CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTOLOGICAL PARADIGMS FOR PEACE AND MUTUALITY IN NIGERIA

5.0 Introduction

Theology, at best, must respond to the joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears of the community of faith which the theologian represents. The theologian’s primary audience, therefore, must be the community of faith on whose behalf he or she engages in the theological quest.¹

Before articulating the proposed two Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality in Nigeria it would be helpful to highlight a two-fold task confronting contextual Christology in Nigeria today. One challenge is how to synergize the Christology in the academy with those of local or ordinary Christians. Further concerns generate from how to translate the existing Christological notions into models that can better the living experience of the people. It is against the backdrop of these concerns that the Christological paradigms will be developed in this chapter.

The above concerns also point to a major gap that exists today in the writings of Nigerian theologians. The theologians need to bridge this gap in a way that re-enacts the biblical witness to God’s revelation through the Christ-event in the face of the experience of the Nigerian people. Hence, a contextual Christology is not supposed to note the context alone but it should also seek possible ways of making theological thinking affect the public space, and the existential challenges in its immediate context.² This is how Christology can engage adequately the immediate situation and become a transforming model for an encounter in the long run.

In this chapter I will develop two Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality. However, I will critique the existing African means of fostering peace and mutuality and

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argue that they are obsolescent due to modernisation and developments in the socio-political context of Nigeria today. As credible alternatives, I will explore the two Christological paradigms and show how they can be applied to bring peace, mutuality and coexistence in Nigeria.

Some preliminary observations are suitable regarding the rationale for developing these paradigms from the outset. Firstly, the Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality that I propose in this chapter synthesize the two aspects of Christology namely; the humanity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Any balanced Christological presupposition must endeavour to safeguard the ontic and functional dimension of Christology. In this way, they reflect on orthodox Christology. Secondly, there is a gap between Christological reflection in the academy and at the church ministry level. This gap results from the contrasting foci of the church and the academy. As evident in Chapter Three, most of the earlier contextual Christologies formulated by Nigerian theologians remain largely academic. Hence, my approach here is to elicit from these two proposed Christological paradigms the possibilities of bridging the gap between the academy and the day-to-day situation and experience.

This chapter proceeds in three stages. In the first stage, I will attempt to formulate the two Christological paradigms, which will be examined from a hermeneutical and an analytical perspective. In the second stage, I will examine the equivalence of these Christological paradigms or their interpretation in African and Nigerian perspectives. I argue in the third stage, that the church in Nigeria can make use of these Christological paradigms to bring about peace and mutuality in the Nigerian nation.

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3 Ontic Christology emphasizes the ontological realities, the Being of Jesus as divine and human. Functional Christology defines Jesus focusing on what He did.

4 Most of the categories of the contextual Christology in Africa reflect the cultural and religious traditions (see Chapter Three). But a good question to ask after appreciating the intention to own Jesus Christ within the African culture is, what does this image of Jesus offer for the life of the Christians in that context? It must be noted that Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality advanced in this chapter are directed toward the challenge of peace and mutuality in Nigeria but it may also provide insights for handling similar challenges in other countries.

5 I will interpret the meaning of the selected theological terminologies that I will apply in this study. My analysis of the Christological paradigms will involve raising various questions that relate to the paradigms proposed in the Thesis.
PARADIGM ONE:

5.1 Jesus, God Incarnate and the Creator of a New Humanity

What is the Incarnation and how can it lead to the creation of a new humanity and by extension, peace and mutuality in Nigeria? The Incarnation is the core of Christian doctrines of all ages. As a specific historic event the Incarnation is God's definite, once and for all act of taking up human form by being born of a woman yet with full divine characteristics. To use Michael Green's statement, “it means that the Son shares the Father's nature, and that the God to whom universal worship will be given is the one who has disclosed himself as Jesus.” It shows Jesus Christ as God's image in all eternity given and revealed in a specific historical process. This is God self-acting and pouring God-self out for the sake of the crown of His creation.

A key theological terminology that has been used in connection with the Incarnation is the Logos. The Incarnation is seen as Logos' manifestation. This is a unique vocabulary to the Fourth Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we see his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3, 14).

The Logos self-existed with the Father since the beginning, acted as the Word in creation, and makes the Father known by having “taken on human form and come to live for a time on earth.” The prologue to John's Gospel marked the development of the 'Incarnational' Christology which has been described as “the climax in the New Testament development of

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6 A distinction should be made here in line with the observation of Ross Langmead regarding the use of the word “Incarnation” with definite article “the” and without the definite article. When it is written as “the Incarnation” it refers to the series of events, beginning with God’s manifestation in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ –who is uncompromisingly human and divine at the same time – for the purpose of salvation. And when it is written as “Incarnation” – without the definite article – it implies a process of divine beings manifesting in the material world in world religions, as considered in Chapter Four. Hence, I will use the Incarnation in the former sense and sometimes interchange it with the phrase “the Christ-event”. See Ross Langmead, The Word Made Flesh: Towards an Incarnational Missiology (Dallas: University Press of America, 2004), 16-22.


Christological thought.”\(^9\) The author of the Fourth Gospel makes use of a Greek philosophical concept to express the concept of the Incarnation. My emphasis here is on the humanity and divinity of Jesus; He is fully human and fully God. The question of the humanity and divinity later became a subject of great debate. The Greek understanding of the Semitic concept of *logos* became a bridge for the development of Christological discourse in biblical expression. However, Donald Goergen argues that despite the importance of the *logos* concept in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, the term is not the primary way of understanding Jesus. He observes that immediately after the prologue, the term gradually faded away and became replaced with Jesus the Son as the primary concern of the gospel.\(^10\)

The apostle Paul also expresses his view of Jesus’ Incarnation employing a different vocabulary. Jesus Christ is not only sent by the Father (Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4) but was also chosen to become poor for our sake (2 Cor. 8:9) to the extent of ‘emptying himself, taking the form of a slave’ in being ‘born in human likeness’.\(^11\) This *kenosis* Christology is presented in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (Philippians 2:6-11). The hymn expressed in this letter, according to Gordon Fee, is “one of the most exalted, most beloved, and most discussed and debated passages in the Pauline corpus.”\(^12\) My consideration of the *kenosis* Christology focuses more on the content rather than on the origin of the hymn.\(^13\) The expression of the *kenosis* Christology, for instance, ‘being in the form of God’ means to exist in a state of equality with God in the pre-existing state, so that the incarnate life becomes an ‘epiphany of divine glory’ and His exaltation leads to conferring ‘a name that is above every other name’.\(^14\) This concept of the Incarnation formed the basis for the earliest interpretations of Christology in the early church.\(^15\)

The Christological question now became: who is Jesus Christ in relation to God and


\(^14\) There is a consideration whether the exalted Jesus in his exalted state is ‘highly’ beyond the status previously enjoyed in the pre-existing state or the expression simply applies to the conferring of a higher name than that of the cosmic powers and authority. Fuller argued in favor of the latter. See Fuller, *The Foundation of the New Testament Christology*, 208-216. Cf. Philippians 2:6-11.

\(^15\) Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* Vol. 1, 33-76.
in relation to humanity? This question was central to the focus of various Christian communities before the end of the first Christian century. But their understanding of Jesus was derived from the post-Easter resurrection experience. By the second century, diversities already existed in the church within the Christology of the synoptic gospels, John’s gospel, and Pauline Letters. The questions arising from the diversity of internal Christological formulations are the initial background for the Christological controversies.\textsuperscript{16}

The problem was how to classify the Logos in relation to the Father. Factors such as religion, politics, philosophy, and culture influenced various propositions. Each answer became the foundation for further explorations. The question shifted to the nature of Christ, i.e. how best to describe His humanity and divinity without compromising one of them? There was an urgent need for the church to formulate Christian orthodoxy. This was the background to the first council of Nicaea in AD 325. The theology of Nicaea focuses on the divinity of the Son, His humanity, and the essence of His Incarnation. These were necessary to clarify the belief of the church in relation to other positions. The Council of Nicaea attempted to resolve the controversy by reaffirming the consubstantiality of the Son and the Father. It declares that “…Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father… is, from the substance of the Father….”\textsuperscript{17} Nicaea presents Jesus Christ as one in being with the Father and uses the word \textit{homoousios} to show a sharing of the same nature with the Father.

The major contribution of the Council of Nicaea was an emphasis on an equal divine status of Jesus Christ to God. However, the Council of Nicaea which provides the first ecumenical statement of faith after the Apostles’ Creed does not end the Christological debate totally. It left out some aspects of the humanity and divinity of Jesus as there was no consensus on how best to express it. Nicene theology was becoming the acceptable, orthodox position in the church and all other Christological positions were considered heretical.\textsuperscript{18} The highpoint of the argument was taken up at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which consolidated the Nicene theology. The Council of Chalcedon confessed a \textit{hypostasis} union of two natures (the divine and human) merging in one person. Jesus is fully human and fully God.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} Grillmeier, 33-76.
\textsuperscript{17} Kelly, \textit{Early Christian Doctrines}, 232.
\textsuperscript{18} Other positions such as Arianism, Ebionism, Docetism and other opposing christological views were banned and pronounced heretical.
The problems associated with the understanding of the natures of Jesus Christ and the relationship within the God-head was not totally settled. This controversy surrounding Christology in the early Church Councils lasted over three hundred years. Conversely, the success over the period is that it helped to clarify the humanity and divinity of Jesus, and the relationship between the persons of the Trinity – in a form of creeds. As Frances Young and Andrew Teal put it, “the tensions between two types of Christology left a continuing mark on the subsequent Church history … Chalcedon has proved less solution than the classic definition of a problem which constantly demands further elucidation.”

It is possible to draw insight today from the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ as what qualified Him as the Incarnate Word of God because it had been affirmed through the church Councils.

Beyond the controversies of Christology is the central message that the Incarnation personifies. Gerald O’Collins warns that “any study of ‘Incarnation’ must begin by asking: what kind of truth does ‘the Incarnation’ embody?” Some theologians would reason that the history of theophanic experience in the Old Testament prefigured the Incarnation that was to come. The climax of this self-disclosure is what we have in the Incarnation through Jesus of Nazareth. And the purpose of this self-revelation in Christ is to establish a communion between humanity and God, identifiable in peace, unity, and inclusiveness.

This shows the goal of God-coming and becoming among us. Citing an example of Paul, O’Collins argues that it is not sufficient to dwell only on the pre-existence of Christ but also on its consequences.

Paul does not focus on the Son of God’s pre-existence; he is much more interested in what the Son of God came or was sent to do – namely, to free human beings from the forces of evil, enable them to become God’s adopted sons and daughters and let them live with the power of the indwelling Spirit (e.g. Galatians 4:4-7).

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23 O’Collins, *Incarnation* 22. This idea of seeing the Incarnation not only from the pre-existence perspective but also from the aftermath is well stressed by O’Collins. For instance, he referred to John’s introduction of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in John 1:29, 1:36; which eventually became fulfilled at
This is the dynamic revelation and purpose of the Incarnation. In Nigeria, the current theological enterprise needs to shift from what we may consider as the mystery of the Christian faith to how such mysteries (as we may express them in our human language) can impact on the economic, religious, and socio-political processes of our world. The goal of the Incarnation is to recreate a new humanity that is being unfolded in the person of Jesus Christ in the course of history.

5.1.1 The Incarnation and the Reign of God

That God was manifested in the human form to establish unending peace between the divinity and humanity is the point behind Jesus’ proclamation of the Reign of God.\(^{24}\) The purpose of the Reign of God is to create a new humanity that is peaceful with God, and with one another. Scholars have now come to a consensus after long rigorous analyses that, the central theme that distinguished the Christ-event was the Kingdom or the Reign of God.\(^{25}\) The Reign of God is the central message of Jesus’ life and ministry. C. S. Song comments on the relationship between the Reign of God and Christology. Song believes that the relationship gravitates from Jesus to the reign of God.

From God’s Reign to Jesus. From the witness of God’s Reign to the witness of Jesus. From the experience of God’s Reign to the experience of Jesus. And from what God’s Reign is to who Jesus is. The Reign of God is the key. Jesus without it is a disincarnated person – a person without a body. Jesus separated from it is a theoretical construct that does not correspond to the reality.\(^{26}\)

The identity of Jesus is to be derived from the message of the Reign of God. It is a vision that begins with the Incarnation of Jesus and later unfolds in various stages of His ministry. The gospel of Mark records the proclamation of God’s Reign as the beginning of Jesus’ public

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24 The Reign of God is a doctrine that is deeply rooted in the Old and New Testaments. John Gray has dealt with this concept extensively, showing different areas in which it can be traced in the Old Testament and other sources in his *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979). Because of this I will only concentrate on its affirmation in the gospels and other New Testament writings.


ministry. “The time has arrived, the Reign of God is upon you. Repent, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). Its equivalent is the popular Matthean phrase ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ because of cultural exigency. The literal understanding of the Kingdom speaks of the domain where God as the King reigns over His subjects. But it is more than that. Construing the Kingdom literally renders it powerful from the perspective of the mission of God’s Reign that Jesus brought. The concept of the Kingdom itself may be considered as a symbol which Jesus employed to explain the intricacies of His life and mission for humankind. As a symbol, it strengthens the faith beyond earthly things. The symbolic presentation of the Kingdom broadens and deepens the faith “enough to focus and illuminate this process; a symbol that will give meaning to humankind’s most noble aspirations and hope for this world which will at the same time transcend all inner earthly expectations.”

Jesus proclaimed the Reign of God with precise conditions of entering into it. The place of the Reign of God in relation to the messianic mission of Jesus was also conspicuous in the gospels (see Mt. 4:17). Those who must enter it had to fulfil the conditions of repentance and believing in God’s offer of salvation in Jesus (see John 3:5, 16). The Reign of God is characterised by God’s grace and power. Jesus exemplifies both aspects. One way of viewing the teaching of Jesus is the truth and power it embodies. Again, His power reverberates through his ministry in healing and exorcism. Jesus’ healings prove His power and serve as an affirmation of the Reign of God that He came to establish for humanity. An example was when He was confronted with the Beelzebub controversy. He responded that “if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (see Lk. 11:14-23). Jesus’ response shows that the Reign of God is powerful to combat the evils and oppressions that hinder humankind from enjoying fullness of life. It is a display of the supremacy of God’s power over His creation in ways that render cosmic powers and human conditions impotent at the coming of Jesus, the carrier of God’s Reign.

27 I will continue hereafter to use the phrases ‘Kingdom of God’ and ‘Reign of God’ synonymously and interchangeably.
29 It should be pointed out that all through the New Testament, Jesus took for granted there was no need of any definition of the Kingdom of God. His discussion of the Kingdom lifestyle, principles, and norms are more descriptive with the use of parables and similes. The phrase “Kingdom of God” is estimated to have appeared one hundred and twenty-two times in the Gospels out of which ninety times are directly on the lips of Jesus. But it may be suggested that Jesus did not attempt a definition of the Kingdom most probably, because his original recipients understood what he meant. His discussion of the Kingdom was more of a reminder of the period of its fulfilment. The best educated guess one can make is that if the notion of the Kingdom of God was not an anticipated idea with which the disciples were unfamiliar, otherwise they would have asked Jesus to explain its meaning to them.
The reality of the Reign of God, however, points to a paradox from a biblical and experiential perspective. It is a Reign that is now, and not-yet. The Kingdom of God is made possible in the world by the coming of God Incarnate. Yet, it is not a kingdom of this world. But it has a series of physical manifestations – as shall be seen presently. It is a Reign in the heart of men and women irrespective of their circumstances, gender, race, and colour as they encounter God’s love and transforming power. This is a place where a dichotomy exists in the presentation of the theme of the Kingdom of God in the Old and New Testaments. The “former proclaims and prepares people for a Reign that is yet to come in the future; the latter proclaims and offers a Reign that has already come, although realised in faith and not through power and temporal glory.”30 The message of Jesus was that “the Reign of God has already come … it is in your midst” (Matt. 12:28; Mk 1:14-15; Lk 11:20; 17:21). That was the major distinction between Jesus and other religious leaders of His time. It therefore became imperative for Jesus, in view of the constitution of the Reign of God that He had to refute the political option his disciples expected after His resurrection. “Lord when will you now restore the kingdom back to us (Israel)” his disciples asked Him. He said in reply, “It is not in my power to say the time the Father has appointed in His power” (Acts 1:7, 8). This also points to the fact that the Reign of God is yet-to-come. In order that the Reign of God may continue to be manifested in the world, Jesus sent forth His disciples to proclaim the Reign of God having testified to its immanence in the start of His own ministry (See Matt. 10:7; Matt. 3:2). The Reign begins in the spiritual realm over all those who would accept it as God’s people and live under its domain (Matt. 18:3, 36). Thus, the ultimate realisation of the Kingdom is eschatological.

The plan to inaugurate the Reign of God led Jesus to the cross. The Dutch theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx, reflected on what might be the source for attributing the death of Jesus Christ to atoning significance in the historical account of the life of Jesus. In verifying what could have caused the early church’s linkage of his death to the Isaiah’s suffering Servant’s prophecy, Schillebeeckx concluded that:

Jesus’ whole life is the hermeneusis (sic) of his death. The very substance of salvation is sufficiently present in it, which could be and was in fact articulated later on in various ways through faith in him. Although the historical method cannot produce knock-down arguments on this score, still less can it assert categorically that so far as history

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goes we do not know how Jesus understood his own death. Jesus’ understanding of that death as part and parcel of his mission of tendering salvation seems to me, therefore, a fact preceding Easter – and demonstrably so, at least for Jesus’ self-understanding in the final days of his life.\footnote{Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury, 1983), 311.} The support for Schillebeeckx’s argument is found in Jesus’ selfless life for others and his self-understanding of His own life as a life of service and servant of others. Jesus demonstrated this in His washing of His disciples’ feet and the table fellowship at the Last Supper shortly before his arrest. The teachings of Jesus Christ are crucial to his self-understanding. For instance, he emphasised this point when he declared to his disciples that, “just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28). Like Schillebeeckx, Thomas Neufeld sees a link between the enactment of the Reign of God, Jesus’ death, and establishment of the new table-fellowship.\footnote{Thomas R. Neufeld, *Recovering Jesus: The Witness of the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 2007), 193-198.} The offering of Christ’s life is central to the enactment of the Reign of God. Jesus gradually brings it to the climax by instituting the Lord’s Supper with His disciples having already sat at the table with the marginalised and the outcast. Jesus’ life, teaching, death and resurrection became rooted in the New Testament as an embodiment of the initiation of the Reign of God.

5.1.2 The Creator of a New Humanity

The Reign of God is meant to create a new humanity. In the present condition humanity is sick, battered and wallowing in a state of disintegration. It is a condition of constant conflict and utter hopelessness. Peace is lost. The coming of God Incarnate made possible the Reign of God so as to have a renewed humanity. There is a close connection between the hope of humankind for a peaceful life and the Reign of God. To understand this hope and the coming Kingdom, Walter Kasper suggests that we must start from the biblical view that “man is seen as incapable of possessing peace, justice, freedom and life through his own unaided resources. Life is constantly threatened, freedom surpassed and sold, justice trampled under foot.”\footnote{Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (N.J: Paulist Press, 1976), 73.} This view runs through the Bible. Humankind is trapped and set in conflict with one another so that it cannot free itself without a recreation of a new humanity. Segundo Galilea observes in this regard,

But at the same time, Jesus utilizes symbols for the Reign that suggest
identification with humanity, Incarnation and total involvement. It would seem that the Reign does not have a proper identity, thus, Jesus compares it to salt (Mt 5:13) which has to be dissolved in the food to give it flavour. He compares it with the yeast that is mixed with the dough to leaven it (Mt 13:33).\(^{34}\)

The creation of a new humanity becomes impossible unless through the Incarnation, God penetrates into the centre of what it means to be human. That Incarnational initiative established an identity with the human conditions of helplessness to become a champion of a new people of God – a new humanity. Brian McDermott has noted that there is a likely misunderstanding arising from a hasty interpretation of who Jesus is from one side of the gospel. This observation comes from the Bible stories that stress the power of Jesus through His activities to the point that these stories nearly eliminate His humanity (cf. John 8:58; 18:6; Luke 4:30). He states that

> My point here is that certain New Testament texts, taken at first blush, give cause for thinking of Jesus as not really like us. To be sure, each of these texts needs to be examined with the best resources of responsible Scripture scholarship, and our conclusion might be that what we can know historically about the earthly Jesus warrants our thinking of him as thoroughly human.\(^{35}\)

This antithesis can only be resolved when one examines the witness of other passages in the Bible. The Letter to the Hebrews especially corrects this imbalance by expounding the humanity of Christ in two parts with different emphases. In the first part it focuses on Jesus’ ontology in the prologue and in the second part on the functioning status that arises from the ontology (see Heb. 1:1-3). The writer of Hebrews traces the ‘origin of Jesus Christ’ to God and presents Him as the true image of God's glory. In Chapter two of Hebrews, there is the description of His essence. Jesus Christ shared in humanity to identify with the human conditions (Heb. 2:10-11, 14-18).

In considering the preconditions for Christ's sharing with human's burdens and struggles, one faces directly the question of what constitutes the humanity of Jesus. Is Jesus really human completely or otherwise? As shown in the Christological debates in the early church, this question is not really new. The human reality of Jesus Christ essentially consists in the taking up of human “flesh.” “Flesh” in this context refers to the whole human being

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and not just a part of that reality.\footnote{McDermott, \textit{Word Became Flesh}, 198.} The humanity of Jesus Christ is therefore, not in any way different from ours except that despite his humanity, he remained sinless.\footnote{The sole concentration on the nature of Christ is beyond the scope of this study. For a fuller discussion on this see J. N. D. Kelly, Chapters IX-XII.}

5.1.3 \textit{The Reign of God and Its Contemporary Interpretation of the Human Situation with Particular Reference to Nigeria}

I have argued so far that the purpose of the Incarnation is to institute the Reign of God. And the Reign of God is meant to restore God’s vision of peace for humanity. The Reign of God, as a contemporary theme in theology, has been subject to different interpretations: namely, as concept, as symbol, and as liberation.\footnote{Fuellenbach, \textit{The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today}, 54. Cf. Dermot A. Lane, \textit{Christ at The Centre: Selected Issues in Christology} (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991), 22. Kasper, \textit{Jesus the Christ}, 75. James D. G. Dunn, \textit{Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making} Vol 1. (Grand Rapids: Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 389-390. Theologians who interpret the kingdom as a concept connect the Kingdom of God to the eschatological hope that is promised in the Old Testament. This view is both rooted in Israel’s history of deliverance from Egypt and the promise made to the prophets of God’s eventual intervention at the close of the age. The kingdom of God as a symbol is a set of myths intended to communicate God acting as a King. It is the popular opinion among scholars that Jesus uses the notion of the Kingdom with an undertone of ‘tensive symbol’, having non-exhaustive meanings derivable from different objects. That is why Jesus used parables, stories, metaphors, and similes to illustrate the Kingdom.} These interpretations are useful but I am focusing on the Reign of God as liberation as the most significant interpretation that relates to the Nigerian situation. Its significance for social transformation cuts across social, religious, economic, and political echelons. It is this third dimension of the hermeneutical understanding of the Reign of God, that is, the motive of liberation, which I should like to stress in the rest of this section.

The Kingdom of God as liberation shows a correlation to historical liberation.\footnote{Juan Luis Segundo, \textit{The Liberation of Theology} trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), 3.} Liberation theology has affirmed that the understanding of human and historical situations are the focus of the Kingdom of God.\footnote{See Jon Sobrino, “Jesus and the Kingdom of God” in \textit{Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader}, eds. Curt Cadorette, Marie Giblin, Marilyn J. Legge and Mary Hembrow Snyder (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 104-122. Jon Sobrino, \textit{Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View} trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993).} To liberation theologians, the strong emphasis of the Kingdom is on how to offer emancipation from the social, economic, political, and religious structures that encumbered the realisation of a complete humanity.\footnote{This claim has subjected liberation theology to so many contentions. Some have viewed it as a mere solidarity with Marxism, see for instance, Alistair Kee, \textit{Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology} (London: SMC Press, 1990). In order to tackle some of the often cited criticisms of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez}
liberation theological interpretation concentrates on the historical situations and humankind’s self-understanding. This historical consciousness can be traced to two defining events that impacted on human intellectual orientation and capacity to relate to the universe.\(^{42}\)

A new set of questions arose on the role of theology and human situations, especially the challenges posed by poverty, political and economic oppressions, struggles and injustices. The basic conviction of the proponents of the theology of liberation is that, as Juan Luis Segundo puts it;

They would maintain that the longstanding stress on individual salvation in the next world represents a distortion of Jesus’ message. He was concerned with man’s full and integral liberation, a process which is already at work in history and which makes use of historical means. They would maintain that the Church does not possess any sort of magical effectiveness where salvation is concerned but rather liberating factors in its faith and liturgy; that the victory of the church must be viewed in functional terms rather than quantitative or numerical terms, insofar as the Church’s specific and proper means manage to exercise a truly powerful impact on human history.\(^{43}\)

The Reign of God that is proclaimed in liberation theology can aid Christological paradigms for peace, coexistence, and mutuality in Nigerian Christianity. The reason for this is that the emphasis on liberation as an index of the Reign of God is concerned with the world and societal transformation. This focuses attention on the praxis of faith which can aid the turn-around for an individual and a nation. It is apposite to consider for a moment how the Reign of God has been interpreted in African Christian theology.

devoted his book *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988) to the criticisms of liberation theology.\(^{42}\) Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today*, 56-57. These events are the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution. These events raised a fresh intellectual consciousness and humankind’s capacity to relate to and transform the social order. The eighteenth century Enlightenment is also referred to as the Age of Independent Reason. Its emphasis was on the individuals’ ability to independently reason out the ‘world’, human concerns and problems bothering human existence. John Locke, one of the main precursors of the Enlightenment is quoted as saying that “Reason must be our best judge and guide in everything.” Then, it is because of this that so many people could now question the traditional inherited religious and ecclesiastical beliefs purely on rational grounds. The result was that people began to doubt, and reject whatsoever could not be established by reason as null and void. Philosophy which was previously regarded as the ‘handmaiden of theology’ then queen of sciences, became separated from it. Scientific research was pursued with the hope and promise to unravel the mysteries of the world to better human conditions. The Enlightenment was primarily a philosophical movement but its influence was widely felt on religion and theology, science and medicine.\(^{43}\) Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975), 3.
The discourse on the Kingdom of God in Nigeria and perhaps in other parts of Africa is situated within the tension between the present and future realisation of the Kingdom. The present realisation of the Kingdom is often connected to Christian mission. This is associated with evangelism or soul-winning, church planting, church growth, and Christian discipleship. The future realisation of the Kingdom pertains to the Second Coming and final eschatological assemblage of all believers in the eternal Kingdom of God. Mark Shaw has taken the first approach described above in his book, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity*. However, the ‘deepest roots’ of Shaw’s short history is to be found in his exploration of “the concept of the kingdom of God and the ways in which African Christianity witnessed to that reality.”

To Shaw, the growth of African Christianity is a visible demonstration of Kingdom expansion among humanity. The model of the Reign of God will help African church historiography and also sustain the motif of peace and justice that the Kingdom exemplifies. In most churches of Africa, the threefold reality of the Kingdom as the “sovereign reign of God over all things through his providence, the redemptive reign of Jesus Christ over those who believe, and the coming kingdom of justice when Jesus Christ returns” is emphasised differently. But the threefold reality of the Kingdom contributes to the ways these churches have witnessed to the Reign of God.

The Ghanaian Pentecostal theologian, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu points to the connection in the theology of newer Pentecostal churches in Africa and the theme of the Kingdom of God. He states that the Kingdom perception among these churches is experiential and more earthly in outlook. “The Kingdom is seen in earthly terms and is established through the power of prayer, positive thinking and adherence to the principles of success and prosperity.”

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46 Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, 17. Shaw states that the concept of the rule of God can provide fruitful ways to overcome the bottleneck in the African church historiography, that is, between the mission-oriented and nationalist approaches.
Kingdom is more about a present reality.

A well-known Nigerian theologian, Ukachukwu Chris Manus, particularly calls for a renewed emphasis on the kingdom in African Christianity to ensure a renewed meaning for social justice. For Manus, “the reality of the kingdom of God provides men and women of all ages the vista to judge this world and to renew it through their total commitment to peace, justice, freedom.” It is through the kingdom awareness that the peace and justice can be established in the nation.

Such an allusion to the Kingdom of God as the redemptive reign of Christ associated with church related issues is not strange in Nigerian Christianity today. For instance, when Nigerian Christians speak of a ‘Kingdom people’, or ‘Kingdom person’, or ‘Kingdom attitude’ they are referring to those practices which can be considered as virtues or dispositions that reflect Jesus Christ – the initiator of the Kingdom in a person or people.

5.1.4.1 The Idea of the Reign of God among Nigerian Christians

The question that confronts Nigeria again is, who is Jesus Christ today in view of Nigeria’s situation? This inquiry is not new. This question is mostly asked in the face of difficult situations of life. The knowledge of Christ’s identity has a unique way of strengthening the faith and inviting one to perform right action. In the Gospels, John the Baptist, for instance, sent his disciples to ask Jesus whether He was the Christ who is to come or were they to expect another person (Matt. 11:2-5). John the Baptist had earlier declared Jesus, during his baptism, as the Lamb of God to reveal Him to Israel (see John 1:30-31). But when a crisis came, John needed a personal confirmation about Jesus’ identity. Jesus’ reply to John’s inquiry was to bring anew a section of his messianic manifesto. He told John’s disciples, “The blind recover their sight, the lame walk, lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are brought good news – and blessed are those who do not find me an obstacle to faith” (Matt. 11:5-6; Luke 7:22-23). Jesus’ answer is a clear reference to various compositions of the Reign of God.

I have already argued that Jesus Christ can be identified as the initiator of the Reign of God in Nigerian Christianity today. But which aspect of this Christological affirmation can be instrumental in the construction of a Christological paradigm for peace, coexistence, and

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49 Ukachukwu Chris Manus, *Christ the African King* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993), 164.
mutuality in Nigeria? This question seems to be entirely new. The Christological thinking among Nigerian Christians is detailed on some aspects of the Reign of God. Their thinking about the Reign of God may be described as three concentric circles. Each interacts with the other and they are mutually inclusive. The first is the aspects of personal needs, followed by inner transformation through salvation, and the universal Reign of God’s power. These aspects are those of meeting the physical and material needs of people. They also correspond to a solution-oriented and life changing Christology.\textsuperscript{50}

The prevailing notion of the Reign of God among Nigerian Christians is conceived differently as a reward for faith in Jesus in its eschatological dimension. They also portray the Reign of God as a personal spiritual experience on earth through salvation in Jesus.\textsuperscript{51} As a praxis Christology, it is expressed through songs and other local aphorisms. Two representatives of these notions are cited.\textsuperscript{52}

\textit{Example One}

Baba ye, je ki’joba Re de, Father, please let your Kingdom come,
Baba ye, je ki’joba Re bo, Father, please let your Kingdom arrive,
K’ase Re bere lori mi, Let your authority begin in me,
K’ogo Re tan l’aye mi, Let your glory shine in my life.

\textit{Example Two}

Ijoba Orun lere Onigbagbo o, The Kingdom of God is the reward of the believer
Ma ma je n kuna Baba, Let me not miss it Father
Mu mi de’le o, Take me safely home
Ki n ma ku sajo be eefin, Let me not be extinguished halfway like smoke
Mu mi de’le o, Take me home.
Jesu Kristi, mu mi de’le o, Jesus Christ, take me home
Ile Orun. Heavenly home.

These songs embody all of my earlier analyses of the biblical idea of the Reign of God. In these songs, Jesus’ identity is tied to the Reign of God. The songs depict the

\textsuperscript{50} See Chapter Two for my earlier discussion on Solution-Oriented and life changing Christology.
\textsuperscript{51} Shaw, \textit{The Kingdom of God in Africa}, 294.
\textsuperscript{52} The identity of the writer of the first song remains anonymous as its author cannot be uncovered at this time. The second song has different versions but the particular version presented here is a track sung by Lara George, a Nigerian gospel musician, in the album \textit{Forever in My Heart}, 2007.
Kingdom of God as a gift and a reward that is now and not-yet. Perhaps, the songs describe it as a literal geographical location where the Father, God Reigns. As a Kingdom that is now, it is associated with a visible manifestation of the power of God (as glory or radiance) as deliverances and healings. Songs of freedom and going home are often attributed to a main strategy of personal reaffirmation of the humanity of the blacks. Songs are a channel for the expression of faith and theology. As an eschatological Kingdom, it states the possibility of an apostasy before arriving there. As a result, Jesus Christ is described as holding the hands of His own so as not to ‘evaporate like smoke’, leading them into eternal home. The songs seem to balance the different aspects of God’s Reign that are necessary for my elucidation here. These songs and other similar ones must have been influenced by the biblical notions of the Kingdom of God but now reaffirmed with local expressions.

A critical examination of these songs raises some questions. First, there is no clear understanding of the Kingdom of God except the biblical inference drawn in composing these songs. Second, there is a tension between the aspects of the realised and eschatological Kingdom. In the thought of most Nigerian Christians, the prevailing concept of Kingdom is that of a home, available at the close of the age. This notion in particular can affect the presentation of the message of the Reign of God on the social level. This will be stressed later in this chapter.

5.1.5 The Reign of God as a Paradigm for Peace and Mutuality in Nigeria

“God’s Rule and Kingdom is the proclamation of a good news, it is the declaration of peace, joy, and salvation.” The foundational Christological question: who is Jesus Christ today? has shifted from a discussion on orthodoxy to orthopraxis. Most Nigerian Christian are not interested in knowing Jesus alone but most importantly in what one does with that knowledge. What may be added to this question is: what model can be developed from an interpretation of Jesus Christ as the bearer of the Reign of God to initiate peace and mutuality

53 This has a theological connotation connected to Raymond Brown’s interpretation of the Greek word basileia, which he interpreted as meaning, the ‘kingship and to the kingdom produced by that kingship’ An Introduction to New Testament Christology, 61.


55 There are no channels for maintaining peace and mutuality that correspond to the notion of the Kingdom or Reign of God in Nigerian and African Christianity. Hence, I delay an analysis of ways of fostering peace and mutuality in African religious traditions until the section on the second Christological paradigm for peace on reconciliation.

in the Nigerian situation? These are questions staring in the face of every Nigerian Christian today.

It should be said, however, that the context of faith practice for most Nigerian Christians cannot be separated from what blessings they stand to accrue from it. There is a gap today in the proclamation of the Reign of God in Nigerian Christianity and the events in the life of the nation. The aspects of the Reign of God that is often emphasised are those that relate to the liberation of the individual human person. In most Christian gatherings, this is synthesised into matters relating to healing of the body and economic liberation for members of the church. The Reign of God is also linked to salvation experience. However, the corporate issues, for instance, peace, coexistence, and mutuality are not being given enough attention. And what will the Nigerian society look like if Jesus is portrayed as the initiator of the Reign of God? How can the neglected aspects of the Reign of God be incorporated into the life of the Nigerian church to enhance the corporate concerns of peace and coexistence in Nigeria? These are the specific areas I will now explore further.

As background to the discussion, I should like to refer to the four streams that emerge in discourses on the Reign of God in theology and church traditions. These four manifestations of God’s Reign are closely related and complementary.57

1) The Reign is made present in the hearts of people. This is the focus of Christ’s teachings and his apostles.
2) The Reign is made present through its irruption in societies and cultures.
3) The Reign is made present in the Church.
4) The Reign will be made present, fully and forever, in the future life.

I have already explored the first and fourth manifestation of the Reign of God earlier. The second and third point needs attention. These two manifestations of the Reign of God I am concentrating on are important to this research because they expand on the interpretation of the Reign of God as liberation, responding to the need for social transformation, the crucial place of the church in God’s plan and in the Nigerian society. The church is the continuing agent of the Kingdom of God. These two ideas may be combined and restated that, ‘the Reign is made present in the Church and it is made present through its irruption in societies and cultures.’

Jesus established the Kingdom through his life, ministry, death and resurrection and other Kingdom acts as observed earlier. Then the Kingdom theme was passed on to the early apostles (Mt. 10:1ff; Lk 10:1-11; Mk 6:4-12). The disciples’ mission was an offshoot of the mission of Jesus. Hence, it was a unique call to further the enactment of the Reign of God through their words and deeds. Then, Jesus passed on the right to enact the Kingdom in the Great Commission to the church (Mt 28:18-20; Lk 24:47-49; Mk16:16-18). The promise and the sending of the Holy Spirit were directly connected to the command to bear witness to the message of the Kingdom (Acts 1:7-8; 2:1ff). Since that time, the message of the Kingdom became the message of the church. The church grows by appropriating this message in its locality. The Reign is made available through the church.

It is in the same manner that the message of the Reign of God has been laid down in the church, and promoted through the church, that it needs to irrupt in the Nigerian society via the church. This irruption presupposes that it is not an invention of the church. The church only needs to rediscover it and re-emphasise it in strong terms. In appropriating the message of the Kingdom, the perception here is that the church should both derive her identity and message from the notion of the Kingdom. C. S. Song notes in this regard:

The Christian church does not define its relation to the world independently. That relation must be shaped by the relation of God’s Reign to the world. In short, what church is and what it must do is derived from the way of Jesus, which in turn is derived from God’s Reign. There is no need for the Christian church to spend its time and energy trying to explain itself to the world. God’s Reign explains what it must be. The Christian church authenticates itself when it allows itself to be shaped by the demands of God’s Reign in its life, mission, and structure.

The Kingdom of God is the birthplace of the church. The church’s message ought to be shaped by the totality of the Kingdom message in the life of the individual believers and its social circumstances. It is in view of this that the situation of Nigeria must be seen from the perspective of what the proclamation of the Kingdom of God means and what it can offer for peace and mutuality.

John Paul II, in Redemptoris Missio, offers very insightful comments that illuminate

58 Only Mark did not state evidently the content of the message delivered to the apostles except that Jesus gave them authority and the disciples went and preached that people should repent (Mark 6:8-12).
59 Neufeld, Recovering Jesus; 190-192.
60 Song, Jesus and the Reign of God, 8-9.
how the Reign of God can be an instrument for peace, mutuality co-existence in Nigeria:

The Kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but is before all else a person with a face and a name of Jesus of Nazareth, in the image of the invisible God. If the Kingdom is separated from Jesus, it is no longer the Kingdom of God which he revealed. The result is a distortion of the meaning of the Kingdom, which runs the risk of being transformed into a purely human or ideological goal, and a distortion of the identity of Christ, who no longer appears as the Lord to whom everything must one day be subjected (cf. 1 Cor. 15.27).61

Edward Schillebeeckx also argues that the Kingdom of God has a very strong social dimension. The Kingdom of God highlights

a changed new relationship (*metanoia*) of men and women to God, the tangible and visible side of which is a *new type of liberating relationship* among men and women within a reconciling society in a peaceful natural environment.(italics mine)62

Furthermore, Dermot Lane is convinced that the Kingdom of God should be interpreted socially from the perspective of Jesus’ experience of God as Father – *Abba*. Jesus’ experience of God as Father transcends any patriarchal intention. His unique *Abba* experience of God made God real as the Father in the relationship. Jesus sought to create a new community of equals who are characterised by cordiality in their relationships. All activities of Jesus were intended to fulfil the will of the Father in various phases and situations in human life.63 The social dimension in this context is that of its possible contributions to peaceful coexistence and mutuality in Nigeria.

It is informative that some theologians have considered Romans 14.17; “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”, as the clearest biblical definition of the Kingdom of God.64 Remarking on this verse, Fuellenbach emphasises that “the Kingdom, defined in a brief formula, is nothing other than justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. These are not just feelings or sentiments but realities to be implemented in this world.”65 How can the aspects of justice and peace become realities that are implemented with reference to the crisis situation in Nigeria?

61 *Redemptoris Missio*, 18.
63 Lane, *Christ at The Centre: Selected Issues in Christology*, 37-46.
5.1.5.1 The Reign of God and the Role of the Church

Israel Akanji recommends a channel through which the Nigerian church can promote the Reign of God in the Nigerian society. He challenges the pastoral ministry of the church in Nigeria “to become actively involved in the transformation of conflict in the nation.” This can be achieved through a practical theology for the Nigerian church which is well grounded in a hospitality, spirituality, and strategy.

The church in Nigeria today must also be summoned to respond in active strategic ways towards the transformation of the incessant religious conflicts which have caused so much pain. The Model reflected upon here, namely, the theology of hospitality, is not just for the purpose of handling conflicts, but as a manner of relationship that is required between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria before, during and after a conflict or disputation.

Akanji argues that a theology of hospitality that is properly administered by the Church in Nigeria on a short-term and long-term basis will lead to the transformation of the Nigerian society. The short term strategies involve the support which immediately becomes necessary in times of conflict whilst the long-term strategies are those which are potentially powerful to forestall the happening of conflict in Nigeria. Since hospitality is “one’s friendly reception and generous treatment of guests, strangers, and people who are different from one,” he thinks that if every stakeholder beginning with the church in Nigeria is committed to the pursuit of the practice of hospitality, the affected places by conflicts will easily experience healing of memories and prevention of future occurrence.

There is a divine dimension to hospitality, too. The revelation of the Reign of God and its blessings to humanity are illustrations of God’s hospitality to humankind. Hospitality, as Jesus showed in table fellowship, is a crucial dimension of the Reign of God. The church must be involved in the immediate concerns of the nation. The local dominant interpretation

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of the Reign of God as a reward waiting at the close of the age needs reinterpretation to create a space to witness to that heart of Jesus’ mission within the nation.

This is where the strategic place of the church comes to the fore in acting as the agent of truth in the nation. In the process of irruption of the Reign of God in human societies, what it does, in the words of Jon Sobrino, is that “it judges and actually critiques any historical and social structure."  

70 It will provide a thorough critique of the Nigerian Christian emphases, their social responsibilities, and even, solution-oriented Christology. Since “the Kingdom is proclaimed in the presence of and in opposition to the anti-Kingdom,” 71 its critique will lead to new emphases for the praxis of Christian faith in Nigeria. The anti-Kingdom are those issues of injustice, misuse of power, intolerance which are major challenges to the Nigerian peace situation. I will develop this further in the next chapter.

5.1.5.2 Some New Challenges

It is essential at this juncture, to examine how the situation will look when Jesus is portrayed in this model of Incarnational Christology among the Nigerian Christians. First, this paradigm will provide a better appreciation and understanding of who Jesus is and the Reign of God He embodies. This paradigm will strengthen an understanding of the uniqueness of the Christ-event. Second, it will establish a strong connection between the ministry of the church and the challenges of the nation. I have already argued in chapter three that the prevalence of Christological notions at the grassroots in Nigeria is geared towards solution orientation. I submitted that the daily situations of the people have drawn them to Jesus as the source of hope and solution. The main danger associated with this Christological presupposition is that such a view of Christianity is potentially dangerous to breeding consumerism. This paradigm will correct that imbalance.

I should like to state the major challenge to this Christological paradigm. The hermeneutical understanding of the Kingdom with its paradox of the Kingdom now and not-yet becomes problematic. This is a source of tension not only for a contextual theology but also in global theology. My earlier analysis of the interpretations of the Kingdom among

71 Sobrino, Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View, 116.
scholars provides a basis for this assertion. If the Kingdom is a present reality, how can it be subject to the final fulfilment in the future? Is it the same Kingdom in different phases or are we conveying ideas of two different Kingdoms but with the use of human languages? These and many more questions are likely to arise at the local levels. However, as I stated at the beginning of the chapter, a contextual theology today needs to bear true allegiance to the biblical revelation, interact with and transform its immediate context.

To resolve the above challenges the theologian needs to remain loyal to how the message of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ can influence the human society through a proper understanding of the irruption of the Reign of God. Leonardo Boff also corroborates this idea when he affirms that God became human in Jesus of Nazareth so that the power and presence of God’s Reign can be realised in the world.

The Incarnation of Jesus does not simply mean that God made himself man. It means much more. He really participated in our human conditions and took on our deepest longings. He used our language, heavily laden with ideological content – as was the idea of the kingdom of God. But he tried to give our language a new meaning of total liberation and absolute hope. He demonstrated this new content with typical signs and actions. The kingdom of God that he preached is no longer an unattainable human utopia, “for nothing is impossible to God (Luke 1:37); it is a reality already initiated in our world.72

I have argued that the true meaning of the Reign of God and its implications for social impact in the here and now must be rediscovered in the present day Nigerian Christianity. When this happens, Nigerian church will become more adequately prepared for mission and be positioned to take its rightful place as an agency of change. To conclude this section I have been asking the question: who is Jesus? I have argued that Jesus is the creator of a new humanity through the inauguration of the Reign of God. There will be restoration of the long awaited mutuality in Nigeria, when the church presents this paradigm through her ministry to the nation.

The Reign of God institutes justice but also opens the channel for reconciliation between God and humanity. The Reign of God is an integral component of reconciliation. Without the Reign of God there is no reconciliation and vice versa. These Christological elements provide an avenue to explore a social transformational praxis of Christology. The goal of mutuality is attained when the Nigerian churches focus on how best to express Jesus

Christ as both the inaugurator of the Reign of God and reconciler of humanity with God and one another. Through reconciliation the hostilities which cause crises and violence are rectified and harmony is attained. The model of reconciliation can also function as a paradigm for peace and mutuality simultaneously with the Incarnation and the Reign of God. I will articulate this as the second Christological paradigm in the next section.

PARADIGM TWO:

5.2 Jesus Christ the Exemplar of Reconciliation

In this section my argument is that Jesus Christ can be portrayed as the reconciler and an exemplar of reconciliation as part of the response toward the search for peace and mutuality in Nigeria. There is a significant shift today in African theological discourses from an old inculturation theology that centres on creating cultural equivalence to new contextual theology that proves to be relevant to its immediate context. One of such current notions is the theology of reconciliation. This shift occurred because of the need to respond adequately to the current problems that are confronting African nations. In fact, J. J. Carney sees reconciliation as “an emerging paradigm of African theology” which occupies “the heart of contemporary African Christian theology.” Reconciliation is a theological concept that is being applied to social, political, economic, and religious areas.

In this section, I will discuss briefly the meaning and theology of reconciliation, how some African Christian theologians have interpreted it, and finally, how Jesus can be portrayed as a model for reconciliation in the twenty-first century Nigerian Christianity to foster peace and mutuality in the Nigerian nation.

5.2.1 Meaning and Theology of Reconciliation

In its varied forms, the word “reconciliation” (noun) – or “to reconcile” (verb), “reconciling”


(verb), “reconciler” (noun) – primarily deals with relationships. It is about binding life together.\textsuperscript{75} In Christian theology, reconciliation enunciates the significance of Jesus Christ’s work on the cross. In Paul’s theology (for instance, Rom 5.10-12; 2 Cor. 5.18-20), reconciliation “refers to the re-joining of warring parties and peace which ensues as a result of that re-joining, here applied to the relationship between sinners and God.”\textsuperscript{76} It presupposes that the reconciling work is demanding to the point of needing a mediator, that is, the person of Jesus Christ. This is one of the great theological themes that connect the heart of the New Testament to the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{77}

The vision of reconciliation is beyond humanity. It is both theological and Christological in its design.\textsuperscript{78} It is a covenantal enactment which God began on His own accord for the sake of His mercy and love. The apostle Paul clearly shows God’s plans of reconciliation in relation to human conditions when he states that “All things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself…” (2 Cor. 5:18). Ralph Martin has accurately suggested that Paul’s soteriological language of reconciliation should be understood against the background of the predicament of humankind. This predicament is to be seen in the cosmic rebellion and human need.\textsuperscript{79}

Reflecting about the human condition and the implications of reconciliation for human needs, Vincent Taylor categorises reconciliation and forgiveness as “a comprehensive description of the Christian experience” in as much as due attention is given to all that these terminologies mean.\textsuperscript{80} Ernst Käsemann’s contribution stresses that instead of reconciliation, “the doctrine of justification remains the heart of the Christian message.”\textsuperscript{81} Further objections stem from the fact that the doctrine of reconciliation can be advanced on a few scriptural bases.\textsuperscript{82} Whilst noting such a robust argument, Ralph Martin still thinks that reconciliation

\textsuperscript{76} McDermott, \textit{Word Become Flesh}, 97.
\textsuperscript{77} This is especially true when one considers the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It is very close to other theological terminologies such as redemption, atonement, justification, peace, and forgiveness.
\textsuperscript{82}See Christoph Schwöbel, “Reconciliation: From Biblical Observations to Dogmatics” in \textit{Theology of Reconciliation}, ed. Colin E. Gunton (London & NY: T&T Clark, 2003), 15-16. For instance, of the six usages of
can be seen as an appropriate teaching expression of the doctrine of justification in the New Testament. Since Paul used the language of reconciliation for teaching *both* to state the kerygma and to issue the appeal, “Be reconciled to God’ (cf. 6:1)” it may be taken as a valid New Testament teaching.\textsuperscript{83}

My view is that the doctrine of justification and reconciliation are mutually valid as the core of the New Testament message. The best way to view them is that they both express the same reality with different perspectives and emphases. Again, justification and reconciliation are soteriological metaphors that have their roots in the salvific work of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:15-20; Rom. 4:24-5:2). When one professes faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the person is both justified before God and reconciled to Him in Jesus.\textsuperscript{84}

The fundamental significance of presenting Jesus as the reconciler is that the humanity and divinity meet in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is interpreted as the go-between person between God and humanity. The sacrificial work of Christ takes humanity to the point of departure for re-writing human history. Karl Barth demonstrates this when he writes that:

> When Holy Scripture speaks of God, it concentrates our attention and thoughts upon one single point…. And if we look closer, and ask: who and what is it at this point upon which our attention and thoughts are concentrated, which we are to recognize as God?... Then from its beginning to its end the Bible directs us to the name of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{85}

In the person of Jesus Christ, we understand the divinity and its intersection with humanity. This is very clear in the death of Jesus Christ as the summit of self-disclosure of God’s love for humanity. That is why Hans Urs Von Balthasar, described Barth’s theological enterprise as “an intellectual hourglass” “where God and man meet in the center through Jesus Christ. There is no other point of encounter between the top and bottom portions of the glass.”\textsuperscript{86}

There seems to be a consensus among the New Testament scholars that the death of Jesus has

\textsuperscript{83} Martin, Reconciliation, A Study of Paul’s Theology, 150.
\textsuperscript{85} Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 2, part 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 52-54.
\textsuperscript{86} Cited in Kärkkäinen, Christology, 116.
a mediatorial capacity although this is expressed with different theological terminologies. The motif of His mediation is closely tied to His identity and mission. Michael Fallon has paid close attention to this from the perspective of Jesus’ self-understanding and mission. Fallon concentrates on the salient question, ‘Who is Jesus?’ He proposes that Jesus is the exemplar of the limitlessness of God’s love for the world. This, however, remains unknown until one analyses the purpose of his death. According to Fallon,

His compassionate love led him to identify with those who were hurt, oppressed, lost. His identification was total,…He knew God as the liberator, and he was determined, by his actions and his words, to do his best to convince others of this truth and to bring about God’s will for the world. We have seen where this finally took him. His death was the complete symbol of his commitment to what he understood as the Father’s will.

The identity of Jesus as the reconciler is established through His death. However, it goes beyond His death to His resurrection and what it means today in a specific social historical context.

My concern here is how Jesus Christ can be portrayed as a model of reconciliation in Nigerian society and how this portrayal can effectively resolve the problem of lack of peace, coexistence, and mutuality. Much of what is said today in the social sphere has gone beyond an analysis of Christ’s death or which theological language is suitable to express it. The question has changed to how Christians can bring up the reconciliatory import of Christ’s union with humanity to transform the societal strata. In a world where humankind is polarised along social status, religious affiliation, and social convictions, it often results in misdemeanours of unhealthy relationships, crises and violence. It is from the above view that an idea of reconciliation is borrowed today without limiting it to the work of Christ on the cross.

What I have discussed above is the vertical scheme of reconciliation. If reconciliation will be useful in human relationships and in a nation’s affairs to be specific, there is a need to allow the concept to transverse from vertical (God and humanity’s relationship) to horizontal (human interpersonal relationships). I will now explore this further.

87 See works which portray the death of Christ as sacrifice for sins to include Frances M. Young, Sacrifice and the Death of Christ (London: SPCK, 1975). Michael Winter, Problems in Theology: The Atonement (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995). Some of the theological languages include reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, etc.
I have argued that reconciliation is a divine prerogative. But that is not all there is to it. Reconciliation also presupposes a horizontal movement. Reconciliation flows from God to humanity, from one person to another to impact on human relationships with its corresponding social effects. This is how the concept of reconciliation can properly fit into the social and political relations. If an idea of reconciliation is to make any significant contribution it must be stretched beyond the biblical notion of salvation to certain elements to better human relationships. Similarly, human reconciliation needs to be “pointing to the christological form in which God achieves reconciliation through Christ.” The significance of reconciliation lives on through the fellowship and kerygma in the church. This past event has present realities for the community of faith and the world at large. As the church continues to bear witness to the reconciling power of the cross through its life and ministry more people are brought into divine/human reconciling relationship. It will end in the horizontal reconciliation in society.

5.2.2 Reconciliation in Nigerian-cum African Christian Theology

The current emphasis on the theology of reconciliation in African Christian theology is influenced by certain factors. African nations now live in a post-colonial era that requires a reformulation of African Christian theological themes. This can be called a third response to mission theology. In this third response, theologians are realising that it is insufficient to condemn the manner in which the earliest missionaries related with the Africans and their culture. Besides, varied conditions of the post independent African nations need attention. Africans have to be awake to the responsibilities of handling these manifold conditions. Therefore, reconciliation seeks to construct a relevant theology that is responsible for playing a vital role in reconciling different aspects of the African nations. These aspects include economic, political, social, religious, and ecclesiastical structures which have been badly affected by the colonial and post-colonial experiences.

One major institutional acknowledgement of an urgency for a theology of

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90 I have discussed the essential components of the theological presuppositions guarding mission movements in Chapter Three. The first response of African Christian theologians is that of apologetics. They showed some aspects of African religious systems that are in direct continuity with the gospel message. The second response is deconstruction and reconstruction theology. The theologians in this category call for de-emphasizing the prominent emphasis of the missionary theology and particularly call for re-reading the biblical text and hermeneutics in such a way that aid African Christian’s faith and practices. A recent example of the works in this category include W. Musa Mudimbe, Andrew M. Mbuvi, and Dora Mbuwayesango, eds. PostColonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012).
reconciliation as a relevant paradigm in African Christianity came through the Vatican’s Second African Synod. The Synod had its theme as “The Church in Africa in service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: ‘You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world’” (Matt. 5:14). The Synod points to the urgency of a theology that aims at restoring African nations and focuses on justice and peace as the fruits of reconciliation. It affirms this perception in Proposition 42 by stating that:

Africa is not hopeless. Our destiny is still in our hands. All she is asking for is the space to breathe and thrive. Africa is already moving; and the Church is moving with her, offering her the light of the Gospel. The waters may be turbulent. But with our gaze on Christ the Lord (cf. Mt. 14:28-32), we shall make it safely to the port of reconciliation, justice and peace.”

Reconciliation, justice, and peace remain the essential components of any relevant theology in an African context today. Using the imagery of a family, it calls upon the church to rethink the work of reconciliation for a fresh engagement with endemic issues in these nations.

Theologians in Africa have constructed different models of reconciliation. However, all models of reconciliation focus on life in the human community in which every action against the human person is seen as for or against life and community. Everything that affects a person has a corresponding impact on human community. Conflicts, disputes and hostilities threaten the communal life and equally have deep implications for the relationship of the community with God. Hence, reconciliation is not a move towards one person in the community, but towards the entire community and to God. There are two major ways of achieving reconciliation in the traditional African societies. These are through sacrifices and ancestral mediation. I will look into these two reconciliatory channels briefly.

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91 The Second African Synod (of the Roman Catholic Church) took place in Rome from October 4-25, 2009. Other church denominations were present as observers.


5.2.2.1 Sacrifices as Reconciliation and Peace

According to the traditional religious structures, the major reconciliatory channel among Africans is via sacrifices or rituals. Through rituals, a community is purged of evil deeds. Wellness, prosperity in human relationships, harmonious community relations, and divine-human relationships are secured, and peace is restored. The structures of sacrifices vary depending on the need or focus, either private or public. The features of sacrifices include “presentation, consecration, invocation and immolation.” Sacrifices are offered to the spirit, ancestors, and ultimately to God as the recipient. There are no commonly agreed procedures as each community has specified sacrifices to restore peace and coexistence.

In the scriptures the chief goal of the sacrifices in the Old Testament is reconciliation. The sacrifices among Africans correspond to the Old Testament presentation of sacrifice as the best channel to connect to God and to be at peace with Him. Sacrifices are a way of coping with and restoring life among Africans. This propels some theologians in Africa to develop some Christological themes that attempt a correlation between the biblical ideas of sacrifice and the African concepts of sacrifice. They see it as the core of the Christian faith that touches on the African traditional life. These theologians affirm that Jesus Christ became the mediator for humanity because of his death as a sacrifice for sin. An example of this is the ‘Hebrews Christology’ which Peter Nyede developed. The height of Hebrews’ Christology is the atoning and reconciliatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ which highly resonates with the African understanding of life and wellbeing.

The possibility of exploring sacrifice as a model for peace and mutuality is confronted by how to articulate this Christology in the Nigerian social context. How to translate the

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notion of sacrifice from the traditional African worldview to the Christian understanding of sacrifice of Jesus is daunting in a socio-political context. For instance, the biblical presentation of the sacrifice of Jesus is that it is a once and for all atoning and reconciliatory provision for human reconciliation to God, whereas African traditions understand sacrifices as daily affairs, a perpetual practice. The concept of sacrifice does offer insights but it cannot be applicable in the modern Nigerian social setting to bring about peace and mutuality.

5.2.2.2 Ancestral Mediation as Reconciliation and Peace

Reconciliation has also been proposed through ancestral mediation. The authors who recommend this model apply the African concept of ancestor to the work of Jesus Christ and depict Jesus as an ancestor. An ancestral Christology portrays Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and humankind.

Francois Kabasele rightly notes that “most of the movements of spiritual awakening in black Africa are marked by an acute sense of the intermediary.” John Mbiti further observes that the concept of intermediaries is found “almost everywhere” in Africa, given the socio-political and economic structures of the society which accommodate the position of a third party. “It is a widespread feeling among many African peoples that man should not, or cannot, approach God alone or directly, but that he must do so through the mediation of special persons or beings.” The theologians who emphasise the Mediatorial role of Christ explore the equivalence of African religious and cultural practices to express this Christology.

An ancestor must necessarily fulfil certain conditions. The ancestors, among other

99 The daily offering of sacrifices in African tradition is closely related to the Hebrew concept of sacrifice.
100 Magesa, African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life, 77-82. Magesa agrees that the wholeness and harmony of life in its fullness, is the ethical basis of life in African religious traditions, and it is realised through ancestral communion.
102 Francois Kasabele, “Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother” in Faces of Jesus in Africa, 117.
105 There are different views on who can be considered an ancestor under different African societies. But generally, an ancestor will be a departed clan member or head of communities who passed away in a good old
things, strive to guarantee the future of the human community. They make sure the unity of life in the past, present and future, including the dead.\textsuperscript{106} Jesus also fulfilled this role when he came in a human form and died for humanity.

Finally, it is through death that Jesus Christ now serves as a divine Redeemer, Prophet, King, Priest and unique Mediator. An ancestral Christology informs the need for “a Christian life that is primarily religious and secondarily secular”\textsuperscript{107} though such a dichotomy is not always made under the traditional structure unlike the modern systems which have made it a current reality. In which case, a harmonious relationship is needed in both so that the “religious element should be the fundamental basis and guiding principle of secular activity.”\textsuperscript{108}

Although Christological discourses on the mediator centres on the ancestral Christology there are some constraints attached to it.\textsuperscript{109} First, there is a missiological and contextual challenge. The notion of an ancestral cult from which those who advocate this model derived their insight is less feasible within modern African societies. The fact of a current post-ancestral era of Africans with no trace of an ancestral cult is a particular challenge. This makes the idea of Christ as an ancestor strange to a contemporary African mind.

Secondly, there is a creative tension between the divinity and humanity, ontology and functional status of this Christology. It focuses so well on the humanity of Jesus in a way that there is a vast limitation which subsumes the divinity in the process of cultural translation. All these concerns lead to the third which contemplates whether an ancestral model for reconciliation can contribute to the African challenge of peace in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Walliggo echoes this warning that “the model of ancestor may not change much in society. It may make us re-own our culture within Christianity, but may not touch very much on the


\textsuperscript{107} Nyamiti, \textit{Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective}, 92

\textsuperscript{108} Nyamiti, \textit{Christ as Our Ancestor}, 92.

\textsuperscript{109} See Diane B. Stinton, \textit{Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 109-142. Stinton’s discussion on ‘Jesus as Mediator’ only focuses on the ancestral Christology. It is not so clear whether Stinton takes the ancestors as the only model for Mediatorial Christology. A simple academic guess for doing that is the supreme importance of mediation in ancestral cults in Africa.
injustices that have been done to us and which we are doing to each other. Reconciliation that is embedded in an ancestral notion is grossly inadequate as the basis to formulate a reconciliation paradigm that will foster peace and mutuality in Nigeria.

A conceivable method for reconciliation which fills the gap between the sacrifice and ancestor mediation as models for reconciliation in Nigerian Christianity today is possible. This mode of reconciliation draws huge insights from these two elements with contemporary harmonisation for the social-political process of our time. This is arbitration.

I will now explore how arbitration may serve the purpose of peace, coexistence, and mutuality in Nigeria.

5.2.3 Jesus the Reconciler as a Paradigm for Peace and Mutuality in Nigeria

Reconciliation not only has deep Christian roots, but like all successful theology it speaks to the current context. If reconstruction emerged from the ephemeral hopes of the second wave of African democratization, reconciliation grew out of the enduring pain of ethnic and political conflict in places like Northern Uganda, Nigeria, and Burundi.

How does the reconciliation of Jesus Christ translate into a model for peace and how can this portrayal become more evident in Nigerian Christianity? I argue here that the heart of the doctrine of reconciliation is the offer of peace and reinstatement of mutuality. Nigerian Christians must reinterpret the notion of reconciliation with its social significance. The gap between the sacrifice and ancestral veneration as patterns of reinstating peace and mutuality is filled in a context of conversation, of analysis of the damage in the crisis situation and of arbitration. This process has been modernised in the current time to accommodate the advancement of the society and multiplicity of religious associations.

A proper articulation of Jesus Christ as the reconciler and an exemplar of reconciliation in Nigeria must integrate a missional transformational praxis that cuts across every facet of Nigerian nationhood. Chelimo Richard Kimosop suggests that palaver is a

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110 Stinton, Jesus of Africa, 135.
111 Carney, “Roads to Reconciliation”, 553.
112 The traditional procedures for reconciliation among other things involve the opposing/erring parties and the council of elders. The issues at stake are diagnosed by listening to the parties involved, before the leader appointed by the community gives the final verdict. This is followed by determining which sacrifice is appropriate.
good way of understanding this concept. Palaver is a community based discussion type that focuses on a specific problem in the human community. This approach has some affinity with those African scholars who are advocating a re-affirmation of the African cultural values and spirituality as an alternative to reconstructing African communities. However, palaver in modern times must be modified to accommodate the developments in modern socio-political and religious processes. A well-known example of this model, with some modifications, is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. Hence, I have selected the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to illustrate how the Christian notion of reconciliation can aid the development of a Christological paradigm for peace and mutuality in Nigeria. This is the closest example to the reconciliatory paradigm that is proposed here. I will describe this reconciliatory paradigm, and show its resources, challenges, and prospects.

5.2.3.1 A Brief Look at the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

It is impossible to embark upon an elaborate analysis of the TRC since that is not the focus of the study and since many researchers have justifiably treated its scope, committees, and reports. However, it is apposite to offer some insight since in my opinion, the theology of the TRC can be useful in charting a path to reconciliation and peace in the Nigerian society. The TRC represents an up-to-date fusion of the biblical concept of forgiveness and reconciliation with the African notion of humanity, Ubuntu. The Ubuntu, a philosophical concept of human person, speaks of what it means to be human, and how one person functions in relation to others. In the words of Desmond Tutu,

It is to say, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” It further says rather: “I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.” A person with Ubuntu is open to others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when

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113 Chelimo Richard Kimosop, “The Palavar: A Model to Reconcile Africa?” SEDOS Bulletin vol. 43, no. 7/8 (August-July 2011): 199-207. See Diane S. Stinton, ed. “Introduction” African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations (London: SPCK, 2010), xv-xx. It should be observed that the word palavra (unlike its English translation as palaver, ‘a long confused or incoherent talk’) is not necessarily negative in its original Portuguese concept, meaning ‘speech’ or ‘word’ which also generates from the Latin parabola, which means ‘parable’ or ‘speech’. Theologians who are advocating the concept of palaver directly derive their meaning and intention from the original Portuguese concept.


others are humiliated or diminished.\textsuperscript{116}

The above reflects the cultural cum philosophical assumptions upon which the TRC was founded. The TRC emerged against the background years of victimisation, human rights violation, political and social oppression, abuse and misuse of political power, unlawful torture, racial discriminations, deaths, and economic misappropriation experienced during the apartheid era. TRC holds in tension the crimes against humanity committed by various players and those acted under authority and the need for healing, reconciliation, and nation-building. The South African nation had just transited from the era of apartheid to a democratic government. The nation was broken and crippled by ills and hurts of various individuals and families as well as institutions such as the church, which have suffered under the previous regime. An idea of charting a path for the political future was already brewing amongst some academics and politicians who believed the nation could be rebuilt and that there is a certain hope for a democratic alternative to apartheid.

The proposal for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission emerged in the political arena through different consultations within the African National Congress (ANC) and other well-meaning South Africans who anticipated that forming a cluster of people would be a powerful tool to refine their ideas and finally lead to a proposal for a Truth Commission.\textsuperscript{117} The new national government was anticipated to work towards national unity, reconciliation, and peace. Having seen the proposition as a reasonable initiative that could set a pace for the political future of South African nation, the new president Nelson Mandela passed on the proposal to the legislature, where it was legislated through “The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act.” The Act provided that the Commission would consist of eight to ten persons, with three specialised committees, the Amnesty Committee, the Violation of Human Rights Committee, and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee. The primary objective of the Commission was to establish in accordance with the principles of international law and the Constitution as complete a picture as possible of gross human rights violations that occurred during the past, which took place inside and outside South Africa between 1 March 1960 and 5 December 1993, as well as their antecedents and circumstances, in order to

\textsuperscript{116} Desmond Tutu, \textit{No Future Without Forgiveness} (London: Rider, 1999), 35.
\textsuperscript{117} Alex Boraine, \textit{A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-46. Boraine, an insider in the TRC, traced the historical emergence of the TRC in the first and second chapter of his book. The book is a documentary on the activities of the TRC.
achieve national reconciliation.\textsuperscript{118}

The Commission was established on 15 December 1995 and it submitted its final report, a 3,500 page report in five volumes on 29 October 1998, involving hearings on widow cases, youth and children, women, and institutions with recommendations to the government. The achievements and failures of the TRC are proliferated in literature today. First, it is the opinion of some that the TRC was politicised, precisely because it was a product of political compromise saddled with political responsibility of reconciliation. Dorothy Shea pointed out that the entire process of the TRC was politically motivated, reflected in the selection of the commissioners, the amnesty process, the granting of reparations or prosecution recommendations.\textsuperscript{119} Such a robust argument on political grounds is not unexpected since the political institution provided funding and every necessary state apparatus for the institution and implementation of the Commission. Combating political influence is a major daunting task that is characteristic of every known truth commissions around the world. This was so not only on account of internal political interference alone but also and most importantly on account of such questions as what could be interpreted as the truth and what manner the truth is to be pursued.\textsuperscript{120}

Second, the essence of truth and reconciliation are sometimes contradictory. This has raised a stern criticism against truth commissions as having high capability to uncover different forms of abuse and human rights violation, especially at ‘making people’ confess their role in the abusive and oppressive past, but deficient in achieving reconciliation.\textsuperscript{121} As a result, some critics are pessimistic, saying that it would do more harm than good whenever instituted. However, truth and reconciliation are complementary, the former serving as a vehicle for the latter. Truth-telling may not instantly lead to reconciliation but it is a necessary step in the direction of reconciliation and peace. Those who expect that in every situation the truth-telling would attain an instant reconciliation are more or less envisioning a very cheap reconciliation that would last a short period. Uncovering the truth in a national political situation is very demanding and broadening. The wisdom of the TRC in handling this

\textsuperscript{118} Boraine, \textit{A Country Unmasked}, 48.
\textsuperscript{121} Boraine, \textit{A Country Unmasked}, 340-378.
inherent challenge is to identify varied forms of truth: factual or forensic truth, personal or narrative truth, social truth, and healing or restorative truth,\(^{122}\) which assisted in the work of the TRC. But it is impossible to find out the whole truth.

Third, the methodology of the TRC, its data collection and analysis, the nature of evidences presented to it and the process of reaching its conclusions have also been judged inadequate. In a study on the TRC’s methodology, Anthea Jeffery argued that the key findings of the TRC were untested and mostly hearsay through secret testimony of offenders who saw their testifying before the Commission as an opportunity to escape imprisonment through amnesty. Jeffery states further that the Commission left out major massacres, and in some cases, the basic facts were either misrepresented or distorted.\(^{123}\) Hence, the non-comprehensive fact or evidence was used to hold people accountable for their wrongdoings. The one way that Jeffery substantiated this claim is that although the Commission received about 21,300 victim statements, and had recorded nearly 38,000 gross violations of human rights, about 90% of the victim statements were not given under oath.\(^{124}\) This lack of proper judicial process is a major flaw of the TRC.\(^{125}\) Priscilla Hayner’s analysis of forty truth commissions around the world revealed that truth commissions are never perfect, they are sometimes faced with moral and political pressures that end up limiting the expected success and distort their reports.\(^{126}\)

The best achievement of the TRC is that without the fear of being persecuted, the marginalised and the oppressed obtained a platform to publicly narrate their ordeals under apartheid reign. The public acknowledgment of wrongdoings and the past abuse which had been fervidly denied in the past became a laudable accomplishment.\(^{127}\) The unique opportunity to name misdeeds and to ask for forgiveness has nonetheless initiated some sort of healing of memories, tortures, and abuses in the hearts of the offended. Further, it brought to the general public the horrific past that some members of the society have suffered in silence and the opportunity to share empathetically in the suffering of other members of the South African society. Being confronted with the magnitude of abuses and gross human rights

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122 Boraine, A Country Unmasked, 1.
violations, the chair of the TRC Archbishop Desmond Tutu trembled and collapsed. Other members of the society also shared the difficulties the victims had undergone.

Another success of the TRC that should also be emphasised is the triumph of negotiation as a means of charting a path to reconciliation as against a violent alternative or revolution for restoring peace and nation building.\textsuperscript{128} That the nation could move in the direction of negotiation, amnesty and reparations upon certain conditions attest to the fact that political reconciliation and nation building cannot be actualised when the victims within the same society are not catered for to bring healing of mind and memories. These few outstanding achievements of the TRC seem to stand side by side if not outweighing the negative estimations many have raised against the TRC. Both the success and failures of the TRC point to two cogent considerations: reconciliation is a very long process involving varied dynamics, and it is too early to jump to a conclusion, as of now, as to whether the TRC utterly succeeded or otherwise.

5.2.3.2 Reconciliation and the Church in Nigeria

The unsettled scores, broken relationships, burdens being created by memories of oppression, abuse, and the deaths over the years show the need for reconciliation. This may well involve coming together to diagnose the existing problems, analyse the effects so far, and project a productive future for the nation.\textsuperscript{129} The only way forward after the series of these attacks which are religiously motivated is for the nation to start a channel to bring back peace and coexistence.

The theological presupposition upon which the TRC is founded is what I should like to draw insight from rather than the actual historical process of the emergence of the TRC and even its activities. This theological assumption is rooted in Christology and is focused on restorative justice and reconciliation. When this is understood and applied it can function as a reconciliation paradigm. The reconciliation paradigm may draw resources in areas such as economy, legal, religion and so on. The focus is not to use legal means for reparation of wrong deeds, though it may be necessary to hold some individuals responsible for their

\textsuperscript{128} Graeme Simpson, “‘Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories’: A Brief Evaluation of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in \textit{Commissioning the Past}, 226.

\textsuperscript{129} It is for this reason that I treated some selected episodes of mayhems, vandalism and massive destruction of property and lives in Chapter Two.
actions where practicable. Rather, the essence is to diagnose and expose the negative deeds and wrongdoers and to chart a new frontier towards reconciliation and healing of past wounds. This is where it becomes necessary to exercise caution. As Laurenti Magesa remarks, “the essence of all of this is that the legal approach to reconciliation alone, devoid of the transcendental, sacramental dimensions, is highly unsatisfactory and unsustainable in the long run.” What is needed is a spirit of forgiveness that commences restoration and reconciliation other than stressing restorative justice through legal procedures. If the legal dimension is emphasised above a commitment to heart to heart conversation, the reconciliation will be one-sided. The force of the law will never satisfy a condition for personal, heart-conviction and reconciliation with wrongdoers. Here lies the vision of attaining justice through reconciliation.

The role of the church in making reconciliation effective as an emerging Christological paradigm for the Nigerian nation is signalled by how much the church’s identity became known in the South African TRC. As I pointed out earlier, the notion of a TRC first surfaced among those who believed things needed to change and that a new future as well as reconciliation was possible when there is proper commitment to negotiation and probing the events of the past. However, it is possible to indicate various ways in which the church was instrumental in this, but for the present purposes, the personality of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, comes to the fore. The Nigerian Noble Laureate Wole Soyinka describes Tutu as “the moving spirit behind the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” The peace advocacy and his role in the TRC are the greatest legacy that Tutu will always be remembered for in South Africa. Tutu, in the words of Carney, “embodied the reconciliation agent as prophetic advocate speaking truth to power.” His use of ecclesiastical and ecumenical avenues to promote what is now a model being sought after by other countries cannot be underestimated. The church became an institution upon which Tutu and others stood to expunge the degrading status created by apartheid discriminations.

Tutu’s active participation in the TRC reflected the deep, biblical understanding of reconciliation. C. H. Dodd has underscored the conspicuous place of the community of God in the new plan of God for the reconciliation of humanity and societal order. This community of God is about creating the future that reflects God’s purpose of reconciling all things back.

130 Magesa, What is Not Sacred?, 161.
131 Wole Soyinka, The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 100.
132 Carney, “Roads to Reconciliation;,” 554.
to Himself. Dodd thinks that,

The future lies with the new community created by the Spirit of Christ. The future of mankind is entrusted to this community, and its history must be the growth and consolidation of this community. Its members are “luminaries in the world, holding out the word of truth” (Rom. 12:14-21). They are “elect” for a purpose – the purpose of bringing into God’s way and into the fellowship of His Son the whole race of mankind without distinction.\(^{133}\)

The church as an institution in Nigeria needs to learn to become a community where the hurt not only finds refuge and the oppressed receive hope but a place where the river of reconciliation flows from God’s reconciling initiative into human affairs. This will enable the nation to draw insights into how to ameliorate her challenge of peace and mutuality.

5.2.3.2.1 Resources for Reconciliation Paradigm

Christology, from a Christian perspective, forms an epistemological foundation for reconciliation. From Christology flows forgiveness, healing of memories, truth-telling, and justice. Forgiveness and justice move towards a communion restoration with God, one another, and the whole of creation. The Christological design of forgiveness in relation to peace is intoned in the Christian conviction that “God’s forgiveness is embodied most fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.”\(^{134}\) This ministry the church is enjoined to embark upon in a social context. The Christian concept of forgiveness must challenge and transform the human conceptions of forgiveness “that focus on isolated individuals, on momentary individual transactions, or only on words spoken or feelings felt.”\(^{135}\) On the contrary, it flows from the life of the resurrected Christ who reconciled the humanity to God and became an Exemplar of reconciliation. The grace that flows from that life of communion enables the church to craft a community of the forgiven, to forgive, for healing, and for reconciliation in the nation. Forgiveness is fundamental to reconciliation.

Apart from the Christological elements stated above, the contextual religious perception of the Nigerian people must be mentioned. The Christological paradigm for reconciliation has to embrace the religious consciousness of the Nigerian people. Its scope


\(^{135}\) Jones, “Crafting Communities of Forgiveness”, 125.
must extend beyond the four walls of the church so as to avoid the pitfalls of limiting its relevance to Christians. Its expression ought to exclude a denominational interest and provide an emphasis to enable it attain the goal of social transformation. Stan Chu Ilo attests to this very point when he describes the scope of theology of missional transformation praxis. According to Ilo,

This current is not concerned with theological camps and systems but with the reconstruction and transformation of African society and human destiny outside of the determinism of crisis and African present social conditions. Thus, it is a theology without any fixed systems or fixed data, but an open theology which is constantly admitting new data as it immerses itself in the living faith expressions of the people.  

Ilo’s assumptions fit well into the present argument. In its application a theology of reconciliation needs to rest on the church’s emulation of the exemplary reconciliation of Jesus Christ through her ardent desire for social transformation. The church will then extend it to the government, corporate bodies, political associations, civil society organisations, and private individuals. In an article entitled “Be therefore Reconciled to one another”: The Church’s Role in Justice, Healing and Reconciliation in Zimbabwe” Lovemore Togarasei and Ezra Chitando point out the unique advantages that the church has in mobilizing people towards justice, healing, and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

The church is strategically positioned above political parties in view of a massive membership in urban centres and remote areas. She has membership from most political parties. Many of the civil activists identify themselves with the church. The church is variously viewed as prophet: God’s watchtower, teacher, civic educator, defender, and promoter of gospel values, advocate of human rights and reconciler. These factors suggest that the church can mobilise people differently to political parties. This is because “political parties have been directly implicated in acts of violence and this has diminished their standing as credible agents of peace and healing.” What remains for the church is to explore these features deeper and mobilise her human resources, being enriched with the Christological notion of peace. These and other factors give the church an edge to act

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137 Lovemore Togarasei and Ezra Chitando, “Be therefore Reconciled to one another”: The Church’s Role in Justice, Healing and Reconciliation in Zimbabwe” Missionalia 39:3 (Nov. 2011): 210-227.
138 Togarasei and Chitando, “Be therefore Reconciled to one another”, 220-222.
139 Togarasei and Chitando, “Be therefore Reconciled to one another”, 223.
decisively in the mobilisation toward peace and mutuality.

The above qualities are the commonly shared values in the nations and churches of Christian Africa. This gives an edge to merge the rich content of the Christian message of reconciliation to day-to-day experience and the desires of the Nigerian people for a peaceful nation. It is necessary to seek collaboration because the task of social transformation cannot be spearheaded by a single group. It must reflect the communitarian structure of the African community. Hence, this theological expression must be missional so as to achieve the task of a transformational praxis. To quote Ilo again,

African theologies are also mission theologies because they are attempts to show that God’s will which signifies the presence of God’s kingdom is being enacted in Africa through African Christianity. Thus, where the absence of reconciliation in the Christian community, poverty among God’s people, and violence and strife undermine the fullness of life, African theology must show how these evils have to be removed, and how a transformative grace can become concretized within a creative praxis by Christians and churches. It is only through this that African theologies can offer a missional transformational praxis. 140

The theology of reconciliation has influenced the move towards reconciliation in various African nations. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is prominent and has given an impetus to other countries too. Ghana’s was called the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), and in Sierra Leone, it was called Sierra Leone’s Truth Commission (SLTC). In Kenya, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) was established in 2008. In all these cases, there have been perceived injustices, deprivation of the human rights, and violation of the dignity of the human person. They set up commissions to address those situations. Granted that it is impossible to equate the level of success in each of the above cases, the notion of reconciliation has contributed to political sustainability and social restructuring.

In the case of Nigeria, it will be argued that the Christological paradigm for peace and mutuality will focus on justice, healing and reconciliation in its entirety. This kind of proposition is not entirely new in Nigeria. For instance, immediately after the Nigerian-Biafran Civil war (1967-1970), which had devastating effects on eastern Nigeria, the Federal Military Government developed a vision of reconciliation and reconstruction of relationships

of the easterners and the rest of Nigerians. It focused on rebuilding the nation after the unwholesome consequences of the Civil War. This vision was short-lived as successive governments soon deviated from it. Reconciliation is always mentioned today in the socio-political space when there are conflicting interests within a political party.\textsuperscript{141} The context of Nigeria today is different to the Civil War contexts, but the emerging situations relate to religious problems, political injustice and economic inequalities and show that it is necessary to engage in an amicable conversation to understand the root causes of these challenges.

More recently there was a similar commission set up in Nigeria, Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, 1999–2002, to investigate cases of human rights violations between 1 January 1984 and 28 May 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo. The starting date of the Commission was later extended to 1966, the year that the first military coup truncated the first democratically elected president. The Commission was headed by Justice Chukwudifu Oputa. As it was fondly called, the ‘Oputa Panel’ held consultations throughout the country and it became popular due to concentrated media attention devoted to its proceedings. Having received reports from persons who alleged being violated, the Commission recommended to the Inspector General of Police to create a special unit in the Nigeria Police to carry on with further investigations that could not be covered under its hearing, about thirty-five in all.\textsuperscript{142}

The unfolding political influence however prevented the Commission from making the much anticipated success. For instance, two of the past military heads of state obtained court injunctions to prevent subpoenas whilst one simply ignored the summons from the Commission. The case ended in the Supreme Court and the erstwhile military heads of state who filed the law suit were prevented from appearing before the Commission. Other people in politics and past governments voluntarily came forward to respond to the allegations levied against them. In May 2002, the Commission submitted its report but the president refused to publish it to the public using the excuse of non-appearance of the two past military leaders. After two years of lobbying by the civil society groups, a group called Nigerian Democratic Movement, based in Washington, DC, in conjunction with the Civil Society Forum in Nigeria published the report online.\textsuperscript{143} Nothing substantial came out of this Commission as the

\textsuperscript{141} The popular procedure that is often used for reconciliation is conversation and mediation between the warring political party members. A committee is appointed to meet with the concerned persons and an amicable resolution is arrived at.

\textsuperscript{142} Hayner, \textit{Unspeakable Truths}, 249.

\textsuperscript{143} Hayner, \textit{Unspeakable Truths}, 250.
government lacked the will to act upon its findings and recommendations.

The reconciliation paradigm must hold in tension the need to chart a pathway for liberation, reconstruction, and justice implementation. This is the way that reconciliation will be true to its ideals. It must rescind the oppressive structures in the nation, ensure freedom and realisation of a free and reconciled humanity. The result will be a reconstruction of societal values and relationships. Although, some scholars have pointed out the seeming difference between reconciliation and reconstruction, it may be stated that reconciliation deals with tainted human relationships and reconstruction with the rebuilding of social structures, standards, and values. However, the two concepts are not entirely synonymous, they can fulfil a common purpose of restoration of peace and harmony in the socio-political, religious, and historical processes. True reconciliation occurs where reconstruction of structures that inhibit a complete humanity have been dismantled.

5.2.3.2.2 Limitations of the Reconciliation Paradigm

Having illustrated how reconciliatory paradigm can function in Nigerian Christianity including its basic resources, I will now discuss briefly the limitations or challenges that will face this Christological paradigm.

First, there is always a dichotomy between the context of faith profession and the praxis levels. This is sometimes visible when the church affirms the person of Christ and His work but is grossly lacking in engaging the existential challenges within that context on the basis Christology. It is much easier to point to Jesus Christ and His reconciliatory act but do nothing tangible to make the Christological ideas permeate the social, religious, economic, and political processes. This is precisely the problem that I identified with solution theology in Chapter Three.

Second, there are some caveats that are noteworthy in the pursuit of reconciliation as a Christological paradigm for peace. It is imperative to acknowledge that the notion of reconciliation is a complex phenomenon, beyond humanity. This acknowledgment is potentially powerful to render the church powerless in view of the multifaceted challenges of

peace and mutuality. Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice point out that reconciliation should begin with a realisation that “the way things are is not the way they have to be.”

Although huge resources are available to the church, the work of reconciliation is far beyond an activist task but it consists in a contemplative lament. By this I am referring to the biblical examples of the Psalmist’s protests, or Job’s pleadings, or Jesus’ cry in agony, “Eloi, Eloi lema sabachthani” at the end of Mark’s gospel (Mk15:34). These examples confirm that lament is a common response to unjust suffering. Lament is both a prayer and a cry for the emancipation of the victim. Lament recognises the limitation of human efforts to grasp the vast problems of evil, injustice, and oppression in the world. It anticipates God’s transformation of the world in ways we cannot imagine. The point I am making is that reconciliation is more of a spirituality than a strategy to obtain a quick solution. This is why Katongole and Rice have described reconciliation as a Christian alternative to reconciliation. Peter Schmiechen also adds that reconciliation is not that of works or human efforts but it certainly requires human response.

Third, since the purpose of the Christological paradigm of reconciliation is not primarily about legal means for reparation, the question that readily arises is, whether it is possible to have genuine reconciliation without mass reparation. Such a question is raised about the TRC. Analysing a theology of reconciliation, like that of the TRC, Wole Soyinka points to the theme of forgiveness as one of its setbacks. Soyinka rejects the model of reconciliation after Tutu’s theology with a caveat, “Saints are dangerous for your health.” He is especially concerned that the Christian doctrine of forgiveness is problematic in the process of reconciliation. Soyinka marvels:

How on earth does one reconcile reparations, or recompence, with reconciliation or remission of wrongs? Dare we presume that both, in their differing ways, are committed to ensuring the righting of wrongs and the triumph of justice?.. Would the Truth and Reconciliation ethic have been applicable, even thinkable in post-Acheampong Ghana? In post-Mobutu Zaire? Will it be adaptable in post-Abacha Nigeria? That circumstances may

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146 Katongole and Rice, *Reconciling All Things*, 75-94.
150 Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness*, 23ff.
make such a proceeding expedient is not to be denied, but we must not shy away from some questions: would it be just? And, more important, how does it implicate both the present and the future.\textsuperscript{151}

The problem Soyinka sees in the TRC theology is that it is implausible to talk about true reconciliation without due reparation, forgiveness, and justice. It is a major defect of truth commissions in different places where it has been practiced. Because truth is complex and varies in degrees, it is sometimes difficult to hold to a particular version of truth that is told. The tendency is always there for the truth telling process to concentrate on the perpetrators in hope that the truth telling will heal the victim-survivors at the neglect of the victims.\textsuperscript{152}

When people have not paid for their offences, justice has not taken place. If possible at all, such reconciliation will be deficient – in favour of the perpetrator. In reality, it is improbable that reparations may be applicable in a reconciliation process at an equal level to the offence committed. How can those who perpetrated diverse levels of vandalism, civil unrests, killings and destruction of properties at different times in northern Nigeria pay dearly for their offences at a commensurate level? If they are asked to repay, in cases of those killed, can only one life be equivalent to two or three people killed by one person? These are the technical difficulties attached to this view. What the theology of reconciliation in the TRC did is to work on victims’ civil and human rights. The focus is to bring a change in relationship and attitude so that it can lead to healing, restoration, and forgiveness.

Evidently, Soyinka worries that no mass reparation followed the TRC and contends that this example cannot be followed by others. C. Villa-Vicencio dispels the notion that the TRC did not result in a process of reconciliation. For Villa-Vicencio, an authentic reconciliation occurs in a society, when it is no longer cramped by past events and the people can face a new future together. He declares that, “a noisy and informed debate about the complicity and crimes of the apartheid era is necessary, even if uncomfortable.”\textsuperscript{153} Hence, the context of that debate or ‘noise’ about the exact situation starts healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. Reconciliation is further aided by the fact that forgiveness among African peoples is communal – received from a group rather than a person.\textsuperscript{154} The above clearly

\textsuperscript{151} Soyinka, The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness, 23-24, 19.
\textsuperscript{153} Gathogo, “Reconciliation Paradigm in the Post Colonial Africa:, ” 77, citing C. Villa-Vicencio, Walk with Us and Listen: Political Reconciliation in Africa (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2009), 171.
\textsuperscript{154} This is where theology of reconciliation intersects the communitarian view of the African life. See Michael Battle, “A Theology of Community: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu” Interpretation (April 2000):173-181.
indicates that the phenomenon of peace and reconciliation is very complex. As Tutu affirms in his introduction to *Walk with Us and Listen*:

> Peace building is not an easy process [as Soyinka seems to imply!]. No single intervention by the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, or the African Union is enough to give Africans the cherished prize of peace and relative prosperity. The book fits into the philosophy that underlies the international Council of Elders that it is my privilege to chair. It poses vital questions concerning the need for the Court and local initiatives for justice and peace to find common ground. The international community can help bring peace to situations such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Indeed, the United Nations, the African Union, and neighbouring countries have often been far too reluctant to confront tyrants, dictators, and warmongers in such countries. Where dictators, criminals, and perpetrators fail to respond to reason, the international community needs to pressure them to do so, and where necessary they need to face the International Criminal Court’s full wrath…Where offenders are not prepared to acknowledge past wrongs, as is the case with President Robert Mugabe, they need to be removed from office. They cannot have it both ways.\(^{155}\)

Another predicament of this paradigm is the presupposition that a pastoral solution may be effective in the face of socio-political, racial, economic, and historical problems. The cultural and religious diversities cannot be left out in this regard.\(^{156}\)

Reconciliation as a Christological paradigm must therefore be careful of negative political influence in Nigeria. I cited some occasions in Chapter Two when Commissions of Inquiry were set up to find out the truth in different conflict situations but these Commissions and their reports were crippled by a combined forces of politics, nepotism, and tribalism. The difficulties emanating from an appropriation of Jesus as an exemplar of reconciliation confirm Jane Muguku’s incisive description of reconciliation in Africa as “a very complex and difficult undertaking…[and that]. It can only be an attempt to explore some possibilities and to raise some questions as a contribution to the questions that others are also asking.”\(^{157}\)

How will the Nigerian church attain this task in spite of a long history of prejudice, violence, and crisis with Islamic fundamentalism and government nonchalant attitude towards the struggles of the church? In translating God’s vision of peace to a practical expression in the nation, the church must realise that God has established her as the locus of


\(^{156}\) Gathogo, “Reconciliation Paradigm in the Post Colonial Africa;” 88.

His reconciliation to the world. This self-awareness needs to be restated by the leadership of the church in its quest to fashion a new, acceptable way of mission expression that takes cognisance of the situation of the nation. This is what Paul meant when he states that God has committed the ministry of reconciliation to us (2 Cor. 5:18). It is in an extension of the apostolic ministry that the church considers herself the carrier of the same message delivered to and interpreted by the apostles. The fruits of reconciliation through Christ’s death are the restoration of the ruptured relationship and peace (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:1).

The reconciliation paradigm must be inclusive. It needs to begin with the Nigerian church’s advocating the need for the social transformation that addresses the cardinal sources of frequent disruption of peaceful atmosphere in the nation. These are religious issues, political, and economic policies. All other factors generate from the above. The bottom line is that the church must acknowledge that there are fundamental problems in the nation and the presence and growth of the church must provide mission responsibility. Nigerian church can construe her participation in the process of restoring peace as a sure and new way of doing mission in the twenty-first century.

The quest for reconciliation will become easier when it is conceived as a movement or a journey of a tripartite partnership. God is involved as the initiator of reconciliation. Jesus is present in that journey as the reconciler and humankind is involved as the recipient of reconciliation. This is what Paul conveys in his discourses on reconciliation. The hermeneutical analysis of the above must be considered vis-à-vis the context of the Nigerian Christianity.

The question here now is, what will the Nigerian situation look like when the church succeeds not only in portraying Jesus as the reconciler but in showing a Jesus-like manner of approaching reconciliation? This model will particularly help the church to emphasise what Jesus Christ has done by applying it to the Nigerian situation.

God brought reconciliation as a gift to humankind. The ‘presence of God in Christ’ became a changing vision of reconciliation. The unique status of reconciliation brought special gifts to the church. This status bestows upon the church the status of an ambassador of reconciliation. The nature of reconciliation confronts, shapes, and transforms the church from the old life into new so that reconciliation is made possible.\textsuperscript{158} The reality of this new life

\textsuperscript{158} Katongole and Rice, \textit{Reconciling All Things}, 47-49.
cannot be realised apart from human response to the reconciled work of Christ.

Reconciliation cannot be separated from the qualifying status of a new life. This new life functions on the basis of the life of Jesus Christ in whom the work of reconciliation is accomplished. The peace of Jesus Christ is the core of the reconciled life. The emerging social realities in Nigeria and other parts of Africa point to one crucial fact: the mission of the church in the world goes beyond conversion. To detach the church from these realities is to produce the “gospel of evacuation” – a gospel isolated from the events in its social and historical contexts. The church may well create a peaceful atmosphere by exploring the implications of the mission of the Reconciler for social and all-round transformation. When this is done the identity of Jesus who died for humanity to bring them back to God and to identify with Nigerian people corporately will be revealed. This is potentially powerful to fulfil the goal of social transformation and conversion.

5.3 Conclusion

An exploration of some aspects of Christology that may contribute to peace and mutuality in Nigeria integrates two major ideas underlying the Christological paradigms: the inauguration and continual propagation of the Reign of God, and reconciliation as a particular expression of this. In fact, the precise understanding of who Jesus Christ is offers a window of opportunity for the church in Nigeria to engage the nation’s situation, especially in its quest for peace and mutuality. If all appropriate tools are obtained in right sequence and proportion, the Nigerian situations will surely change with time.

I have proposed in this chapter two major Christological paradigms that the church in Nigeria can employ for the sake of social transformation. I have also submitted that engaging the immediate context of Christian faith remains the call of the church in every age. Nigerian Christians should obtain these Christological paradigms intentionally not to impose themselves in the public space but by exploring various opportunities in all spheres of the Nigerian nation.

The practicality of the proposed Christological paradigms may involve a new expression of discipleship for people who are well bred with Christo-praxis orientation in

social, political, and economic settings. And who are ready to apply an understanding of who Jesus is today to the multifaceted challenges of the Nigerian nation. The results will be obvious in the long run. First, it will help to ‘rescue’ theology from the academy and turn it into a model that will bridge the gap between theological reflection in the academy and a daily experience of Nigerians. Second, it will produce a booming Christianity with right social concerns and actions. James Will captures the tone of that Christianity with proper social concern when stating that

Nothing less than a full Christology of peace will suffice. That is, the issues that the church has sought to clarify through its faith in Jesus as the Christ must provide a paradigm for our interpretation of the Christian meaning of peace. Our understanding of peace must interpret, and our work for peace must express, how our humanity may ultimately be united with God’s eternal wisdom and purpose. My conviction is that only a fully Trinitarian theology is sufficient for attempting to articulate what Christians mean by either social or gospel as we work for peace. A fully Trinitarian Christology illumines our ethical struggle for peace in a peaceless world as the gracious gift of participation in the power and pathos of participation of the Trinitarian life of our creator and Redeemer. Since many Christians become disillusioned because of a much simpler understanding of the possibility of peace, the articulation of such a Christology is essential to sustain the peace work and witness...\(^{160}\)

This is the way that the Church enriched by some aspects of Christology in Nigeria can contribute to the nation’s situation in efforts towards peace-making and peace-building. It is good to note that expressions of Christology become sensitive, particularly in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society like Nigeria. Christology must be obtained discretely with some specificity in certain ways. The current Christological presuppositions and their expressions in Nigerian Christianity need to be adjusted to fit into the context of models to actualise peace and mutuality. In the next chapter, I will concentrate on how the proposed Christological paradigms can champion the needed encounter for peace, coexistence, and mutuality.

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