The quest for an appropriate Christology for the African context has dominated African Christian theology of recent. This search for an African face of Jesus Christ or an effort to reimage him into African categories is a desire to make him be at home in the African continent against the claim that Christianity is a white man’s religion. Chapter one of this study is introductory. It examines the concept of Afro-Christology and the recent efforts by African Christian theologians to give direction to this search for an African face of Jesus Christ, considering the traditional religious background of Africans and their socio-cultural and political milieus. In this chapter, the aim of this study is elaborated. Various names for Jesus that are representative of important personages in traditional African societies, their indispensability and significance are suggested. However there are differences between the opinions of the theologians and that which is witnessed in some of the churches especially the AICs. This informed the reason for the study, to discover how Jesus is appropriated in the MFM church, one of the foremost indigenous churches in Nigeria. Some features of the AICs are also examined in this chapter.

Some contributions to this quest for an African face of Jesus Christ are examined in Chapter two. African traditional religions are at home with the concept of a supreme and sovereign God who is powerful and reign over the cosmos. But the concept of God having a son as in Christianity proves difficult. This is why finding appropriate terms to convey the meaning of Jesus Christ so that Africans may relate with him as one of their own and not a stranger becomes urgent. An Afro-centric Christology has the goal of interpreting and seeing Jesus Christ with African eyes, listening to him with African ears and employing local concepts and idioms to describe him for the African. This validates the claim for an authentic African Christianity. The building blocks for this task as suggested by some African theologians include the Bible, theology of older churches, traditional African religion and worldviews, and living experiences of African churches (the AICs). Popular images suggested for Jesus include Ancestor, Healer (Nganga or medicine man), proto-Chief, Elder brother, Liberator, Christus Victor etc.

The historical development of Christianity in Nigeria is the focus of chapter three. The AICs churches are reputed for their uniqueness and distinct African character that make Christianity to
be considered as a non-western religion, at least in Africa. The Portuguese introduced Christianity to the Benin kingdom of Midwest Nigeria in 1515, through a trading expedition. This early missionary expedition floundered because of resistance of the people. The second phase was in the post-Atlantic slave trade years of 1841-1914, as notorious African slave routes were converted into missionary routes. European colonies were also established that inadvertently aided the missionary enterprise. Many missionary societies of major church denominations established missionary outposts in Nigeria, but most significant of all were the activities of the British explorers and missionaries. Churches were established and Christianity grounded in Nigeria in this era. The third phase witnessed the emergence of African indigenous churches from existing colonial churches on account of schism precipitated by failure to embrace African culture into church life, clamour for wholly indigenous church leadership, indebts African spirituality in worship etc. Indigenous churches that were established were renowned for healing, prayer emphasis and prophetism that added African flavour to Christianity.

Chapter four is a focus on the emergence, structure, belief and practices of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church, (MFM), the subject of this study. The MFM is among the new genre of churches in the global south that emphasize healing and exorcism as means of destroying the menace of evil that is prevalent in the African environment. The Bible for them is replete with texts where evil spirits were exorcised from the demon possessed, liberating them to live normal life. Jesus was primarily an exorcist and is all powerful to vitiate malevolent spirits peculiar to African societies that are responsible for spate of deaths, calamities, diseases, epidemics, low life expectancy, wars and other numerous vices prevalent in the African continent. For the MFM, the numerous problems besetting Africans can be attributed to faulty ancestral foundations, family causes, witchcrafts, demons assigned to destroy African societies. They borrow largely from the African traditional religion worldview of the existence of spirits in the nether world that influence the world of humans. The cosmic struggle between the forces of evil and good make the deliverance theology imperative in the African context. The MFM exhibit features of the AICs but reject inculturation of the gospel, because African cultural paraphernalia are coated with evil that Christians must seek relief and deliverance from.

Healing remains a critical issue in Christianity in Nigeria, hence Chapter five of this study focuses on healing practices in Nigerian churches, and how Jesus Christ is understood as healer par excellence. Healing, exorcism and prophetism have been the dominant features of the AICs
from their inception in the early years of the last century. This is because for the African, religion is both pragmatic and utilitarian and takes care of existential concerns. Various phases of the evolution of healing theology in the AICs and Pentecostal churches are highlighted in this chapter. While Jesus is seen in the indigenous churches as the ultimate healer and deliverer, in the Pentecostal churches add the dimension of wealth and prosperity as signs of God’s favour upon the believer. This has made this genre of Christianity attractive to a large segment of the society impoverished, diseased and economically deprived who look to these churches for succour and messages of upliftment. Healing in various church contexts are examined in this chapter.

Chapter Six highlights the various Christologies that have evolved over time across denominational divide in Nigeria, and considering factors that shaped Christianity as discussed in previous chapters. It is significant to note that a distinguishing factor in the Christologies of the mission churches on the one hand and the AICs and Pentecostal churches on the other, is that the former focus more on the identity and ethics of Jesus Christ while the latter are preoccupied with the significance of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The latter category seeks to appropriate for the Nigeria context, the power promised to conquer evil forces and to liberate humans, to live victoriously over life diminishing forces. The emphasis in the AICs is triumphant Christology, and to this the Pentecostals add Jesus the blesser with fortunes and the good things of life for a society that is severely impoverished. As said earlier, in the MFM, Jesus is seen as an exorcist. The Christologies of these churches differ from what is often suggested in theological circles in Africa.

In the concluding chapter, deductions on what informed the various types of Christologies in the Nigerian context are made. These include among others, socio-economic factors and more importantly is the primal worldview and traditional religion of the people which cannot be jettisoned on account of novelty of new religions. The Christology of the MFM Church reflects the new emphasis on ‘power religion’ that can alleviate the sufferings of Africans both from spiritual and physical problems that are rife in Africa. The practices of the MFM Church however leave much to be desired as regards aspects of the Christian faith that borders on oneness of the church, contextualization of the faith, hermeneutics and culture of the people.