oriented Christology as a leading theological theme shows that the church in Nigeria is currently employing a problem solving approach to the problems facing individual persons; whereas the emerging context is highlighting an urgent need to be in solidarity with the nation as it faces its corporate challenges. The value that the solution Christology offers is that it dwells on the redemptive power in Jesus Christ as a source for overcoming life challenges. Solution theology and Christology that emanates from it is relevant to the current situation of Nigerians. The major demerit is that it focuses on individual situations and this encumbers it to contribute to the corporate problem of peace and mutuality in Nigeria.

3.3.2 Culture-Paradigms Christology

The vast majority of Christologies formulated by Nigerian academic theologians are culture based. These theologians explore the implications of the Christ-event bearing on some cultural elements, symbols, and concepts as a means of Christological expression. This is

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94 I accede here to the notion of solidarity which Nigerian Catholic theologian, Ikenna U. Okafor, obtained to portray the possible ways that the church can identify with the social situation in his book Toward a Theology of Fraternal Solidarity (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014). Okafor speaks in “anticipation of a city of brotherly love, Philadelphia, which is laid on the cornerstone of Philia with the Church as its sacramental ‘light house’ and the temporal manifestation of the kingdom of God. This city is the utopia of the kingdom of God which is the goal of the Christian vocation…,” 12. He moves on in the concluding part by hinting on the solidarity function of the church in Africa: “The person of faith is a person of creation. His or her mission is to build through a preponderance of embrace a dis-alienated society,… To believe is to have a role to play in the changes demanded by the kingdom of God, which means an end of suffering for the poor and the liberation of the oppressed (Matt 11:4-5),” 201.
because culture has become a popular vehicle for conveying Christian beliefs and practices. Each of the culture-paradigms Christology treated will reveal a particular identity of Jesus. I will now explore some of the creative culture-paradigms Christology developed by Nigerian theologians.

3.3.2.1 Guest Christology

Enyi Ben Udoh, a Nigerian Presbyterian minister, proposed that Christology is connected to the theology of inculturation in his doctoral thesis entitled “Guest Christology: An Interpretative View of the Christological Problem in Africa.”95 His reflection on the experiences of the Nigerian Civil War raised Udoh’s curiosity on what image of Jesus is germane to the Nigerian context. During the Nigerian Civil War (between 1967 and 1970), around one million people were killed, over five hundred thousand people rendered homeless and became refugees in their own land. Udoh sets out in his work to examine the question of “the image, status and role of Christ in Africa.”96 He decried the problem which arose from the method of introducing Christ to Africa by the missionaries, which is contradictory to the African worldview. He argued that “the traditional way in which Christ was introduced in Africa, was largely responsible for the prevailing faith schizophrenia among African Christians.”97 In reflecting on the manner of the penetration of the Church of Scotland’s Mission to Calabar, eastern Nigeria, Udoh was left with no picture other than that of a Jesus who is an invader, and a tyrant “who entered African scene as a forceful, impatient and unfriendly tyrant. He was presented as invalidating the history and institutions of a people in order to impose his rule upon them.”98 The above situation made Udoh conclude that many Nigerians simply see Jesus as a mere ‘guest’ or ‘a stranger’ or ‘a refugee’ who needed shelter in Africa.

There are two major Christological problems in Africa that this work identified. First is the Africans’ perception of Jesus as an ‘illegal alien.’ Jesus is different to Africans by birth or nationality. A view of Jesus as an ‘illegal alien’ will make him “liable to be rejected,
doubted, and excluded from the mainstream.\textsuperscript{99} Hence, Jesus is pictured as a legitimate guest who needed to be accorded rightful traditional honour by the people. The second Christological problem that the work observes is the image of Jesus Christ as a divine Being or Son of God which is “problematic in African religious experience.”\textsuperscript{100} For Udoh, it is inconceivable for any human being to assume a divine status within an African worldview. He cites the Ibibio’s (of eastern Nigeria) cosmological view:

God does not need a messenger. Ibibio cosmology assigns him limitless sphere… an ultimate authority. There are no prophets and no temples in Ibibio religion. Directly, the clan communicates [with God] in words, and dramatic gestures but direct appeals to God are rare and confined to crisis situation. Indirectly, it is done through elders, dead or alive, by the use of rituals and prayers.\textsuperscript{101}

For Udoh, God can never be a human and a human can never be God and so, God does not operate through an agent or a messenger as the Ibibio conceive him.

Against this backdrop he develops a Christological response to the above crisis situation. The Christological images he explored include Jesus the \textit{Bongaka} (doctor), liberator, and \textit{Christus-Victor}. Udoh saw this proposition as a worthy alternative to the existing images of Jesus in Nigerian Christianity. He is convinced that developing these themes and understanding them appropriately will be of great value in making Christ ‘at home’ in Nigeria and Africa by translating the status of Jesus from being a guest to being our own African kinsman.

Ben Udoh’s work has become a seminal work and reference point for African Christological discourse. However, it is not without some challenges. First, a literal notion of inculturation permeates Udoh’s work. There is an overemphasis on the African culture and religious views. For instance, having depicted Jesus as a guest, Udoh explains that the process of making him ‘being at home’ is to make him undergo a process of ‘initiation act.’\textsuperscript{102}

It is understandable from the New Testament perspective that the historical Jesus was revealed within a cultural context but the message of redemption demonstrates that Jesus is

\textsuperscript{99} Udoh, \textit{Guest Christology}, 225.
\textsuperscript{100} Udoh, \textit{Guest Christology}, 80.
\textsuperscript{101} Udoh, \textit{Guest Christology}, 81.
\textsuperscript{102} Udoh, \textit{Guest Christology}, 215.
transcultural. It is not Jesus that must be subjected to culture but vice versa. However, Kwame Bediako’s Christological reflection departed from Udoh’s speculation in a subsequent publication. Bediako agrees that the process of the gospel transmission in Africa left some vacuums. He related this gap to the methods of missionary enterprises within his immediate Akan worldview of Ghana, which reduced the missionaries’ success level. The models of the missionaries’ presentation of Jesus in Africa, lacked a genuine encounter among the African converts, because of its restriction of the image of Jesus to an European category. “Christ could not inhabit the spiritual universe of the African consciousness except, in essence, as a stranger.” Bediako agreed with Udoh here only on the Christological crisis but insists elsewhere on emphasizing the universality of the Christian message. “I also make the Biblical assumption that Jesus Christ is not a stranger to our heritage.”

Second, Udoh’s assertion that “God has no need for prophets”, and God cannot become a human, actually falls short of various cosmogony and holistic cosmological views of other Nigerian indigenous religious systems. In fact, it reveals a lopsided overview of the Ibibio cosmology. The basic equivalence of the idea of messenger among Africans is the notion of ancestors who are seen as the link or mediator between physical and spiritual worlds. Even among the Yoruba people (of western Nigeria) there are stories or myths of God incarnating in human form among the people and also in the form of apotheosized heroes. Udoh’s intention to champion an indigenous Christology by way of contextualization is confronted by the danger of questioning Jesus’ divinity that made possible the work of salvation.

The quest to own Jesus within African cultural settings may have positive impact on the understanding of Jesus Christ among Nigerian Christians. Jesus Christ can no longer be clothed in a foreign garb or reduced to missionaries’ category as the Saviour of humanity in

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107 Udoh, *Guest Christology* 83, 211.

108 Ezigbo, “Contextualizing Christ-Events:”, 70.

Nigerian Christianity. The meaning of Jesus that is conceivable among Nigerians is the one who shares the same identity with their situation. As my analyses show on solution Christology, for most Nigerians Jesus is a solution provider. The contribution of a Guest Christology is that it will remove the foreignness of the Jewish culture in which Jesus lived to African culture which Nigerians live in today. This paradigm may assist in reinterpreting Jesus’ message and mission to Nigerians today as ‘our mission’ and ‘our message’. That said, it is unconvinced whether the guest Christology can offer direct contribution to the search for peace and mutuality because of its focus.

3.3.2.2 Christology of Christ, the African King

Ukachukwu Chris Manus is a Professor of New Testament at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Leadership in the Markan narratives became the centre of discussion for the Nigerian lay theologian. His reflection on Mark’s Christology informs his depiction of Jesus who seeks to liberate those subjected to suffering under the despotic, oppressive, and indignant earthly king with effects in various forms of indignity to humanity.110

Manus, like most African theologians, takes his analysis from the socio-economic, cultural, and political situations of the African societies, pointing to various forms of injustice that are discernible from those structures. He opines that the kingship of Jesus is non-domineering, non-oppressive, and highly considerate contrary to what is obtainable in African situations. His ethnographic and historic studies of the concept of kingship among the major peoples of Africa: Yoruba (of southwestern Nigeria), and Shilluk (of South Sudan), and among the Baganda (of Uganda), and Zulu (of South Africa), revealed both the sacredness of the position and multi-facial functions attached to it.

In a contrasting studies of the New Testament study of suggestive Christological titles, like Messiah and king, Manus then proposes Jesus as an African servant-king or servant leader who has come to liberate her from her manifold challenges. Manus is convinced that, though there is complementarity in his implications of the analysis of Christ’s kingship and

African kingship, he still maintains that “the kingship of Jesus is never exactly like any of the earthly African kingships” in nature and purpose.\textsuperscript{111}

Naming Jesus in this way is not only rich in giving the interpretative experience of Jesus in African categories, which is very close to the experience of the people, but also affords the corresponding titular Christology of the New Testament in African backgrounds and categories.

Other Nigerian theologians would approve this imaginative presentation of Jesus in a manner not only understandable but also conformed to the local imagination of the Africans. Yusuf Ameh Obaje, a Baptist Systematic theologian, followed a similar approach when he proposed that African Christian theologians’ Christology should be theocentric.\textsuperscript{112} Obaje assumed that the “Church’s confession of Jesus as God-Human who is “fully God and fully man” is best understood from a theocentric perspective.”\textsuperscript{113} Obaje’s contribution hinges on the methodology for a contemporary African Christological formulation. His particular interest is to begin his theological formulation from the Bible stories or from a standpoint other than starting from the cultural elements and thereafter ‘shopping’ for corresponding biblical elements for appropriation. He states more succinctly: “This view of Christology is first and foremost rooted in the biblical witness concerning Christ and it is also open to certain aspects of African traditional beliefs and philosophy.”\textsuperscript{114} This method takes the revelation of God in Christ Jesus as valid for all ages, superseding every form of human culture. This method has also been followed by the Nigerian Catholic theologian Justin S. Ukpong in formulating his \textit{Immanuel} Christology.\textsuperscript{115}

Christology of Christ the King may aid the development of the Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality that will be proposed in Chapter Five. Christ the King Christology aims to correct negative leadership perception and performance among African nation states. Beneath the problem of peace and mutuality in Nigeria are several issues like political affiliation and participation, inequalities in economic distribution, religious mobilisation, and low leadership performance to mention but a few. The function of

\textsuperscript{111} Manus, \textit{Christ the African King}, 233, 237.
\textsuperscript{113} Obaje, “Theocentric Christology”, 49.
\textsuperscript{114} Obaje, “Theocentric Christology”, 49.
leadership is to harmonise both the human and material resources in the nation for the common good. When the leadership problem is solved in Nigeria, it will be easier to harmonise the vast resources in the nation, restructure socio-political processes, and exterminate the roots of violence and religious acrimony. A solution to leadership challenge will chart a pathway to rebuild the Nigerian nation. Hence, the Kingship Christology may contribute to leadership re-orientation as a complementary model for social transformation. The big challenge is that this model is not intended to address peace and mutuality.

3.3.2.3 Feminist-Liberation Christology

My focus here is to reflect upon the contributions of the African women to Christological discourse. Feminist theology has assumed a growing status in African Christian theology since the last two decades of the twentieth century. As a form of liberation theology, its main goal is to promote all-round liberation of women. Natalie Watson, of Ripon College, Oxford, sees the scope of the feminist theology in “the critical, contextual, constructive, and creative re-reading and re-writing of Christian theology.” Feminist theology recognises the women’s voice in the theological arena and the place of women within the Christian tradition with the aim to “transform theological concepts, methods, and language…as a means and an expression of the struggle for liberation.” It should be pointed out that the contributions of feminist theologians is against the background of the African women’s experience.

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116 The term “feminist theology” is widely used today in a number of ways in different aspects of human endeavor and theological reflection. For instance, it can be used in reference to the proliferation of works or writings of women, especially on feminist spirituality. Rather it is understood in this work as a theological reflection bearing on the experiences of women within the African context, their articulation of such experiences or their reflection on the ways that inform the necessity of liberation.


118 Watson, Feminist Theology, 3.

Feminist theology is deeply rooted in women’s experience; it is marked by commitment oriented toward personal and social transformation, toward praxis, and in turn much theological reflection arises out of such praxis. Feminist theology has been called an advocacy theology concerned with the liberation of women from oppression, guided by the principle of seeking to achieve the full humanity of women.¹²⁰

Feminist theologians seek to correct the cultural discriminations and ecclesiastical imbalances in Africa. Two of the major ways aimed at achieving this is worth noting: developing an inclusive theology in relation to the women’s status, and an appeal to Christology. These aspects deserve a brief exploration.

3.3.2.3.1 Developing an Inclusive Theology in Relation to the Status of Women

An inclusive theology begins with the re-reading of the Bible as the primary source for the Christian dogma. It starts with the creation stories followed by a holistic biblical hermeneutics bearing on the new developments in the church and the field of theology. A re-reading of the accounts of creation in Genesis attests to the original intention of God at creation. Teresa Okure notes that the theological assumption coming from the creation-related texts must be reconstructed.¹²¹ The argument from these texts is that man was created first and woman second; woman derives her own identity from the man being formed from the man’s rib. Hence, only the man was created in the image of God and it was the woman who succumbed to Satan’s deceit and fell, rather than man. In response to these issues, Okure proposes that a careful study of the creation accounts show that the accounts meant to relay different sides of the events leading to the first human community.

Obviously this belief in the innate inferiority of the woman and in her exclusive instrumentality for sin and death is based on a misreading of the Genesis accounts of creation and fall (Gen. 1:26-2:4a; 2:4b-4:2; 5:1-2) and on failure to discern the distinctive purpose of each of the narratives. For the creation accounts, taken at their face value furnish no grounds whatsoever for this belief. Rather, they make fundamental statements concerning the nature of humanity in relation to God and the

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rest of creation, and concerning the personal relationship between man and woman.\textsuperscript{122}

The theological ideas contained in the first creation account of God’s image in human species consist in man and woman. Because the word \textit{adam} is primarily used with generic implications, both man and woman are considered partners “conjointly created in the image and likeness of God and conjointly given dominion over the rest of creation (1:28), both male and female stand equal in honor and dignity…and the imagery of creation of woman from man’s rib is a symbol of togetherness in family life …, even a perfect symbol of their “equality.”\textsuperscript{123} Like Edet and Ekeya,\textsuperscript{124} Okure blames the contradiction on the Judeo-Christian tradition which has had adverse effects on the interpretation of the Christian theology of creation.

An inclusive theology in relation to gender will advocate a change in the cultural outlook on women which is the bedrock of unnecessary comparison. This shows a need for reorientation on the status of women. “We may need to reorient our thinking so that we may see communion as a relationship devoid of hierarchical relations and power-seeking.”\textsuperscript{125}

In a move for an inclusive theology, feminist theologians reject the age-long theological positions of the church fathers, which give no adequate recognition to women, and subject it to new evaluation and re-interpretation. This will correct the disparity and subordination of women to men.\textsuperscript{126} Paul, one major formative theologians of the New Testament, who also followed the sequential order of creation and the argument of the Fall to ‘command’ women to be silent in the church and learn in silence, also recognised the women and their active roles in the church. Further, a new order of creation as evident in the theology of redemption recognises the place of women as the coheir of the covenant of promise.

\textit{3.3.2.3.2 Christological Appeal}

Christology provides a framework for actualising the yearnings of the African feminist theologians. How Jesus relates with women and vice versa, women’s perception of the person and ministry of Jesus, how women responded to a faith relationship and the entire Christ-

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{122} Okure, “Women in the Bible” 49.
\textsuperscript{123} Okure, “Women in the Bible” 49.
\textsuperscript{124} Rosemary Edet and Bette Ekeya, “Church Women of Africa”, 8.
\textsuperscript{125} Oduyoye, “Women and Ritual in Africa”, 23.
\textsuperscript{126} Uchem, \textit{Overcoming Women’s Subordination}, 221-240.
\end{footnotesize}
event makes up the feminist Christology. Kenyan feminist theologian, Teresa M. Hinga has suggested three images of Jesus in the New Testament as alternatives to correct the African woman’s experience. Jesus fits in properly for the African women as a friend of the lowly and the healer of the sick, be it physical or spiritual. This is because most women in Africa find their true identity in the acceptance of and reliance on Jesus in the face of different societal and family challenges. These images merge Christology with pneumatology, “the embodiment of the Spirit, the power of God, and dispenser of the same to those who follow him.” The woman is often viewed as a fragile, weaker vessel that should be handled with care and compassion. The weak needs the strong for strength, nourishment and companionship. This is how Jesus saw and related with women in his own time. The woman caught in the very act of adultery perfectly illustrates this (John 8:1-11). Whilst all her accusers concentrated on the Law of Moses which authorised that such a person be stoned, the man’s identity was never revealed. But Jesus’ compassionate intervention saved her from the crookedness of the man-dominated society (John 8:7, 10-11). The above also links to the third face of Jesus as that of an iconoclastic prophet who radically changed the societal status quo. Jesus was a strong advocate for the voiceless, vulnerable and the marginalised.

Every event in the human community has deep implications for women more than men. When feminist perception and voices are added to the search for peace and mutuality, it will be easier to have a solution because of the compassionate character of femininity. A deep survey of the biblical narratives reveals that women were important in the Christ-event, beginning with Mary who having been visited by an angel of the Lord responded with awe and absolute submission “…behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word…” (Luke 1:38). The plan of redemption cannot be discussed without the conspicuous place of women. Throughout the ministry of Jesus and even after the resurrection the Bible gives the accounts of faithful women who gave themselves over to the service of God with holy passion and zeal. That is why Oduyoye conceded that “feminism in theology springs from a conviction that a theology of relationships might contribute to bring us closer to human life as God desires it.”

The story of redemption provides an avenue to overcome whatever imbalance and segregation that has been pointed out. This point reflected in the thoughts of the New Testament authors. For instance, Paul dwells on the implications of redemption by affirming

127 Teresa M. Hinga, “Jesus Christ and the Liberation of Women” in The Will to Arise, 190-191.
128 Oduyoye, “Reflections from a Third World…” 34.
that it has broken every racial, gender or social barrier. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28, cf. Genesis 1:27; 1 Peter 1:18-21). This implies the need to create a human community where “the necessity of giving mutuality and partnership a chance, not just in man-woman relationships but in all human enterprises.”¹²⁹

The identity of Jesus revealed in an African woman’s experience is that of a friend, a deliverer, a companion, and a liberator from the male-dominated structures and practices of the African culture. This concept of Jesus that identifies with the struggles, weaknesses, and oppression of the people, and who is ever willing to liberate from these structures is one particular insight that the feminist Christology stands to offer to the paradigm that will be proposed later. The Christology that emanates from the African woman’s experience is a person of Jesus of Nazareth who died because of human injustice that He may justify all by creating a uniform standard through which humanity can be reconciled back to God.

Hence, developing feminist Christology beyond the current status in Nigeria will promote justice to women, men and children alike. It will promote the recovery of the human dignity and cordiality in social, political and religious association and support the search for peace and mutuality. The major difficulty that seems to confront feminist Christology with respect to the development of Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality is that it is gender based. It argues for a theological reflection that revolves around women’s experience so that non-feminist concerns are of less priority. A theology that will produce a Christology for peace in Nigeria needs to be holistic in reflecting upon the collective experience of the Nigerians.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the development of Christology in Nigeria and Africa, its major emphases, and various roles played by Nigerian theologians in the process. The basic impulse for African theologians is the need for an identity that reflects on their spiritual universe and religious heritage. Underneath this quest is the unforgettable impacts brought upon African culture and social structures through contacts with the colonial imperialism and mission movement. A continual critical attitude to these events will, by no means, change their effects.

on the African life and personality. It is impossible to deny the past. But how should these events shape Christological reflection and appropriation today in Nigeria?

I assessed the modern Christological constructions in Nigeria to discover the values and contributions that each of the four Christological construction treated can offer for Nigerian search for peace and mutuality. Each of the paradigms examined is unique and has specific insight which cannot be detached from the focus of their proponents. However, one commonality to these creative Christological categories is that they can all aid in the interpretation of the question who is Jesus Christ today in Nigerian Christianity? Jesus Christ could be a solution provider or a Nigerian King or a Host or a liberator following analyses of four prominent Christologies in Nigeria. All these Christologies can help in reinterpreting who Jesus is today or better still how Nigerians have understood Jesus Christ and His mission. However, they cannot serve as a foundation for Christology for peace because of their focus.

Christology is becoming ubiquitous in Nigeria. It is my view that this single fact should propel a new focus for Christological reflection in the academy. That is, how to make the person of Jesus Christ pervade the African personality so that the new and emerging circumstances will be understood and interpreted through the lens of the Christ-event.

It is not strange today that African theologians and church leaders continue to clamour for a deconstruction of theological interpretation both in the academy and Christian ministry level. When they succeed, such reconstruction should be focused on the challenges facing African Christians in their contexts. So much has been achieved since the quest for African Christology began. But so much is still waiting to be told in what lies ahead. The development of the last three decades in African Christianity is the proof of that assertion. The invaluable contributions of various individuals within and outside the church in Africa have hitherto benefited the current state of the understanding and appropriation of Jesus Christ in Africa. The full account of the development is not presented here since that is not the focus of the study but the above is informative for the present purposes.

It is permissible that the earliest African Christian theologians dwelt on the relationship between culture, theology, and the person of Jesus Christ. These considerations are still valid today but in some new ways. The new direction in Christian theology in Africa cannot recede to an analysis of the past centuries. This new direction of Christology within African theology should be how to arrest the specific circumstances and the emerging
situations in which African nations find themselves. Nigerian church needs to situate herself in the context of events in the life of the nation. That is the path to the realization of the African concept of humanity. Further, it will make the Nigerian church a listening church to the corporate issues that affect the realization of the Nigeria’s destiny as a nation.\footnote{Nigerian theologian Elochukwu E. Uzukwu has argued in his book, \textit{A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006) on the need for the African churches to listen to the plight of their people. Although written by a Catholic theologian, who draws hugely from the conversation at the African Synod of Bishops, the book is one of the contemporary articulations of how the church can respond to the needs prevalent in its context.}

Consequently, in the next chapter I will digress a little to probe into some problems that Christology will have to wrestle with in a context like Nigeria in an attempt to address the problem of peace and mutuality. This is crucial because of the multi-religious character of Nigeria and diverse worldviews often expressed there. Christology needs to negotiate a space in the midst of these factors if it will make any significant contribution to the life of the nation.