CHAPTER SIX

TOWARD A TRANSFORMING MISSION OF PEACE, COEXISTENCE, AND MUTUALITY IN NIGERIAN CHRISTIANITY

6.0 Introduction

The centrality of my argument in this chapter is that the Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality that I developed in Chapter Five can be expressed, articulated, and experienced in the Nigerian nation as prophetic dialogue and prophetic Christology. This proposition will corroborate an urgent need for a paradigm shift in transposing Nigerian Christianity from the level of Christology to Christo-praxis – making use of the epistemological Christology to consolidate on the existing understanding of Jesus among Nigerians as a model for contributing to the progression of Nigeria in its search for solutions to its many problems.

The relevance of the above depends on its prolegomenon and the attitude of its participants. If the proponents of a theological framework handle it with an in-depth caution in relation to its context, the result will be positive. The theological ideas cannot remain just an academic exercise. They must be translated into moulds and categories that resonate with the Bible so that they are easily understood by non-theologically trained Christians at the level of praxis.

If Jesus Christ is articulated as God Incarnate and the Creator of a new humanity, and an exemplar of reconciliation, it cannot but result in an ‘encounter’ in the Nigerian nation.¹ This chapter is divided to three parts. In the first part, I will proceed by enunciating two ways in which the Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality can be articulated: prophetic dialogue and prophetic Christology. I will then discuss useful contributions that may result from the Christians’ engagement with the nation in the search for mutuality and

¹ The word ‘encounter’ in a dictionary meaning has it as ‘a meeting, especially one that happens by chance.’ See, www.http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/encounter. This conventional or dictionary meaning is not implied when the word is used among the Christians in Nigeria. It is used with an understanding of an event that leads to a breakthrough or a lasting positive impact.
peaceful coexistence via Christological paradigms in the second part. The third section explores some missiological import in the process of applying the Christological paradigms proposed in this study. My conversation will move between the Reign of God and reconciliation and vice versa in different sections of this chapter.

6.1 Prophetic Dialogue

I will argue in this section that one of the best ways to comprehend and express the proposed Christological paradigms in the praxis level is through prophetic dialogue. I will explore how theology and practice of mission as prophecy and mission as dialogue can be instrumental in enunciating Christological paradigms and in what way that this mission concept may be foundational for mission of peace and mutuality in Nigerian Christianity.

In the previous Chapter I have already argued that Jesus Christ is the bearer of the vision and mission of the Reign of God and reconciliation to the world. The above understanding of Jesus can be expressed vividly in a special way in the form of mission as prophecy and mission as dialogue – prophetic dialogue within the church’s context. Prophetic dialogue is a theology and practice of Christian mission which demonstrates how the life of Jesus, His mission, and ministry should be imbibed in the church’s interaction with her immediate community.

Prophetic dialogue grows out of a particular theological understanding and practice of Christian mission in the twenty-first century. The concept of prophetic dialogue became famous with the writings of Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder who advanced this perception in relation to the complex idea of mission and the participation of the church in different contexts. They proposed that a synthetic term which merges the three theologies of mission that developed in the last half of the twentieth century is prophetic dialogue. These theological understandings of mission are: “1) mission as participation in the mission of the

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Triune God (Missio Dei), 2) mission as liberating service of the Reign of God, and 3) mission as proclamation of Jesus Christ as universal savior.”

The exponents of prophetic dialogue advocate that the expression ‘prophetic dialogue’ may be considered as the “overarching umbrella for an understanding of the various elements in the practice of mission – witness and proclamation; liturgy, prayer, and contemplation; justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; interreligious dialogue; inculturation; and reconciliation.”

It is vital to state that prophetic dialogue as a theology of mission was proposed by the Catholic Society of the Divine Word Missionaries congregation (SVD) during its Tenth General Chapter in 2000 as how they would love to understand and practice mission in the 21st century. However, an application of prophetic dialogue as a mission theology transcends a denominational boundary. It is a gift to any mission minded church anywhere that is passionate to identify with God’s current acts in the world. I will adopt Bevans and Schroeder’s interpretation of mission as prophetic dialogue to demonstrate how to articulate the Christological paradigms in Nigerian’s search for peace. In fact, Gerard Hall is right in suggesting that whatever practical issue one is trying to discuss, be it liberation, justice or reconciliation, “the category of “prophetic dialogue” is helpful for understanding and evaluating the theological task.”

Engaging mission from a Christological foundation in the form of prophetic dialogue may be useful in Nigerian Christianity, especially in the quest for mutuality, based on the facts of the complex state of its multi-religious, multi-culture and diversified social context.

Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder developed this mission concept further in ways different from the way it was used when it first emerged. Each of the elements covered in the term prophetic dialogue should be understood and practiced as prophecy and as dialogue to aid the task of mission beyond conversation to spreading the vision of the Reign of God and social transformation. Both the prophetic and dialogical nature of mission is rooted in God’s relationship with and acts in the world. Prophets always perform unique responsibilities by their nature and calling. The prophets speak forth and act under the influence of the Spirit who is also described as the spirit of prophecy (cf. 2 Pet. 1:21; Rev. 19:10). One attribute of prophecy is listening. A prophet first listens to God and he listens to the people in the process

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4 Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 2.
5 Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 2.
of disseminating the message. The message might come in words or deeds. The prophetic message equally has dialogical implications. Dialogue in this sense implies an exchange, a learning that transpires between God and the church as God’s agent on earth, and the transportation of the missionary act between the church in the form of “respect, openness, willingness to learn, attentiveness, vulnerability, hospitality, humility, and frankness”7 and the world. This shows that dialogue and mission are intertwined in practice.

Prophetic dialogue as a mission theology is useful here because of its holistic approach and its inclusiveness. It combines different aspects of Christian mission to stimulate the role of the church in the world. Prophetic dialogue synthesizes how the Christian church can function effectively in the face of the existing religious plurality and multi-culturality. However, it is not the only theological expression that was used in examining mission in today’s world. Other theological expressions of mission deserve to be mentioned briefly.

David Bosch, a well-known South African missiologist, stresses the need for a paradigm shift in missiology which will result in new ways of thinking about mission and creative manners of missionary engagement. To achieve this purpose Bosch develops thirteen “elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm.”8 For Bosch these elements must influence the understanding and practice of mission in the modern era. These paradigms represent a new framework for the understanding and practice of mission and the direction that mission must proceed. Similarly, Robert Schreiter advocates a theological perception he describes as “mission from the ground up.”9 The theological perception of mission will affect how people do it. Therefore, mission must be understood as grounded in the Trinitarian God-act in the world beginning with creation to incarnation and to the sending of the Spirit. He posits that “mission from the ground up” must wrestle with four major themes in the face of challenges threatening different human contexts. The reality of secularity, the conditions of poverty, protracted warfare, religiously motivated crises, and economic implications of globalization and many more are clear invitations to the church to do mission as God’s

7 Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 29.
response to the human situations. This concept entails “focusing our attention in such a way as to be able to see God’s movements in the world” so that we can “hope to participate in God’s reconciling the world.”

The above clarifies my argument: a conceivable, relevant, and contemporary mission must be done contextually. The circumstances of the people must determine the mission approach. Two examples are appropriate to illustrate Schreiter’s scheme. Firstly, it is commonly admitted today that secularity has become a conspicuous challenge to Christian faith. In a secular state, mission needs to be in the form of cultivating ‘small, disciplined communities that have vigour to serve as leaven in the larger society.’ Secondly, in a situation affected by protracted crises or war, carrying out mission must ‘include skills in peace building and reconciliation, alongside well-established skills in education, medicine, and agronomy.’ The keys to performing mission in this manner consist in an awareness of the situation, determining a corresponding mission response, and the mode in which the response might take. Schreiter’s submission agrees with the focus of this study.

Christian mission will fulfil its goal of transforming the society when the church sees herself as a partner or participator with God. This awareness will lead the church to look beyond herself to discovering what God is doing in the world and consider how to actively take part in it. There are commonalities in Bosch’s and Schreiter’s propositions. They are in agreement on seeing mission as God’s initiative and how it can be practiced in diverse human contexts. The reflections of these missiologists also point to the fact that any mission element selected for appropriation in modern times needs to imitate missio Dei. As Bosch warned, in discussing a specific element, “the emphasis throughout should therefore be on the wholeness and individuality of the paradigm, rather than on its separated ingredients.” Hence, missio Dei serves as the whole from which every individual mission element must take its point of departure. It is possible therefore, to say that the ideas propounded by Bosch and Schreiter are not different from prophetic dialogue except that the categorisations and methodologies each of these missiologists has advanced for doing mission are different.

13 Bosch, Transforming Mission, 368. Although Bosch outlined a vast categorization he is very modest by stating on page 377 that, his categorization is not exhaustive rather they are complementary and interrelated so that one element cannot be isolated from other elements.
To return to prophetic dialogue, Bevans and Schroeder have argued brilliantly in their *Constants in Context* – that mission is constantly faithful to six constants: Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, soteriology, anthropology and dialogue with culture.\(^\text{14}\) By this they meant that all these elements are always present for mission to reflect upon and engage in every context.

\section*{6.1.1 Elements of Mission as Prophetic Dialogue in Nigerian Christianity}

In the remaining part of this section I will offer a reflection upon how mission can be approached as prophecy and as dialogue with particular reference to Christology, as seen in the paradigms developed in the previous chapter. My proposition is that the Christological paradigms developed in this thesis can be appropriated in a manner that translates to prophetic dialogue in outcome. It is not the actual proposition that can lead to an encounter with the government, culture and other religious views in Nigeria but the manner in which it is carried out. I will select two elements from six elements of mission – witness and proclamation; liturgy, prayer, and contemplation; justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; interreligious dialogue; inculturation; and reconciliation – to reflect upon how Christological paradigms can be expressed to aid social transformation especially in the quest for peace and mutuality in Nigeria. I will show how these elements connect to other elements of mission and prophetic dialogue, their effects, and shortfalls in Nigeria.

These elements are witnessing and proclamation. They have been selected because they are often emphasised among Nigerian Evangelical and Pentecostal churches as the basic expressions of Christian mission. Their usage among these churches is often in the context of conversion. Hence, witnessing reveals God’s mind in a given situation and proclamation invites the people to respond to the situation so that in the end mission becomes prophetic and dialogical. All these elements are intertwined.\(^\text{15}\) But witnessing and proclamation cannot be limited to the scope of conversion in the mission circles and in Nigerian Christianity again. My argument is that witnessing and proclamation encapsulate the basic expressions of mission in Nigeria by which Christological paradigms can be conveyed today.

\(^{14}\) See Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*.

Witnessing as a prophetic stance is first and foremost characterised by openness and listening. It is an openness to the missionary God to discern His path in the world. Witnessing is also about listening to the immediate situation to know how to be involved in God’s mission. The church is the community called to witness to God’s gracious acts in various facets of human community and existence. The witness of the church begins internally as a people of faith through worship and communion.\(^\text{16}\) It extends externally through individual witnessing, corporate and institutional witnessing. Witnessing is a crucial theme in Nigerian Christianity. The individual Christians are always encouraged to engage in personal witness in the form of sharing their faith and proclamation as part of their daily activities. It is very common to find people distributing tracts on the streets, witnessing to the Reign of God in salvation. The church’s institutional witness is the greatest legacy of the missionaries in Nigerian Christianity. Most hospitals, schools, orphanages and other social cum mission channels established by the missionaries to serve the people have been upgraded. These were mission-oriented establishments by foreign missionaries. One example is the university education which churches now invest in to support government initiatives in the education sector. Private universities are so common in Nigeria today that virtually every denomination now has one. Some already have two whilst others are planning for more.\(^\text{17}\) Ecumenical witness is also growing due to the hostility and threats posed by the Islamic fundamentalists in different parts of the country. The impact of Christian witness especially as it should affect interreligious relations and dialogue have been quasi-effective as I already pointed out in Chapter Two.

The many existing turbulences among nations (Nigeria inclusive) are caused by the complex state of social, political, economic and also environmental injustice. All these have resulted in the marginality and the inequality of peoples in different places and have subjected so many people to slavery and poverty. It seems to be a contradiction that although justice is an integral part of the gospel which embodies the Reign of God and reconciliation, the proclamation is growing and injustice of various forms seems unabated. This situation

\(^{16}\) Bevans and Schroeder identified four forms of witness: the individual Christian witness, witness of the community of faith, the church’s institutional witness, and the common witness. See Bevans and Schroeder *Prophetic Dialogue*, 65. I will look briefly into how each of these kinds of witness play out in Nigerian Christianity.

\(^{17}\) The missionary education focused on evangelism. As pointed out in Chapter Two, many people from Islam and ATRs got converted to Christianity through educational witnessing. However, the churches’ investment in the university education is perceived as more of an economic venture than a witnessing tool by many Nigerians today. Some of the private universities charge between S 7,000 – 15,000 per annum depending on the course of study. It becomes difficult for a common citizen and even members of these churches whose tithes and offerings fund these schools to attend because of the exorbitant fees.
demands the church’s witness to justice and peace. “Commitment to the poor and marginalised of the world takes shape in the first place as the church acts as a voice for the victims of injustice on the one hand and a goad to the consciences of the rich on the other.”18

The witnessing role of the church here is to stand as a voice for moral purity, political conscience, and economic revitalisation so that the poor and the marginalised would be duly protected from the cartel of oppression and degradation of humanity and creation. It is in this mission of advocacy and solidarity that the heart of the mission of God in the world can penetrate the heart of humanity. So much still needs to be done in this aspect in Nigeria. The church is the community of God’s justice. She needs to speak out with one voice to the situation of the nation. It will both enhance the Reign of God and foster reconciliation by her pursuit of justice. When justice is restored, there will be peace and mutuality.

The witness of the church needs to be felt also with regard to inculturation. It is a missiological imperative today that in proclamation one must ensure that the gospel interacts with the culture in which it is proclaimed and produces results that do not distort the core of the gospel. This dialogue between the gospel and the culture must shape a cultural response so that the gospel can be communicated with an appropriate cultural expression. However, globalisation plus the multi-culturalism and multi-religious status of the African nations make this task difficult. The influx of Euro-American culture on the economy and politics is potentially driving the world towards homogeneity in which the pattern of communicating the gospel will remain foreign.

The solution, for Aylward Shorter, is in the “new evangelization” which promotes a culturally polycentric church in Africa – where true plurality of reception and expression of Christian faith exist.19 Mission succeeds when the gospel successfully penetrates the lives of its recipients, and that can only happen through proper cultural engagement. There are indications that inculturation is aiding the expansion of Christianity in Nigeria and Africa in general. Much of the growth that has been experienced in Nigeria today, as I already indicated in Chapter Two, are indicatives of how interactive the gospel has been with the culture and the situation of Nigerian people. In the academy this interaction can be seen in the various christological models which attempt to locate certain images of Jesus within the Nigerian worldview and culture and shape a cultural response. In the church or ministry level

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interaction can be seen in the inculturation in local theologies and Christologies and the people’s response to the mission of Jesus in their own cultural forms and categories.

The witness of the Nigerian church has also been felt in interreligious dialogue. The globalised and multi-religious character of Nigeria makes interreligious dialogue an imperative in the twenty-first century. There are indications that different kinds of dialogue are being practised in Nigeria. The greatest form is dialogue of life. There are diverse ways in which Christians, Muslims and traditional religionists interact on a daily basis. This includes living together in the same community, working together for the common good of the nation in civil service, engaging in business transactions together, sports, and political activities in the nation. The main setback of interacting this way became prominent in the early 1990s, when Christians who lived very close to Muslims in some parts of northern Nigeria became the first targets in events of violence. This led to resettlements where Christians began to live separately from Muslims.

Furthermore, there are avenues through which dialogue of social action is being carried out. This sometimes takes the form of collective projects or campaigns. Nigeria Interreligious Council (NIREC) has engaged in a series of mobilisation for peaceful elections in Nigeria. NIREC also established an arm, Nigerian Inter-faith Action Association Against Malaria (NIFAAM), to collaborate with other relevant agencies in the fight against malaria and other diseases. This organisation similarly has an inter-faith committee on HIV/AIDS. All these efforts are based upon the assumption that religious communities will be able to contribute to the issues and concerns of the nation.

Dialogue of theological exchange was also practised by Christian and Muslim scholars and some non-governmental organisations. They always organise it around critical issues that affect social and religious interaction. Most of the known occasions of dialogue of theological exchange have been around Shari’a law and its implementation. It is extremely difficult to engage in dialogue of religious experience in Nigeria. In fact, there are not known records or instances of this type of dialogue most probably because of the religious temperature and attitude of both Christians and Muslims. However, it is not uncommon for NIREC and government to enjoin Christians and Muslims to pray occasionally for the peace of the nation in their respective worship centres.

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However, the response in the forms of intolerance, prejudices and an unabashed character displayed by most Muslims and counter reactions from Christians have made the practicality of interreligious dialogue ineffective and daunting at various levels of the Nigerian nation. The difficulties associated with interreligious dialogue have always been sources of tension between dialogue and the motif of conversion in mission. However, the purpose of dialogue is neither to convert the dialogue partner nor to impose one’s faith conviction on the other. These challenges are the reasons the document Proclamation and Dialogue states that dialogue is not a matter of being successful but of being faithful to the Gospel.\textsuperscript{21}

One of the cardinal convictions upon which Christian mission operates is the motif of reconciliation. Christian mission witnesses to and proclaims the need for reconciliation between God and humankind and between a person and other fellow humans. This is the one area in which the Nigerian church needs to be more proactive. The prophetic mission of the church should be directed at reconciling people at variance. Bevans and Schroeder observe that the place of reconciliation is conspicuous in the world today in view of multiple challenges that confront different nations:

> In a world of increasing violence, tension between religions, terrorist actions and continuous threat, globalization and displacement of peoples, the church’s witness to and proclamation of the possibility of reconciliation may constitute a new way of conceiving the content of the church’s missionary task.\textsuperscript{22}

Reconciliation brings hope for the hopeless and economically deprived, healing for the hurt and aggrieved, restoration against the violence of power. The path to this is the church’s development of proper identification with the oppressed and victims of injustices of various forms, honesty and compassionate extension of the redemptive love of God in Jesus Christ to them.

The prophetic ministry is obligatory today because of the corruption in the religious disposition and the manner that religion has been used as an instrument for vilification and exploitation in the political space. This has continued to breed inequalities in economic distribution and social unrest resulting in a lack of peaceful coexistence in the social arena. Stephen Bevans and Cathy Ross note concerning the essence of prophecy:

\textsuperscript{21} Many Roman Catholic magisterial documents such as Redemptoris Missio, Gaudium et Spes and Dialogue and Proclamation consider dialogue as an integral part of mission.

\textsuperscript{22} Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 70.
The biblical message of God offering a covenant to Israel, castigating them for their unfaithfulness and assuring them of an everlasting love despite their sins, of offering hope in the depth of exile, of the proclamation and witness to the reign of God, of the good news of Jesus’ lordship and of the reconciling work of the cross is the essence of prophecy. \(^{23}\)

The core of prophetic dialogue is the engaging of others’ views and liberating the processes and systems that constitute oppression in human society. In Nigeria, a theology that will effect reconciliation today and be instrumental in the restoration of a peaceful social and religious space has to be mindful of an appropriate manner of engaging other worldviews in the process of theologizing. This will account for the success or failure of such theological work in an attempt to permeate Nigerian religious and political space.

This concern has continued to resurface in the writings of Nigerian theologians. In this regard two streams of thought can be recognised. There are those who believe that in a bid to restore peace and harmony in Nigeria the focus should be on the themes related to interreligious dialogue. Such writers emphasise the importance of tolerance, coexistence, trust, respect, and constant openness to the religious views of the other. \(^{24}\) All of these writers insist that interreligious dialogue is potentially powerful to serve as a panacea for national development in Nigeria if these cardinal elements could be imbibed. The second category of Nigerian writers are those who are well convinced that if properly positioned with the relevant theology and orthopraxis, Christianity can champion social-political and economic transformation. These scholars are not unaware of the intricacies of religious associations in Nigeria but they are strongly persuaded that the message of Christianity is essentially relevant for every human context. \(^{25}\) Since Christianity has made useful contributions from the beginning of Nigeria’s nationhood it can yet be instrumental in the making of an equitable, just and peaceful Nigeria. What is needed is to develop a right Christian ethic that focuses on

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how Christians can live their profession in different spheres of the nation’s life. The current study belongs to this second category.

One crucial fact that connects the various proposals of the above writers is that the task of building a new Nigeria can be approached holistically and dialectically making an allowance for various stakeholders in the nation. This effort is best described again as prophetic dialogue. Peace and mutuality can be attained when the ideals of reconciliation and the Reign of God are allowed to reverberate in conversation with the other. According to Joe Kapolyo,

If this prophetic dialogue is to be truly effective, transformative and life-changing, enabling the goal of mission to be realized, it needs to engage the human spirit both individual and corporate at its most profound level located in the deep structures of culture involving worldviews, beliefs and values.26

I cannot agree less with Kapolyo on the importance of allowing mission as dialogue to interact with different levels of a nation’s life. When witness and proclamation are practised in Nigeria as reflective mission elements with the consciousness of their dialogical and prophetic nature they will translate Nigerian Christianity to a new era of mission marked with reconciliation, justice advocacy, proclamation of the Reign of God in the society. These elements will create a space for the gospel to further inhabit public space. “Nevertheless, proclamation needs always to be done dialogically, taking account of the situation of those to whom the good news is addressed.”27 The Christological paradigms can best address those multiple challenges of Nigeria through an attitude of prophetic dialogue.

However, the ongoing events in Nigeria at this moment clearly indicate low success rate that the church is having in what I have described above as performing mission as prophecy and engaging mission as dialogue. What I mean by this is that the prophetic dialogue has yet to engage the Nigerian nation fully especially from the perspective of the six elements of mission. This may be a dissenting view as some may argue that the church in Nigeria has given attention to inculturation of the gospel in a manner that has resulted in so much economic liberation of the church. Despite the opulence of the church, there is no proper prophetic attitude towards the political power and authority in ways commensurate to the heart of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. That is why it has become an imperative to

27 Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 66.
öffer an impetus on how the Nigerian church can carry out the mission to which God has called her. The Christological paradigms proposed in this study are potentially powerful if carried out as prophetic dialogue, and can offer the likelihood of advancing the course for promoting peace and mutuality.

6.1.2 Practical Opportunities for the Practice of Prophetic Dialogue in View of the Nigerian Crises Situations

There are huge opportunities to practice different elements of prophetic dialogue such as witness, reconciliation, proclamation, and dialogue among others as decisive forms of missionary engagement today through the ecumenical collaboration in Nigeria. The instances of religiously motivated violence driven by perennial issues such as the Shari’a laws implementation, economic inequality, ethnic bigotry, and religious representation in politics, and intolerance to mention but a few, may here be considered as occasions for the practice of prophetic dialogue. This may be looked at in three ways, the pre-crisis, during the crisis, and the post-crisis church’s witness and proclamation that will translate the practicalities of mission in Nigerian Christianity today into the form of prophecy and in the form of dialogue.

First, the pre-crisis witness, proclamation, and dialogue activities should be directed at the nation with the view to witness to the ideals of the Reign of God. These are suggested in the form of practices that uphold a peaceful atmosphere by the citizens, and proclaim the demands of justice at all levels of governance. Most of what needs to be done can be put in place before the crisis period so that the church is creating a level playing field for the various religious and worldviews in the nation. This method is preventive. Second, during the period of crisis, there is another dimension to the role that the church can engage in. These functions include dialoguing with the key players and stakeholders on how to resolve the issue of contention amicably. The church’s response in times of crisis may include an emphasis on the ideal Christian disposition to a crisis situation, especially in the form of non-violent response to the hostility. This may include speaking the truth about the cause of the crisis and inviting the parties involved to see beyond individual interests but to a collective goal of attaining mutuality in the nation. It is evident in some of the case studies that I presented in Chapter

28 The issues such as Shari’a laws, religious representation in politics, intolerance and others have earlier been pointed out in Chapter Two as some of the factors impacting upon the dynamics of religious interaction in Nigeria. I have singled out some of them here in an attempt to illustrate how some elements of prophetic dialogue may be carried out in practical terms.
Two, the Kaduna State crises for instance, that the responses of Christians at some points did escalate the crises and increased the numbers of casualties and damages to personal and government property.

The third role of the church in the form of prophetic dialogue is what can be called the response of the ecumenical body following a period of crisis. Here, the dialogue of the church with the warring parties and the government can be indicative of the reconciliation of the opposites. Through this the proclamation of forgiveness despite the hurts and injuries will be immediately relevant for the Nigerian church. In order to engage in this form of dialogue effectively, Nigerian ecumenism needs to have foresight, be determined, and be focused. It needs to be more proactive rather than reactive. But unfortunately, this aspect has not come to the limelight because Nigerian ecumenism is also entangled in certain issues that I will point out later in this chapter. Prophetic dialogue, based on its understanding of Christology, in its interaction with the government can perhaps open the government to an efficient dialogue with the Muslim authorities and other policy makers in Nigeria.

An appropriation of the Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality proposed in this study can also lead to another view on how to advance the missionary role of the church in the society. This idea suggests that the church must draw more insight from the person of Jesus Christ and how His meaning and mission can aid the transformation of the contemporary Nigeria situation. What I am bringing up is prophetic Christology. It may be considered as the other side of the same coin with prophetic dialogue. Prophetic Christology and prophetic dialogue can function simultaneously as channels for articulating Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality. That is what I will examine in the next section.

6.2 Prophetic Christology

My argument in this section is that prophetic Christology offers a cutting edge for articulating Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality. I will show how prophetic Christology relates to the motif of mission as evident in the Reign of God and reconciliation, and how peace and mutuality can be attained through prophetic Christology.

What is a prophetic Christology? I will use the notion of prophetic Christology to enunciate the prophetic character of Jesus’ life as a corollary for the church’s missionary
activities in the nation. A prophetic Christology is every action of the church which revolves around the Christ-event as the basis for the prophetic ministry of the church in the public space. Prophetic Christology takes cognisance of and draws from the message of the Reign of God that the life of Jesus Christ reflects. One of the three core interrelated functions of Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Bible is that of a prophet. A Christology that is prophetic in nature seeks possible ways of intervention and transformation in the life of the community where the church is located. A prophetic Christology is an invitation to partake in the Godhead through the redemptive and reconciliatory mission of Jesus Christ in the world and it is the empowerment of the Spirit. It is a unique summons to the church to participate in the mission of God in the world. William E. May corroborates the centrality of this summons from God to humanity in Christian faith.

The Christian faith is by no means a cerebral activity; rather, it is a way of life, a commitment to persons, a call to action, a challenge to become involved and risk one’s life. But is all this because it is first and foremost a movement rooted in, centred on and sustained in being by Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God?

The life of the church is supposed to be an extension of the life of the resurrected Christ. The participation of the church in Jesus’ mission and its proclamation in the world are indications of how much the church can draw from the person of Jesus Christ. There are clear indications in the gospels that Jesus Christ was identified as a prophet on various occasions (Mk 8:27, 28; Lk 9:19; Matt. 21:10, 46; Lk 7:39). Luke, however, paints a deep and vivid picture of the prophetic status of Jesus by linking Jesus to the messianic prophet (Lk 4:18-19). Whilst declaring His manifesto Jesus puts himself in Isaiah’s prophecy and considers himself as the one in whom that prophecy is fulfilled. Jesus even refers to himself as a prophet (Luke 4:24, John 4:44). The prophetic identity of Jesus has been variously described among scholars as being a social or political prophet, as a ‘Jewish eschatological’ prophet, as a ‘charismatic’ prophet and as a ‘feminist’ prophet. The motif of reconciliation in Jesus

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29 For a detailed discussion of these aspects of the functions of Jesus Christ see for instance, Robert Sherman, King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).
30 William E. May, Christ in Contemporary Thought (Dayton, Ohio: Pfaum Publisher, 1970), ix.
32 Each of these studies fits in appropriately in one aspect of Jesus’ life or ministry. Some of them are studies on the historical Jesus. Some studies portrayed Jesus as the Jewish eschatological prophet. See Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede trans W. Montgomery (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1956). Paul Winter, On the Trial of Jesus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1961). Other studies yet consider Jesus as Political Zealot. See S. G. F Brandon, Jesus and the Zealots
Christ and the establishment of the Reign of God encapsulates these aspects and even goes beyond them. The prophetic image of Jesus Christ has so much to offer the Nigerian church in carrying out a transforming mission that speaks truth to power and addresses the challenges of the nation.

Prophetic Christology can also be seen in a close connection to the various channels Jesus used to inaugurate the Reign of God among humanity. Jesus demonstrates his prophetic stance by intentional actions that addressed the specific needs within His own Jewish sociocultural, political, and religious world. His vision is to proclaim to His hearers that a new way of life that reflects the ethic of the coming God’s glorious Reign is necessary. True prophetic ministry that is socially relevant for today and as evident in Jesus’ life and mission must synergize the message and actions together. William R. Herzog II has emphasised the prophetic character of Jesus in relation to the praxis of the Reign of God.

In these emphases, Jesus was a prophet in the Deuteronomic tradition, a prophet who stood in a long line of prophets stretching back to the eighth century, blending his voice with those of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, even though he shared neither status nor their access to the institution of power.

However, Jesus assumed a role beyond that of a prophet. He stepped into the role of a broker of Yahweh’s justice and covenant favor. In this role, Jesus claimed that he was the mediator of God’s healing and saving power, evidenced by his own healings and exorcisms. 33

Jesus assumes the function of the prophet of reconciliation and the Reign of God through His life. Standing upon Christ’s prophetic character the church and every individual Christian has been invited to act as members of the Kingdom that serves as light and salt to the nations of the earth.

The purpose of prophetic Christology is to incarnate Christ and His action into the contemporary scene. Jesus Christ demonstrates prophetic action so as to establish peaceful

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coexistence between God and humanity. The prophetic action corrects, restores, reconciles and works to enhance harmony in human relationships. The need for peace and coexistence among persons occupies the core of Jesus’ ministry. His teachings and preaching, and engagement with various people that were considered outcasts by societal standards all demonstrate the synergy between prophecy and social actions. The Beatitudes, where Jesus, according to Joseph Grassi, gave “the keynote introduction providing a new interior basis for a meaningful life in contrast to the exterior things most people find so important,” is significant for all times. He taught a new set of spiritual laws that were to characterise a new community of God, bounded by a new covenant – the church. In the fifth Beatitude, Jesus taught: “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Peace is not only an attribute of God; the Old Testament says “The LORD is peace” (Judges 6:24).

Peace or *shalom* in the biblical context denotes wholeness in terms of serenity in religious, political, economic and relational dimensions. It also follows the image of change, finishing, or completeness, perfection and fullness. Peace encompasses all the blessings which proceed from God. Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees, his deportment with the Samaritan woman at the well, his association with Zacchaeus, his reaction to the woman with a haemorrhage and the Syro-Phoenician woman all portrayed Jesus as a man who not only preached peace across economic, cultural, religious and social levels but also engaged in conscious efforts to maintain it. Most of the people Jesus associated with were not converted to his ‘way’ immediately but they all saw something lacking in their former way of life through him.

The Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality can be expressed as prophetic Christology in Nigerian Christianity in a bid to lead the nation from an engagement to an encounter. In his book, *Towards the Prophetic Church*, John M. Hull identifies two main sources for the prophetic church. The first is the Old Testament prophets and their acts. The second is the person of Jesus Christ and his teaching. He decried the evident betrayal of that prophetic voice in Western tradition through imperialism. However, he advocates that the prophetic voice can be restored today through a theology of prophetic action where the

church adequately engages with its immediate context through participation in the person and mission of Jesus. Nicholas M. Healey also makes a similar claim when he calls for a practical-prophetic ecclesiology. A practical prophetic ecclesiology will primarily focus on diverse issues that challenge the praxis of faith and it will develop ‘a theodramatic horizon’ upon which the church can reflect and theologically respond to society.

6.2.1 The Focus of Prophetic Action in Nigerian Christianity

Nigerian Christianity today is driven by prophecy. For instance, the inception of the African Instituted Churches (AICs) in Nigeria marked the beginning of a radical shift in the mission and ministry of the Christian church. The historical study of J.Y.D. Peel of the Aladura Church (literally a praying church) which began among the Yorubas of western Nigeria reveals that it began as a revival movement that gave much emphasis to prayer, visions and ecstatic manifestation with prophecy. Another historical study by James Bertin Webster pointed to the fact that the churches of African origin place much emphasis on prophecy.

The prophetic movement at any rate was to impact the Evangelicals as well as laying a foundation for Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Allan Anderson, in stating the uniqueness of this movement among Africans and those based outside of African shores, said that, its emphasis is on prophecy and ecstatic manifestations such as speaking in tongues. He observes further that most of these churches were led by prophets. In spite of the strong emphasis of the Nigerian churches on prophecy, the prophetic orientation is one-sided. This partiality is to be located in the quest for a total wellbeing. The biblical futurology as a form of prophecy reveals situations. Whereas the biblical accounts of prophecy in both the Old and the New

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37 Hull, Towards the Prophetic Church, 209-234.
38 Nicholas M. Healey, Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical – Prophetic Ecclesiology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 52-76, 154-185. Healey used the term epic to mean something like speculative or fabrication as against theodramatic, which is real. He borrowed the idea from Urs von Balthasar – who used the language of dramatic interplay to elicit the relationship between God, world, and the church. This can either turn out as an epic or as a drama.
40 James Bertin Webster, The African Churches Among the Yoruba 1888-1922 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964). In Chapter Two, Webster treats in great details under the heading ‘Causes of the African Church Movement’ during mission movement in Nigeria, mentioned other concerns such as the need for indigenization of the church, issues of polygamy, racial dichotomy among the members of the clergy, exercising gift such as prophecy and others led to dissention of opinions. See pages 42-91. Cf. Deji Ayegboyin and S. Ademola Ishola, African Indigenous Churches (Lagos: Greater Heights Publications, 1997), 11.
Testaments combine both aspects of prophecy as an ‘ecstatic immediacy of God’ and ‘as a biblical futurology.’ The prophets revealed not only the events of the future but foretold the timely message for the community of God.

### 6.2.2 Glimpses of Hope for Expressing Prophetic Christology in Nigerian Christianity

The solution-oriented theology in Nigeria can yet accommodate prophetic Christology. This is because it revolves around the Christ-event and specific prophetic actions of Jesus. Prophetic Christology will permeate the life of the Nigerian church and individual Christians through appropriate and timely warning, rebuking, and encouraging. It will critique and transform the focus of the dominant grassroots theological presupposition. In this way the prophetic Christology will translate to fostering the Reign of God and maintaining reconciliation in the Nigerian society. Nigerian Christianity will become more prophetic in character.

Prophetic Christology will be functional when viewed from the perspective of the interplay between religion and politics and between church and state today. In Nigeria, there is a constant interaction between the church and political power. Some persons who occupy political and economic positions are members of the church. Those who are not Christians feel ‘compelled’ to identify with the church when vying for elective offices. They seek prayers and mobilisation from the church for election and re-election. There are also periodic occasions like national prayer day, and special thanksgiving sessions where the church leadership can serve the transforming mission of God. The church leadership can use these channels to speak truth to power in the political and economic terrain. This prophetic role of the church as a watch tower for the church and the society has been emphasised by Joe Aldred. “Every church and context needs its own organic intellectuals to speak prophetically inward and apologetically externally.”

This presupposes that the prophetic function of the church is of dual purpose; to purify the church itself and to sanitise the society.

The proposed Christological paradigms in this study can also result in prophetic Christology as a way of practising contemporary mission in Nigeria. This requires a brief elaboration. As stated earlier, the prophetic emphasis in Nigeria is typically directed at

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42 Hull, Towards the Prophetic Church, 1-6.
personal problems and challenges at the expense of the nation’s struggles. Similarly, I see this as an existing dichotomy in the perception of the many Nigerian Christians and the biblical traditions of prophecy. The biblical traditions of prophecy reveal that God addresses personal as well as national needs. In contrast to this worrisome situation, the Christological paradigms proposed in this study, will correct the imbalances between the two streams of prophecy mentioned above. Hence, prophetic Christology can therefore penetrate through the ‘solution Christology’ but will also go beyond it so as not to remain irrelevant with time because of the current critical phase of Nigerian Christianity. I will return to this challenge in the concluding part of this Thesis.

It is vital that the church occupy her rightful place in the Nigerian nation. This can happen when she restores her prophetic voice and character. The Nigerian church needs to constitute herself as an agent of social and political change over the events in the nation. The church will do this by developing purposefully a voice that enlightens, chastises, encourages, advocates, warns, and in the same manner, speaks of things to come. Prophetic Christology has a dual function that can lead to a ‘double transformation.’ One aspect is to the church and the other is to the society. “The prophetic spirit is regarded as the attitude of Spirit inspired criticism directed inwardly toward the community of which the prophet is part. The prophet seeks the liberation of all people both in and out of the Church.”

If prophetic Christology is to address certain situations in the nation there are certain criteria that will determine what the church is to be involved and in what ways the intervention should be. First, the core of Jesus’ life which is found in the message of the Reign of God and reconciliation will determine what and how the church should be involved in the life of the nation. If the message of the Reign of God becomes the core of Nigerian Christianity as observed in chapter five, the same message will dictate the normative standards for the church. Second, the church’s participation can also be determined on the basis of the felt needs. The church is part of the larger society. Members of the church are involved in the political and economic issues of the nation. They are aware of most of the issues leading to violence and lack of peace and mutuality in the nation. The insider’s knowledge of the church can further inform which direction is to be involved in the nation.

The Christological paradigms proposed in this study can provide new directions for Nigerian Christianity. The paradigms will orchestrate a new prophetic mission that imitates

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44 Hull, Towards the Prophetic Church, 3.
both the prophetic life and the mission of Jesus Christ. As a transforming mission, it will seek to emulate Jesus’ mission in three ways: “(1) by being led by the Spirit; (2) by inaugurating the reign of God; and (3) by conveying the good news of hope and salvation to all.” The good news of salvation also works for reconciliation in the process of its public transformation. The uniqueness of Christian prophetic mission helps the utilization of relevant Christology. Sebastian Kim, in his book *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate*, underscores three main perspectives on how the church can impact positively on the public domain. He argues that the church in the postmodern and pluralistic society needs to stand against any form of monopoly of political or economic power and promote free access to debate over all the issues of concern. The church also needs to engage in the public issues by developing a relevant theology “in order to play an appropriate and prophetic role in the wider society.” There should be a merger of hermeneutical theory and practice involving the scholars, church leaders and church congregations so that they can actively interact with major players in state affairs. This will lead to some solutions to the problems confronting the state. Although, Kim specifically talks about the formulation of a ‘public theology’ that takes care of the impending needs of the nation, such theology cannot be realised unless an appropriate consideration is drawn from relevant aspects of Christology.

If any theological concept will be relevant today for the social change it must conform to the criteria of justice, fairness and equity. These features of public theology also promote the physical manifestation of the Reign of God and reconciliation. They are equally prophetic because they regulate and critique the monopolistic tendencies that are evident in the manipulation of political, economic and religious powers. This prophetic Christology as a channel for witnessing to the Reign of God and reconciliation has to be focused on the public. According to Jürgen Moltmann, “As the theology of God’s kingdom, theology has to be public theology: public, critical and prophetic complaint to God – public, critical and prophetic hope in God. Its public character is constitutive for theology, for the kingdom of God’s sake.”

The concepts of prophetic dialogue and prophetic Christology are closely interwoven; one can hardly exist in isolation to the other. The exercise of the prophetic ministry of Jesus was never exclusive of other people participating in it consciously or otherwise. Jesus engaged the other in the Temple, in His miracles, teachings and preaching, parables, table fellowship, death and resurrection. All these events clearly indicate how Jesus was interacting and conversing with people different from Himself. VanThanh Nguyen states that “Prophetic Christology likewise underscores that Jesus the prophet constantly engaged in prophetic dialogue.”

Dialogue as applied to Jesus is an inclusion and engagement even with the opposition. Whilst prophetic dialogue exemplifies the ideal mission focus in the modern times and prophetic Christology operates on the identity derived from the life of Jesus, they can both fulfil the goal of creating a new direction for transformation in the 21st century Nigerian Christianity.

If appropriated in these ways, the Christological paradigms will be able to contribute to a Nigerian contextual theology. Stephen Bevans is right in arguing that the essence of contextual theology is fulfilled in prophecy. By its nature, contextual theology seeks to understand a particular situation in the history of humanity and constructs an adequate theology that responds to that context. Both contextual theology and prophetic dialogue interact with the human experiences in relation to Christian faith and tradition with openness, critique, and reconstruction. Theology is contextual when it reflects on and responds to a specific contextual situation.

Hence, the place of prophetic dialogue and by extension Christology, is not only to critique the obnoxious structures of hindrance in the nation’s life but also to initiate possible ways of promoting common social witness to peace and coexistence among religions and practitioners where possible. Amos Yong, a Pentecostal theologian is convinced that “in the interfaith encounter then, such a dialogical approach enables authentic exchange. Christians

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50 Amos Yong, “Christological Constants in Shifting Contexts: Jesus Christ, Prophetic Dialogue and the Mission Spiritus in a Pluralistic World” in Mission on the Road to Emmaus, eds. Bevans and Ross, 19-33. Amos Yong took a triad path of considering Jesus as the king, priest and prophet with a pneumatological emphasis to the question of interfaith dialogue especially in a multi-religious context.
can testify out of the depths of their experience of the living Christ. But as with any dialogical
encounter, they ought also to be open to the religious lives of others.”

Therefore, there is a need for a continual and an adequate conversation among
Nigerian theologians, church leaders and church congregations. At another level, the outcome
of that conversation can offer insights for the church’s dealings with the government and
other stakeholders in the nation. If there is an ongoing communication in these layers of
national involvements, the proposed Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality will be
able to tackle the underlining factors that are hindering peace, coexistence, and mutuality.
They will then function simultaneously both as prophetic dialogue with the other and
prophetic Christology on the issues of peace and mutuality in Nigeria.

The church in Nigeria cannot remain neutral to the situation of the nation if she will
be relevant to the existence of the Nigerian nation in years to come. For the Christological
proposition in this study to effectively lead to an encounter, it must essentially address
various aspects of the society and be applied in the forms of prophetic dialogue and prophetic
Christology. Engaging the challenge of peace and mutuality through Christological
paradigms can lead to visible transformation in the social, religious and political processes of
Nigeria. These possible contributions will be explored in the next section.

6.3 Perceived Contributions

I will argue in this section that the Christological paradigms will aid the socio-political,
religious, and economic situation of Nigeria especially in the quest for peace and mutuality in
eight major ways. These areas will function as aspects of cumulative influence of
Christological paradigms on Nigerian nation and Christianity. I will draw insights in this
section from the writings of Robert Schreiter and other writers in my attempts to show how
the Christological paradigms might foster peace and mutuality.

51 Yong, “Christological Constants in Shifting Contexts: Jesus Christ, Prophetic Dialogue and the Mission
Spiritus in a Pluralistic World”, 32.
6.3.1 Christological paradigms will lead to the Practice of Reconciliation as a Spirituality with Corresponding Human participation

Attaining mutuality, peace, and reconciliation is enormous. The history of theological interactions in the social arena coupled with the ongoing reality in the Nigerian nation and other Third World countries inform the need for the church to be consciously involved in reconciling tasks in the nation. This involvement is participation rather than initiation. Emmanuel Kantogole and Chris Rice have warned that in discussing reconciliation, the first response is not supposed to be how I can be involved but to step aside to listen and understand what God is already doing in the situation. This means that the human participation is more of witnessing to the reconciliation paradigm than initiating it. This warning is useful in preventing what Robert Schreiter has pointed to as the wrong notions of reconciliation in his *Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in A Changing Social Order*. The work of reconciliation started and finished with God who started it as a gift to humankind. It began with God, who is the victim of violence and injustice. The reconciliation that Christians stand for in a situation of suffering is what flows directly from God. The concern arising from this, therefore, is not to begin a process of reconciliation anew but to “discover the mercy of God welling up in my own life, and where does that lead me?”

The heart of Christology as the platform for reconciliation is found in the Pauline discourses on the effects of the death, cross, and blood of Christ. These symbols propelled us not only to think about the violence but the means to curb it. God’s reconciliation leads to liberation of humankind and so must every Christian desire for reconciliation. An ideal way of viewing reconciliation and liberation is such that the former leads to the latter. Schreiter argues that if there is no liberation there cannot be true reconciliation.

Reconciliation can only come about if the nature of the violence perpetrated is acknowledged, and its conditions for continuing or reappearing are removed. Liberation is not just liberation from violent situations, but also liberation from structures and processes that permit and promote violence. To choose

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53 Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 20-22. The first is ‘reconciliation as a hasty peace.’ The second false notion of reconciliation is the promotion of ‘reconciliation instead of liberation.’ The third idea is that of ‘reconciliation as a managed process.’
reconciliation as an alternative to liberation does not acknowledge the deeply conflictive realities that create the chasms that reconciliation hopes to bridge.\textsuperscript{55}

The spirituality of reconciliation is in the witnessing responsibility and the liberation motif it fulfils. Reconciliation cannot provide a substitute for liberation.

The practice of reconciliation will become easier in Nigeria when the Christians realise how much of it is to be derived from Christology. This will happen when the orthopraxis becomes complementary to the orthodoxy of Christology. The framework for these areas is connected to the life and mission of Christ then and now. It shows that the reconciliation of Christ prefigured not only the reconciliation of humanity to God but also hinges on the reality that it provides a contextual image for Nigerian Christians to emulate in their desire to serve as agents of reconciliation. This might also suggest the reasons for the failure of other alternatives explored so far. Reconciliation is often viewed, as Schreiter has insisted, as something that can be attained through a hasty process of peace.\textsuperscript{56} Such a hasty process sometimes includes setting up committees or commissions of enquiry. There is nothing wrong with committees so long as there will be proper diagnosis of the issues leading to conflict and the root causes will be dealt with.

Most of the commissions of enquiry set up in the case of Nigeria ended up supressing the memories of violence and oppression. All these steps follow a basic presumption that reconciliation is something to be achieved through what we do rather than what God has done and is still doing in the world. The results of this are obvious; the weak get weaker and the vulnerable become more exploited since the basic issues underlying the causes of violence are not addressed and right tools are not being employed.

Reconciliation is the work of God in which the Christians of the nation are invited to partake. That is why the practise of reconciliation is more of a spirituality than a strategy. A strategy would look like a set of problem-solving precepts or standards. “What undergirds a successful process of reconciliation is a spirituality, a view of the world that recognises and responds to God’s reconciling action in that world.”\textsuperscript{57} For the Nigerian church to act as an agent of reconciliation, she needs to turn to God first, recognising the reconciliatory work of Christ and be healed ‘as the victim’ of violence, oppression and injustice. It is possible to

\textsuperscript{55} Schreiter, \textit{Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry}, 22.
\textsuperscript{56} Schreiter, \textit{Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry}, 18-21.
\textsuperscript{57} Schreiter, \textit{Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry}, 60.
consider this in two ways. In the first instance, various members of the Christian communities have fallen victims of riots, oppression along religious lines with other religious groups supported by political structures in the nation. The immediate task of the church is to minister to such persons. Second, various church congregations and facilities have equally been affected during attacks and reprisal attacks especially in northern Nigeria. It is needful for the church to explore the possibility of reaching out through ecclesiastical and ecumenical channels to those congregations which have been badly affected and injured over the years. It is only when this crucial task has been done within the church that the church can be ready to turn to the nation with an unveiled face to serve in reconciliation. The practice of reconciliation as a spirituality will lead to some internal elements that will aid the desired encounter.

6.3.2 The Proposed Paradigms will lead to Truth and Justice

The task of maintaining peace and mutuality is a complex and a multidimensional mission. Truth and justice are pillars upon which reconciliation and the Reign of God are founded. There is a need for uncovering the exact social historical situation of a conflict situation without bias. The main challenge here is to decide by what parameter the truth should be measured and to what extent can justice be sought? As far as Christian theology is concerned the Christ-event provides the criteria for assessing the situation and what is acceptable as justice. Besides, there are some perceived cultural equivalences between the gospel truth and what is generally acceptable as the norm under Nigerian religious and social standards. Such equivalences may provide translatability from the gospel into Nigerian social strata in ways that are not far from the world of an ordinary Nigerian. In short everyone knows what is right either by the voice of their conscience or by dictates of the law. The problem lies in willingness to do what is right.

Hence, there has to be an internal communication of the truth to the church herself in all her faces and to allow time for it to permeate the church’s life. When the church has initially encountered the transforming truth of God and become convinced thereby, it may not be difficult to bring the same knowledge of encounter from the life and ministry of the church to the various strata of the Nigerian nation. Truth by its very nature is transforming. It is this transforming nature of the truth that leads to justice. Experience from elsewhere like South Africa, for instance, has shown that the church cannot be exonerated from whatever is
happening in a nation either directly or otherwise. This is because some government policies
on economic and religious matters are often supported by church leaders when those
decisions are not even healthy for the life and future of the church and the nation. In Nigeria,
there are individual members of the church who occupy celebrated positions in the public
arena. In some cases some of these persons are accused of engaging in practices that make
people associate their actions with the church directly.

The pursuit of justice in the reconciliation process can take different forms. These
forms may include punitive justice or restitutional justice or structural justice, legal justice
relating to judicial and legislative reforms. All these forms of justice on the social level may
be obtained jointly to bring reconciliation in a social situation. Nevertheless, there is need for
cautionso that the pursuit of justice especially through legal means does not degenerate into
mere revenge.

This is where the church has an enormous role to play in Nigeria. There is so much
social and political injustice which the nation yet struggles with. Sometimes it takes a form of
inequality between the political class and common citizens, bribery and corruption,
embezzlement of public funds, maladministration, religionalization of politics and so on.
Failure to properly address all these aspects will hamper the end results of reconciliation and
mutuality. It is very common in Nigeria to set up a commission of enquiries in an instance
when people take laws into their own hands in an attempt to protect personal interests. This
has had political, economic and religious dimensions over the years. Nevertheless, most of
these commissions have been ineffective as justice has not been properly pursued. The
pursuit of justice will make a commission of enquiry serve as a deterrent to others in the
future. In order to promote justice and reconciliation effectively, the church can walk
alongside the oppressed and the relevant government agencies. The church can further create
avenues for truth speaking like that of the South African Truth and Reconciliation
Commission (TRC). The Judicial arm of the government cannot be left out as the custodian
of the legal implementation in the nation. Relevant aspects of the constitution and laws
guiding the nation must be up-to-date or amended to ensure that it gives adequate backing for
right judicial action.

58 Robert J. Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategy (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books,
1998), 120-123.
The one thing oppression does is to supress the humanity of its victim. It positions its victim to consider the oppressor as the powerful and superior one that cannot be dealt with. This has far-reaching implications for those who have fallen victims in various instances of violence and cruelty associated with the religious or economic and political state of Nigeria. There are some who have virtually lost all their life savings and property to various attacks. Others have been bereaved of their loved ones. Some other people have been displaced and are now struggling to begin life again in other parts of the country. These people are in need of healing due to their wounds and the memories of the past. It takes enormous effort to get healing and restoration in this case.

As a matter of practice, the spirituality of reconciliation must include listening and compassion.\textsuperscript{59} The more the victims are able to share their stories over and over, the more they will feel relieved and would grow in healing and restoration. Re-telling the stories of human experience here presumes that the church will listen and be non-judgmental in responding to those who have been victimised in the society. While it is true that very many people may not recover from their associated shock and trauma, the love of Christ can be extended to those immediately affected by violence. A great deal of healing can be attained through this method. The victims may not forget the actual events of victimisation, since that is constituent of their being human. But the victims can remember afterwards in ways different from earlier memories. This will eventually constitute a survivor’s support and rescue. It is natural that those who have been affected negatively can be instrumental in the rescue of those currently suffering a similar occurrence. The survivor strategy can be illustrated by Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance.

The risen Jesus is a survivor. He has been through abuse and torture. He has been beaten, mocked, and had thorns pressed into his head. He has experienced public humiliation and been executed on the cross. He has experienced the pit of death. And now he has been raised from the dead.\textsuperscript{60}

The survivor narrative of Jesus’ resurrection especially becomes powerful for healing wounds and memories. Jesus can be presented as a champion who has taken part in similar humiliation. And He grants succour to those currently affected by diverse conditions of

\textsuperscript{59} Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation, 74-76.
\textsuperscript{60} Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation, 76.
humanly induced violence. Robert Schreiter thinks that Jesus demonstrated this through His appearances to His disciples in the upper room, to Thomas with the scars of torture on his hands and side. Other than being marks of identifying Jesus as truly the one executed, the wounds on his body became a source of healing of the bad memories the disciples had had earlier. 61 Jesus is not currently available to share His story and promise His solidarity with the afflicted and the poor. He has willingly relinquished that responsibility to the church.

Following the above, the church in Nigeria can encourage the establishment of a department (where it is not currently available) at denominational, local church, and ecumenical levels to help people with a combination of healing stories of resurrection appearances and personal survival life stories of similar events. This kind of ministry that helps the victims to overcome their violence experiences and effects can also be organised in the form of a Christian non-governmental organisation. The establishment of such a department that oversees the healing of emotional scars and memories can lead to proper education for church and nation on how healing of memories and trauma can come about. “A spirituality of reconciliation, then, involves finding our wounds and seeing if they can be a source of healing rather than of ever greater misery. It means placing our pain in the crucible of Christ’s own suffering that our pain might find direction and purpose.” 62 This is one of the ways that healing of wounds and memories can take place through Christological paradigms.

6.3.4 The Proposed Paradigms will create pathways to Forgiveness and Release

Forgiveness occupies a central place in the process of maintaining peace and coexistence. It is a difficult task that must be undertaken before any meaningful encounter can ensue. Like any other elements involved in reconciliation, forgiveness is first of all experienced before it is expressed. The Bible makes it crystal clear that it is God that ultimately forgives sins. Forgiveness is an expression of God’s kindness towards humanity in that “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Also, it is an extension of God’s manifold grace in the face of humanity’s fallen nature. Christians primarily experience it in the Christ-event. It is only a deep-down personal encounter of the real meaning of forgiveness that confers grace on the believer who can then extend it to others on behalf of Christ. Forgiveness frees someone

61 Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation, 77-82.
62 Schreiter, The Ministry of Reconciliation, 82.
from the power of the past wrongdoings of others which is potentially powerful to hold them bound. That precisely shows the difference between human and divine forgiveness.

Forgiving past wrongdoing involves a personal decision and a conscious action. The healing power of the narrative encounter of Jesus, which helps the healing of memories and wounds, can still be referred to here. Healing and forgiveness go together. In fact, healing aids and stimulates forgiveness. The more the victims find the avenue to narrate their victimisation with supporting words of encouragement, the greater the opportunity to be healed and to forgive their offenders. That is particularly true, as Desmond Tutu demonstrates convincingly in his *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Through forgiveness, it is possible to create a future from hopelessness and the horror of violence to hope and inner vigour to face the future with a renewed mind. The firsthand experience of Tutu in South Africa became a survival story that helped rekindle hope in Liberia, Rwanda, Ireland, and other places he visited on ecumenical grounds in Africa and beyond. Forgiveness aided the preaching, acceptance and movement towards peace, reconciliation, and healing.

It poses some further challenges when forgiveness is considered from a national perspective. The basic rule on which forgiveness operates is first of all a recognition and admittance of wrongdoing by a wrongdoer. This leads to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation in that order. In Nigeria, there are some individuals who have been privileged to occupy positions of authority and have been involved in certain heinous and dehumanising acts against others. Despite the fact that others have been battered and shattered by their acts, they have never deemed it fit to publicly accept their wrongs and to apologise to the people involved. It is possible to trace a few occasions where public acceptance and apologies were made but there are more expectations. Forgiveness in this case stands at a very low probability. To handle such a case, Schreiter submits that the goal of personal and social reconciliation, as the case may be, is always different. Personal reconciliation is intended to bring about healing and restoration of dehumanised persons while social reconciliation deals with restoring a sanitised society, reconstructed in such a way that prevents future breakdown of law and order. Hence, the process would start with the victim. When the victim experiences the love of God and the healing that follows, they are able to forgive. That act of forgiveness leads the wrongdoer to conviction and they finally repent.

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It is very difficult to begin with the victim but beginning with the victim has great potential to restore mutuality and peaceful coexistence. The story of Pastor Wuye James and Imam Muhammad Ashafa, the former militia leaders who were converted from their wrong ideologies and co-founded a religious NGO to help people and communities in conflict in northern Nigeria, is worth mentioning here.\textsuperscript{66} This is a typical story of the reconciliation starting with the victim. I have indicated that the Nigerian church has been a victim either through attacks on church buildings or individual members.\textsuperscript{67} If the church takes the praxis of her ministry in modern Nigeria as channels to proclaiming reconciliation and the Reign of God, then it will be a strong signal to the government and other religious views to pursue reconciliation. All these indicate that starting with the victim might work positively in the Nigerian situation.

6.3.6 The Christological Paradigms will Create A New Social Configuration

The goal of mutuality is to create a space where diverse persons can live together without suspicion irrespective of their religious and social affinity. When the transforming truth penetrates the life of the church, and various phases of society, it offers the possibility of reconciliation. Justice attempts to correct what is wrong in such a way that wrongdoers are not simply brought to book but social interaction is fostered. The result is a society where violence is excluded and people of various religions and ideologies are able to interact and build the society together.

The service of the church in pursuit of justice, peace and reconciliation in the world can lead to a new social configuration. The route to achieve this is multi-dimensional. It encompasses a political, economic, social and religious liberative motif. Mutuality and cordiality do not exist in a vacuum just as violence and insurgency do not arise without certain causes. In addition to the above, liberation and equity are components of a new social configuration. Liberation has to do with dismantling oppressive structures that hinder and devalue people in the society. This will lead to mutual respect of one person for the other. Part of our humanity is our commonality as well as our differences. It is only when we realise that what binds us together as fellow members of a human family is stronger than those things that divide us that our world will be a better place.


\textsuperscript{67} The reader is here referred to Chapter Two for series of attacks on the churches in northern Nigeria.
I have argued elsewhere that there is need to foster a theology of common humanity in the praxis of interfaith relations in Nigeria. The peace is broken and basic interaction that ought to be among people is non-existing because of the failure to recognise and respect the dignity of other persons. The socio-political principles upon which a nation can be built have gradually eroded away. The result is threatened peace. This may well account for Nigeria’s lingering crises over the years. If the government lays a strong political and economic foundation with a right disposition to the citizens, there will be little or no tussle over how available resources are utilised. Every nation is built not on religious distribution but on mutual respect for the citizens and humanity of the human person. The social amenities, job creation, creation of equal opportunities, and good governance are all supposed to be achieved when common humanity is strengthened. In such a just society, the value of every member is respected and dignified as fellow countrymen and countrywomen and members of the same human family.

The task of theology in the public space is to foster useful interaction and promote useful engagement with the church, as well as with the social, economic and political layers of society. The current democratic process in Nigeria needs the invaluable presence of the church to consolidate the political process to revamp a new social construct. Hence, the end result of Christological paradigms will be a new society reconstructed with new values for one another and the nation at large.

6.3.7 The Paradigms may refocus Nigerian Ecclesiology and Ecumenism

The dual transforming nature of reconciliation in the pursuit of mutuality has been well stressed. The message of reconciliation of Christ immediately confronts the church and transforms her before having any impact on the nation or society. It is hoped that, if well-articulated and presented with the love of Christ, the Christological paradigms for mutuality will result in a double transformation – for the church first, and second, for the Nigerian nation. The Nigerian church is perceived differently by people today. To some, it is a prosperous church which is blossoming with affluence and opulence. It is viewed by others as


a church focusing on the needs of its members and sometimes exploiting the vulnerability of its members especially by its leadership. Yet, others see it as a compromising and corrupt church which is undoubtedly progressing on the one hand but gradually losing its vitality and divinely assigned responsibilities to the nation on the other.

This perception equally affected ecumenism in Nigeria. In an earlier attempt to trace the historical dimension of Nigerian ecumenism, Ogbu Kalu described it in the title of his book in 1978 as a *Divided People of God.* The division began early in the missionary days when different mission agencies were contending for space and expansion. Nigerian indigenous mission churches inherited this contended space till today. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) began in 1976 partly to protect the interests of the Christian populace. It has developed political concentration at national, state and local levels in ways rather inimical to the core of the gospel as the political will and disposition is currently in opposition to striving for Christian unity. The quest for position, control and denominational superiority and involvement in the nation’s affairs has propelled CAN forward, in the words of Iheanyi Enwerem, as *A Dangerous Awakening.* It is an ecumenism that needs purity to meet the expectation of the nation. I have noted these views and the expectation of the Nigerian church beginning with its leadership in Chapter Four.

Ecclesiological purity can also be achieved following the proposed Christological paradigms in this study. The Nigerian Catholic New Testament theologian, Teresa Okure has underscored the importance of recognising the church as the family of God. While concurring that the “Church must not merely be God’s agent proclaiming reconciliation, justice, and peace to the world, but a body that visibly lives, incarnates, and models this divine reconciliation”, Okure admitted that there are certain problems that must be addressed immediately. The church as the family of God implies that God has given prophetic responsibilities of justice, reconciliation, and peace to the church in the world. Okure identified the problem.

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It cannot be taken for granted that our self-organization as Church needs no revision. The thesis of this study is that many of the practical problems in the Church today (governance; the exercise of authority, power, and control; the clergy-laity divide; financial and ministerial accountability; issues of women; interpersonal relationships at individual and corporate levels; relationship with other Christians and peoples of other faiths; and even the sexual abuse issue) have their roots in an incorrect understanding of what it means to be church, according to the mind of Christ.74

It is possible to state that the problems identified above are not particular to any specific denomination and Christian confession in Nigeria. They are endemic problems that the Nigerian church is struggling to confront. Some of these problems, for instance, are the current dichotomy between the clergy and laity, and the status of women in relation to men in church leadership.

While some church denominations are striving to correct the imbalance, others are yet doing nothing about them. Failure to establish reconciliation with one another in the church will hinder the church’s ministry of reconciliation and justice to the world. It is hoped that when such a Christological formulation that is directed at ensuring mutuality is properly presented with good intent and purpose it will assist the church and ecumenical relations in Nigeria.

6.3.8 The Christological Paradigms will Restore Hope

The heart of the Christian message is hope. Hope is not only delivered through the proclamation of the gospel but by acting out the gospel in some practical and decisive ways. “Not only do human solidarity and practical action to change conditions of violence express hope, they nourish hope and make hope for a better future possible.”75 When the marginal in the Nigerian society consider the shifting faces of governance, religiously motivated crises, and the poor economic conditions, a key question they keep reiterating is, where is hope? In such a context the ethic of Christian ministry places a divine prerogative on the church as a visible agent of hope. Jürgen Moltmann has taken up the theme of hope as a crucial theme in

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74 Okure, “Church-Family of God: The Place of God’s Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace”, 15. It must be noted here that two conceivable uses of the word ‘church’ are identifiable in Okure’s thought. She uses the Church with capital a ‘C’ for the Roman Catholic Church and a small ‘c’ for primary New Testament definition of the church as ekklesia.

his theological works.\textsuperscript{76} He did not fail to remind the church that God is hope, and this hope is directly connected to the promise that the resurrected Christ makes available to the believer. The end can translate to “the beginning of true life, the beginning of God’s kingdom, and the beginning of the new creation of all things into their enduring form.”\textsuperscript{77} Although Moltmann’s writings have great eschatological significance they equally have some influence on the experience of this moment. An acceptance of an eschatological hope brings that hope into the present time.

Ogbu Kalu identified Christianity and politics as tools of hope for most African countries in the decades between 1960 and 1985. It was a period when Christian mission had the opportunity to influence the political structure and happenings in most African nation-states. However, it is regretted that despite the ample opportunities within this period, the church could not adequately engage with the state politically due to a disposition Kalu called “a Peter-Pan Syndrome.”\textsuperscript{78}

What sort of hope do the Christological paradigms deliver for this moment? It is a hope that reassures the people of God’s presence and interest in the affairs of the poor. This is situated within the understanding of the power and promise of God in the face of the monumental evils and oppression. He has said that “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). It is a hope that God is currently and consciously in charge of all human experience. The evil and good may keep striving but God will certainly prevail. The believer needs to keep believing and exploring various avenues to assuage the suffering of the people, bring reconciliation and justice through her prophetic stance in the nation. That is why Moltmann stressed further that “in hope we anticipate possible deliverance.”\textsuperscript{79} When the Christological paradigms that are proposed in this study are understood and applied rightly, it will strengthen the faith of the many Christians in Nigeria, bring more people to faith, and restore hope of the liberating mission of God in the world. Not only that, the church will be more relevant to the Nigerian society by journeying with the nation in all its facets as the

\textsuperscript{77} Jürgen Moltmann, \textit{In the End – The Beginning: The Life of Hope} trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), x.
\textsuperscript{78} Ogbu U. Kalu, \textit{Power, Poverty and Prayer: The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity, 1960-1996} (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 85-93. The idea of a Peter-Pan Syndrome Kalu referred to means that the churches in Nigeria and other parts of Africa strongly relied upon western traditions to the point that when they were ripe to develop their own self-identity, they were unwilling to grow and break away from their dependence upon the notion of separation of church and state.
correct agent for restoring God’s Kingdom on earth. The Christological paradigms offer the possibility of hope for today and the future.

Whilst theologians today acknowledge the need that the church and individual Christians should be apt at responding to the national issues, they equally sound a note of caution on the appropriate measures and specific timing to do so. This is because one can differentiate clearly between the responsibilities of an individual Christian and that of the institutional church in the social arena. Every Christian is called to make his/her contributions to the good state of the nation through compassionate ministry and abiding by the law of the land. The institutional church is called to sensitize the nation by speaking out decisively on the direction or goal of the nation without taking up the mandate of endorsing any political policy. However, this should only be so after effort has been made to distinguish between policies that are morally permissible and those that are morally impermissible. In addition, the church may refrain from issues relating to adopting a particular political candidate or other political options. In contrast to the above, Sebastian Kim proposes that theology in the public domain should engage in conversation and participate in the formation of political process and policy-making relating to economic, social, and religious spheres. If perceived in this way public theology has to start with the institutional church and consider what it has to contribute to the society and nation at large. The institutional church must develop its own distinct premise beginning with values that Christians would subscribe to as benefitting the common good.

It is very important that theological reflection should impact on the public sphere. This only becomes a reality when the church is willing to speak the truth. There is a close connection between speaking the truth and restoring hope. If, as I have stated earlier, the truth and justice are both vital to the Reign of God and reconciliation, there is no hope without speaking the truth in the interest of the nation. But when the institutional church is involved, it is necessary to exercise caution so as to preserve its true identity. It is even very difficult to differentiate between the position of an individual church leader and the church institution under certain conditions in the public domain. It is impossible to claim that the church has a monopoly on the solution and can always proffer solutions to every national challenge. But whether it is practised with much emphasis on the community of believers or an individual

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82 Kim, Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate, 14-26.
Christian, one thing that should be constant is that both the church and individual Christians should seek to restore hope to the masses.

6.4 Missiological Considerations of the Christological Paradigms for Peace, Coexistence, and Mutuality.

I will argue in this section that the Christological paradigms can be articulated in the form of a gentle mission. There is a crucial question that confronts this study. Can the Christological paradigms serve as catalysts to lead to an encounter in a multi-religious, multi-cultural, and politically diverse nation? The fact of the constitutional secularity of Nigeria compounds this concern. Nevertheless, it is the basic assumption that this study will contribute to the search for mutuality in Nigeria when considered under the following assumptions. The practical ways in which Christological paradigms can be expressed is what I should like to focus on in the remainder of this chapter.

Firstly, the proposed paradigms must be recognised and practiced as a gentle mission by the church. The missiologists have continued to emphasise the importance of gentleness as one of the main characteristics of Christian mission. They are reminding the church and their fellow missiologists that the result of the church’s missionary commitment will depend on how mission is both perceived and practiced. This is what David Bosch called “bold humility” or “humble boldness.” Bosch, Transforming Mission, 496-497. Bevans and Schroeder considered it as “entering another man’s garden.” Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 72-87. It is a bold mission because God is involved with His transforming truth. Again, it is entering another person’s garden in view of other religions, ideologies, and cultures that must be engaged in the process. It requires mutual learning and interaction among the participants. Those evangelising and serving as agents of peace and reconciliation have the responsibility to listen and be open to the other in a non-judgmental manner. The language of prophetic dialogue may be referred to again. Mission as dialogue, in the words of Bevans and Schroeder requires “an attitude of respect and friendship, which permeates or should permeate all those activities constituting the evangelizing mission of the church.” Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 21.

Nigerian Christianity needs to conceive her involvements in the activities which will lead to restoration of mutuality and peaceful coexistence as a gentle missionary endeavour. This conception of the work of the church will reduce a predisposition to resistance in the

83 Bosch, Transforming Mission, 496-497.
84 Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 72-87.
85 Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue, 21.
process of translation. It can also reduce the risk of prejudice in the complicated and already tense situation. Some Nigerian theologians have noticed that apart from the colonisation, the manner in which the earliest missionaries proclaimed the gospel prevented the gospel message from penetrating into the hearts of the people. The image of Jesus painted then was that of an imperialist – conqueror of the human heart, land, and culture. They perceived the presentation of the gospel in the earliest period as having elements of cultural invasion on the Nigerian people. The people became suspicious of the military metaphor of conquering especially among the early Nigerian Christians. Nigerian Christians can chart a new path to an encounter in the peace-talks in the nation when they demonstrate gentleness in the process.

The notion of a gentle mission will make Nigerian Christianity develop a listening attitude to other stake holders in the nation. This particular listening attitude will create a space for the church to operate and contribute to the rebuilding of Nigeria. It will save the Christian fold from creating further problems in the process of solving the existing ones.

Secondly, the Christological paradigms have to be applied with the view to engage different aspects of the nation with a sense of genuineness and inclusiveness. A crisis lingers when a mediator begins on a wrong premise or by creating an “I and you” divide. There has been little or no success in the process of fostering mutuality in Nigeria hitherto because the initiators began the process with some bias or lack of complete genuineness from the beginning. What is proposed here is similar to what Ian Markham has described in his *Theology of Engagement*. Markham’s use of the word engagement interpolates between that word and the concept of encounter I have earlier adopted in this thesis.

It involves both positive participation and at the same time observation. A theology of engagement involves the following: it is an encounter that subsequently shapes the theology itself… A theology of engagement sees theology as shaped, consciously and appropriately, perhaps inevitably, by non-Christian sources. However, the encounter may or may not be a positive one. A positive encounter, where Christian theology can appropriate an insight from another tradition, is good. But sometimes this will not be the case.

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86 I have discussed this view briefly in Chapter Three in tracing the development of African Christian theology.
89 Markham, *A Theology of Engagement*, 10.
There is never an encounter without faithful participation and exchange. The nature of such an exchange is not necessarily about good or bad but essentially that something can be learned in the process. This can only be realised with patience, focus and understanding. Certainly, one cannot exclude the possibility of some resistance in the process of an encounter. The shape of an engaging theology in a multi-tradition context would likely end up in “either assimilation, or resistance, or overbearing or a combination of the above.”

In order to rule out the possibility of resistance, the manner of approach and the genuineness of the church as an active player should be open to others so as to convince other participants to engage. When there is a problem, as certainly there is currently, there are various contributions towards a lasting solution. Some of the solutions that have been proffered have failed utterly whilst others have been quasi-effective. The continuous search for a solution to peace and mutuality may become a factor in determining how the Christological paradigms can best be accommodated.

Thirdly, when the church, which has experienced the forgiving and reconciling power of the cross, begins with openness as it stands to lead others to God’s plans of peace and mutuality, it creates a welcoming space for the other. People of other faiths, religions, ideologies and government can accept each other with a thought of mutual host and guest, rather than as strangers. The idea of space that is envisaged here is that which gives allowance for friendship, listening and safety, for thoughtfulness, and the humanity of the other. I will suggest that for the Christological paradigms to be effective the starting point must be with the Christians. In the words of Ross Langmead “The simple act of hospitality in a home is based on creating a safe and comfortable space for our guests. This is also at the centre of a fully orbed hospitality as an expression of Christian mission.”

Much has been written about the image of hospitality (guest and host) in mission and inculturation. For the purposes of current analysis, the function of a host comes first. The church needs to embrace the role of a host to others involved in the peacebuilding process. The

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90 Markham, A Theology of Engagement, 208-209.
church accepts and creates a space for the other to feel comfortable and feel at home. The division that exists in human relationships usually begins with the first person against the second person as other. But when the church succeeds in carrying out the responsibilities of a host, rather than designating the other person a stranger, the basic rule of courtesy would convince the other to reciprocate this gesture. What will result at the end is that the church and other stakeholders will play a dual role of mutual hosting and being a guest. The church and other parties involved in peace-talk and building will eventually be able to treat each other with respect, cordiality, understanding, trust and very importantly, responsibility. It is this kind of gesture that begins the mutuality on a relational level and gradually builds trust and reconciliation that is pivotal to having peace and mutual coexistence in the nation. It is a gradual process that builds up with time and focus.

6.5 Conclusion

The move toward reconciliation and instituting the Reign of God point to two undeniable facts that are applicable to the Nigerian situation. Reconciliation is a journey and the Reign of God takes a long process to be actualized as an essential part of human society. The Nigerian church needs to see her quest for mutuality and peaceful coexistence as a consistent and continual mission to the nation. The church certainly does have a mission to the nation. This mission is to promote the Reign of God so that humankind will be reconciled to God. But this mission can take a diversity of channels depending on the context of the church. In case of Nigeria, one of the key areas with which the church can be involved deeply in the life of the nation is to formulate a relevant theology that will attend to the practicalities of peace, coexistence, and mutuality. Such relevant theology must connect to the life and experience of the nation and be practicable to people outside of the Christian faith.

The core of the relevant theology as proposed in Christological paradigms consists in the promotion of the Reign of God and reconciliation as the dual cardinal emphases of Christian mission which have corresponding social relevance. I have contended that the proposed Christological paradigms can be appropriated in a way that fulfils the purpose of prophetic dialogue and prophetic Christology. It will be mindful of other religions, worldviews and government of the nation by penetrating through them, conversing with them, exploring possibilities of challenging the structural imbalances and inequalities in the Nigerian nation. It will promote justice, fairness and equity. It will speak truth to power and
advocate the course of the poor and the oppressed. However, it must function as a gentle, genuine and inclusive mission rooted in an open attitude to all Nigerians. This is how the mission of God can be rediscovered and pursued with due and urgent attention and relevance to the current Nigerian situation.